

**POWER RELATIONS IN LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID  
GOLDBLATT AND SANTU MOFOKENG**

**BY**



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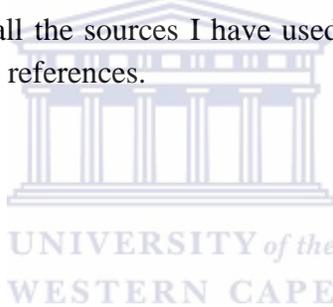
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>TITLE PAGE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>DECLARATION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>GENERAL INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE:</b> Dynamics of textual construction of the South African landscape and the problem of white subjectivity	<b>42</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO:</b> Ways of seeing: From hegemonic to multiple viewpoints of landscape	<b>93</b>
<b>CHAPTER THREE:</b> Hegemonic structuring of Apartheid South Africa: Landscape photographs by David Goldblatt	<b>135</b>
<b>CHAPTER FOUR:</b> Dawn of Hope? Post-Apartheid Landscape Photographs by David Goldblatt	<b>204</b>
<b>CHAPTER FIVE:</b> Notions of the everyday and spirituality in landscape photographs by Santu Mofokeng	<b>254</b>
<b>CHAPTER SIX:</b> Subtlety and Irony: Landscape photographs by David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng	<b>318</b>
<b>GENERAL CONCLUSION</b>	<b>363</b>
<b>SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>376</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>394</b>

**Supervisor: Professor Patricia Hayes**

**DECLARATION**

I declare that *Power Relations in Landscape Photographs by David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng* is my own work and has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.



Mzuzile Mduduzi Xakaza

December 07, 2015

Signed.....

## Acknowledgements

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angles from which I could approach my arguments about David Goldblatt's photographic methodology. Seminars that he co-ran at the Interdisciplinary Center for the study of Global Change on a regular basis helped me discover many other ways of engaging with knowledge acquired through conventional and innovative research methods. Recently, when I finally got my loving and caring life partner and wife, Sihle, I realized that I had an added human source of moral support and encouragement. I also thank Sihle and our children for their understanding during long hours of absence in their midst as I was pursuing my academic goal. My family's support and encouragement actually dates back to my elementary or secondary school years when my late father, who was a migrant worker in Johannesburg, warned me about the dangers of being uneducated, promising to support me and finance my studies as long as he could. Later, when I had lost hope that I could ever acquire tertiary education due to many financial challenges, my father reprimanded me in writing, insisting that he did not regard lack of funds for further studies as an excuse. In retrospect, I sincerely salute my greatest super hero.

Registering for this programme in 2015 simply meant that I would not have access to the library on Bellville campus, but after quick intervention of library personnel, an arrangement was made to enable me to get books at the local DUT (Durban University of Technology) library. I wish to sincerely thank Nozipho Cynthia Majola of the City Campus who never lost her interest in assisting me whenever I needed books and journals. I found the DUT Library ILL system quite efficient and convenient. May this library continue assisting all other individuals who may find themselves in my situation.

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M. M. Xakaza

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## LIST OF FIGURES

- 2.1 Santu Mofokeng, *Afoor family bedroom, Vaalrand*. 1988.
- 2.2 Santu Mofokeng, *Ray Phiri, Shareworld.c*. 1986.
- 2.3 Santu Mofokeng, *Concert, Sewefontein.c*. 1988.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.1 David Goldblatt, *The Docrats' shop after closure under the Group Areas Act. April, 1977*.
- 3.2 David Goldblatt, *Iron-age corbelled hut, Sedan, near Lindley, Orange Free State. 1993*.<sup>2</sup>
- 3.3 David Goldblatt, *Blue asbestos fibres, Owendale Mine, Northern Cape. 26 October 2002*.<sup>3</sup>
- 3.4 David Goldblatt, *Remnant of a hedge planted in 1660 to keep the indigenous Khoikhoi out of the first European settlement in South Africa*. 1993.
- 3.5 David Goldblatt, *Monument commemorating the Ossewa-trek of 1938, which celebrated the centenary of the Great Trek*. 1993.
- 3.6 David Goldblatt, *H. F. Verwoerd Building, headquarters of the Provincial Administration, inaugurated on 17 October 1969*.
- 3.7 David Goldblatt, *Ciskei National Monument. Ntaba kaNdoda, Ciskei. 10 July 1990*.
- 3.8 David Goldblatt, *The KwaZulu Legislative Assembly Building with a memorial to Shaka. Ulundi, KwaZulu. 21 July 1989*.
- 3.9 David Goldblatt, *Dutch Reformed Church, inaugurated on 31 July 1966*.
- 3.10 David Goldblatt, *Dutch Reformed Church, Completed in 1984. Querlerina, Jo'burg. Transvaal. 1 November 1992*.
- 3.11 David Goldblatt, *The City Hall and the Cenotaph. Durban, Natal. 29 August 1980*.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.12 David Goldblatt, *Johannes van der Linde, farmer and major in the local army reserve, with his head labourer 'Ou Sam'. Near Bloemfontein, Free State. 1965*.<sup>5</sup>
- 3.13 David Goldblatt, *Tweefontein H Resettlement Camp*. n.d.
- 3.14 David Goldblatt, *2:45 A.M.: The first bus of the day pulls in at Mathysloop on the Boekenhouthoek-Marabastad route from KwaNdebele to Pretoria*. n.d.<sup>6</sup>
- 3.15 David Goldblatt, *Swerwers, nomadic farm workers, on trek in the Karoo. Near Colesburg, Cape. 1986*.<sup>7</sup>
- 3.16 David Goldblatt, *Swerwers, between Beaufort West and Loxton, Northern Cape. 2002*.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Figures 2.1 – 2.3 by Santu Mofokeng were scanned from *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, pp. 48, 61 and 64, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Figures 3.1 and 3.2 by David Goldblatt were scanned from Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 88 and 35, respectively.

<sup>3</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, London & New York: Prestel, 2005, p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> Figures 3.4 – 3.11 by David Goldblatt were scanned from Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 46, 40, 166, 172, 173, 141, 163 and 118, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Some Afrikaners Revisited*, Roggebaai: Umuzi, 2007, p. 65.

<sup>6</sup> Figures 3.13 and 3.14 by David Goldblatt were scanned from Van Niekerk, P., 'The Bus Stop Republic' in Goldblatt, D., *The Transported of KwaNdebele*, Hong Kong: Aperture Foundation Inc., 1989, pp. 65 and 15, respectively.

<sup>7</sup> Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.57.

<sup>8</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, London & New York: Prestel, 2005, 31.

- 3.17 David Goldblatt, *An elder of the Dutch Reformed Church walking home with his family after the Sunday service*, George, Cape Province. 1968.
- 3.18 David Goldblatt, *An elder of the Dutch Reformed Church walking home with his family after the Sunday service.*, Carnarvon, northern Cape. 1968.<sup>9</sup>
- 4.1 David Goldblatt, *The mill, Pomfret Asbestos Mine, North West Province*. 20 December 2002.
- 4.2 David Goldblatt, *In an abandoned mineshaft, Pomfret Asbestos Mine, North West Province*. 25 December 2002.
- 4.3 David Goldblatt, *Advertisement, Oaklands, Johannesburg*. 20 November 1999.
- 4.4 David Goldblatt, *George Nkomo, hawker, Fourways, Johannesburg*. 21 August 2002.
- 4.5 David Goldblatt, *Braiding hair on Bree Street, Johannesburg*. 7 September 2002.
- 4.6 David Goldblatt, *Squatters' shacks, Newtown, Johannesburg*. n.d.
- 4.7 David Goldblatt, *Freedom Square, Kliptown, Soweto, Johannesburg*. 10 December 2003.
- 4.8 David Goldblatt, *Women singing, Newtown Squatter Camp, Johannesburg*. 1 November 2001.<sup>10</sup>
- 4.9 David Goldblatt, *Feathers and a childbook: debris after the forced removal of farm workers from their roadside camp – Mngonya Valley, near Weenen, Natal*. 26 July 1989.<sup>11</sup>
- 4.10 David Goldblatt, *Buffelsjagbaai, Western Cape*. 5 October 2004.
- 4.11 David Goldblatt, *The Docrats' lavatory, Fietas, Johannesburg*. 17 March 2003.<sup>12</sup>
- 4.12 David Goldblatt, *The Docrats' bedroom*. Pageview, Johannesburg, Transvaal. 1976.
- 4.13 David Goldblatt, *Memorial to Abraham Esau, Calvinia, Northern Cape*. 6 October 2003.
- 4.14 David Goldblatt, *The graves of the Cradock Four, Cradock, Eastern Cape*. 14 October 2004.<sup>13</sup>
- 4.15 David Goldblatt, *After the funeral of the Cradock Four*. Cradock, Eastern Cape. 20 July 1985.<sup>14</sup>
- 4.16 B David Goldblatt, *BHJ, Richtersveld, in the time of Aids, Northern Cape*. 25 December 2003.
- 4.17 David Goldblatt, *Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, in the time of Aids*. 13 October 2004.
- 4.18 David Goldblatt, *Port Nolloth, Northern Cape, in the time of Aids*. 28 December 2003.
- 4.19 David Goldblatt, *Entrance to Lategan's Truck Inn on the N1 in the time of Aids, Laingsburg, Western Cape*. 14 November 2004.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Figures 3.17 and 3.18 by David Goldblatt were scanned from Goldblatt, D., *Some Afrikaners Revisited*, Roggebaai: Umuzi, 2007, pp. 197 and 203.

<sup>10</sup> Figures 4.1 – 4.8 by David Goldblatt were scanned from Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, London & New York: Prestel, 2005, pp. 51, 69, 6, 7, 9, 114, 15 and 16, respectively.

<sup>11</sup> Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 67.

<sup>12</sup> Figures 4.10 and 4.11 by David Goldblatt were scanned from Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, London & New York: Prestel, 2005, pp. 59 and 13, respectively.

<sup>13</sup> David Goldblatt were scanned from Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, London & New York: Prestel, 2005, p. 79.

<sup>14</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections Intersected*, Porto: Museu de Arte Contemporanea de Serralves, 2008, pp. 92-93.

- 5.1 Santu Mofokeng, *Appropriated Spaces*. n.d.<sup>16</sup>
- 5.2 Santu Mofokeng, *Dukathole*. n.d.
- 5.3 Santu Mofokeng, *Target Practice, Mofolo*. n.d.
- 5.4 Santu Mofokeng, *Limbless Doll*, Jakkalsfontein. 1989.
- 5.5 Santu Mofokeng, *Fairways, Golf at Zone 6, Diepkloof*. 1987.
- 5.6 Santu Mofokeng, *Diepkloof ext. 4*. n.d.
- 5.7 Santu Mofokeng, *Winter in Tembisa*. c 1991.<sup>17</sup>
- 5.8 Santu Mofokeng, *Democracy is Forever*.c 2004.
- 5.9 Santu Mofokeng, *Township Billboard*. n.d.<sup>18</sup>
- 5.10 Santu Mofokeng, *Near Maponya's Discount Store, Soweto*. 1985.
- 5.11 Santu Mofokeng, *Sunflower Harvest, Bloemhof*. 1988.<sup>19</sup>
- 5.12 Santu Mofokeng, *People running in circles and chanting before dispersing for work*. n.d.<sup>20</sup>
- 5.13 Santu Mofokeng, *Doornfontein*. 1998.<sup>21</sup>
- 5.14 Santu Mofokeng, *Temple* 1996.
- 5.15 Santu Mofokeng, *Easter Sunday church service*. Motouleng Cave, Free State. 1996.
- 5.16 Santu Mofokeng, *Sisters Gladys and Cynthia leading sangomas and initiates in ritual chants, song and dance of exorcism*. Clarens, Free State. 1996.
- 5.17 Santu Mofokeng, *A view of Robben Island from Signal Hill Cape Town, SA*. 1996.
- 5.18 Santu Mofokeng, *End of the line, Birkenau – KZ2, Poland*. 1997.<sup>22</sup>
- 5.19 Inmates constructing a gas chamber and crematorium complex which would be used in exterminating them, Auschwitz-Birkenau (Photographer and title not supplied) (Courtesy of the State Museum at Auschwitz). n.d.<sup>23</sup>
- 6.1 Kevin Carter or Corbis Sygma, *The execution of some Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) members in the former Bophuthatswana in 1994*.<sup>24</sup>
- 6.2 Dave Hartman, *Barricades are erected on Belgravia Road, Athlone township, Cape Town, September 1985. As violence spread through the townships, barriers were thrown*

---

<sup>15</sup> Figures 4.17 – 4.20 by David Goldblatt were scanned from Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, London & New York: Prestel, 2005, pp. 38, 52, 54 and 57, respectively.

<sup>16</sup> Mofokeng, S., 'Trajectory of a Street Photographer' in *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, Number 11/12 Fall/Winter 2000, p. 44.

<sup>17</sup> Figures 5.2 – 5.7 by Santu Mofokeng were scanned from Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, pp. 9, 85, 21, 41, 42 (top) and 9 (bottom), respectively.

<sup>18</sup> Figures 5.8 and 5.9 by Santu Mofokeng were scanned from Johnson, J. in *Mofokeng – Billboards* <http://politicstheoryphotography.blogspot.com/2007/05/santu-mofokeng-billboards.html> Accessed 24/08/09.

<sup>19</sup> Figures 5.10 and 5.11 by Santu Mofokeng were scanned from Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, pp. 16 and 14, respectively.

<sup>20</sup> Mofokeng, S., 'Train Churches' in Bunn, D. and J. Taylor (eds.), *From South Africa: New Writing, Photographs, and Art*, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 361.

<sup>21</sup> Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, 78.

<sup>22</sup> Figures 5.14 – 5.18 by Santu Mofokeng were scanned from *Rhizomes of Memory: sorafrikanske fotografer Goldblatt: Mofokeng: Hallett*, Oslo: Onstad Kunstsenter Forlaget Press, 2000, pp. 140, 149, 146, 136 and 80, respectively.

<sup>23</sup> Young, J. E., *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1993, p.121.

<sup>24</sup> Marinovich, G. and J. Silva, *The Bang-Bang Club*, London: William Heinemann, 2000, p.194 (i).

up on the streets where young people battled with the police. Within two months, the death toll had risen, and many were injured.<sup>25</sup>

6.3 Omar Badsha, *The police arresting students following the assassination of United Democratic Front leader and human rights lawyer Victoria Mxenge*. n.d.<sup>26</sup>

6.4 Rashid Lombard, *Leaders of the United Women's Organization while they were protesting against the massacre of twenty two people in Langa Township*. n.d.<sup>27</sup>

6.5 Ken Oosterbroek, *A girl leads her younger sister to safety as an impi, or regiment, of Inkatha-supporting Zulu warriors moves down Khumalo Street, Thokoza, at the start of the Hostel War, August 1990*.<sup>28</sup>

6.6 Greg Marinovich, *Inhlazane, Soweto, 15 September, 1990. An ANC supporter hacks at a burning Lindsay Tshabalala as a young boy flees*.<sup>29</sup>

6.7 Joao Silva, *Khumalo Street, Thokoza, December 1990. A man laughs towards the camera as he passes a group of female Inkatha supporters beating an unidentified woman*.<sup>30</sup>

6.8 Juda Ngwenya, *A wounded Greg Marinovich* (courtesy of Reuters). 1994.<sup>31</sup>

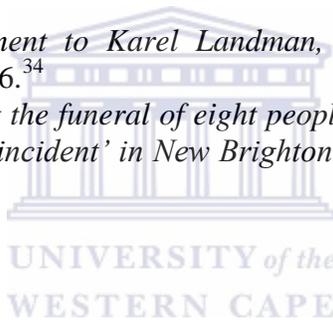
6.9 Joao Silva, *A wounded Greg Marinovich*. 1994.<sup>32</sup>

6.10 Santu Mofokeng, *Riot police waiting, 1980s*.<sup>33</sup>

6.11 David Goldblatt, *Monument to Karel Landman, Voortrekker leader*. *De Kol, Eastern Cape*. 10 April 1993.

6.12 David Goldblatt, *Monument to Karel Landman, Voortrekker leader*. *De Kol, Eastern Cape*. 20 February 2006.<sup>34</sup>

6.13 Chris Qwazi, *Mourners at the funeral of eight people shot by security forces during the 'bottle-store (liquor-store) incident' in New Brighton township, Port Elizabeth, April 1986*.<sup>35</sup>



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<sup>25</sup> Hill, I. T. and A. Harris, *Beyond The Barricades: Popular Resistance in South Africa*, New York: Aperture Foundation, 1989, pp.32 and 33.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>28</sup> Marinovich, G. and J. Silva, *The Bang-Bang Club*, London: William Heinemann, 2000, p.50 (ii).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.50 (vii).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.50 (iv).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p.194 (vii).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p.194 (viii).

<sup>33</sup> Hayes, P. 'The Violence is in the Knowing: the photographs of Santu Mofokeng' from <http://webservices.itcs.umich.edu/drupal/vcw/sites/webservices.itcs.umich.edu.drupal.vcw/files/HayesPoster.pdf> Accessed 24/11/10.

<sup>34</sup> Figures 6.11 and 6.12 by David Goldblatt were scanned from Goldblatt, D., *Intersections Intersected*, Porto: Museu de Arte Contemporanea de Serralves, 2008, pp. 26 and 27, respectively.

<sup>35</sup> Hill, I. T. and A. Harris, *Beyond The Barricades: Popular Resistance in South Africa*, New York: Aperture Foundation, 1989, p.90.

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

*“Landscape imagery reflects and reinforces particular ideas about class, gender, race and heritage in relation to property rights, accumulation and control.”<sup>36</sup>*

### *Introductory overview: the main problem*

How far can landscape photographic images allow us to interrogate the extent to which collective socio-political, cultural and economic aspirations of marginalised South Africans have, or have not, been achieved since the dawn of democracy in 1994? In thinking about such aspirations, I posit that the victims of colonialism and the Apartheid system had expectations of living in a free, non-racial South Africa where equality would be realised in political, social, cultural and economic spheres. However, I use landscape as the basis for determining the extent to which such aspirations might or might not have been achieved within the context of post-Apartheid South Africa. What role can the work of David Goldblatt (born 1930) and Santu Mofokeng (born 1956) play in facilitating our ability to read a post-Apartheid diagnosis regarding this question? These issues are the primary focus of this thesis, and connect to a range of other questions. For instance, what methodological approaches do these practitioners employ in framing their photographed landscape scenes, be they populated or depopulated? Why is landscape in the centre of this thesis, and why are these practitioners considered relevant in the context of this study irrespective of their disparate racial and cultural backgrounds?

The main body of the thesis traces these photographers’ individual methodological approaches, distinguishing them from predominant modes associated with the Afrapix Collective (1982-1992) and the later Bang-Bang Club (1990-1994). It locates them

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<sup>36</sup> Wells, L. (ed.), *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), London & New York: Routledge, 1996, p.298.

within the context of ‘struggle photography’ with which the Afrapix members and the Bang-Bang Club were primarily concerned.<sup>37</sup> The Bang-Bang Club in particular had a preoccupation with the framing of violent scenes that ensued in the South African political arena during the early 1990s, leading up to the national democratic elections in 1994. My argument centres on what I consider the main element that distinguishes the practitioners in question from the Afrapix and the Bang-Bang Club – the everyday. I explore how specific examples of Goldblatt’s and Mofokeng’s focus on the everyday contribute to an articulation of the role of landscape as a medium of social critique. Instead of framing sensationalist and newsworthy episodes of violent political strife within pre-1994 South Africa, Goldblatt’s long career traces the underlying causes of the social injustices and resultant power contestations while Mofokeng, who was also a member of Afrapix, looks at what I term the spiritual or ethereal elements within landscape. It is this subtlety in their approach that sets them apart from their counterparts as they use landscape as a kind of proverbial text in which we can ‘read’ human actions over time. Thus time and space are inevitably significant in the study of these photographers’ oeuvre. But what do all these elements have to do with the challenging question of land in South Africa? What do they have to do with the construction of the South African landscape? What is the role of the camera in that construction? Using photographic images as important tools, I place the land issue, especially as it is mediated

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<sup>37</sup> Afrapix Collective was a group of South African photographers active from 1982 to 1992, focusing mainly on framing scenes of repression by the Apartheid state against the marginalised masses, and the social conditions and political mobilisation of the latter. They operated as a collective for one decade before the demise of the Apartheid system. The Bang-Bang Club was a small group of mainly photojournalists who focused their lenses on what was termed black-on-black political violence on the eve of South Africa’s democracy. They focused on newsworthy, sensationalist scenes which were very much in demand within a wider visual economy.

through landscape construction, at the centre of my interrogation of power relations in Apartheid and post-Apartheid South Africa.

*Land, landscape and the everyday in South Africa*

The date 1652 has a historic import in South Africa relating to the time bomb that is more explosive today than ever before: the land issue.<sup>38</sup> This has been a bone of political contention inscribed on most social and economic spheres of life. The land issue remains central to many of the socio-political challenges that South Africa still has to face, but is a very thorny issue for the powerful echelons in political and academic circles to grasp.<sup>39</sup>

As Ruth Hall states succinctly:

During the negotiated transition to democracy, many South Africans expected that liberation would bring the return of land of which they had been dispossessed under colonialism and apartheid, but the terms on which the transition was negotiated constrained the parameters of how this could happen.<sup>40</sup>

However, the democratically-elected government of South Africa, initially under Nelson Mandela's leadership, made attempts to address this challenge. The Restitution of Land Rights Act, Act of 1994, was meant to encourage those concerned to lodge claims and

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<sup>38</sup> 'Land', in the context of this thesis is viewed as different from 'landscape'. The fundamental difference, which will be expatiated on later in this introduction and the first chapter of this thesis, is that land exists 'naturally' or physically whereas landscape is mainly a social and cultural construction. This idea runs through the whole thesis, touching on ways in which these constructions of the land take place in different historical epochs of South Africa.

<sup>39</sup> However, the democratically elected government of South Africa, under Nelson Mandela's leadership, has made attempts to address this challenge given that Restitution of Land Rights Act, Act of 1994, was meant to encourage those concerned to lodge claims and have their cases heard. Recently, after the process of land restitution has proven futile, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), led by Julius Malema, is trying to address the same issue. Malema's passionate focus is both land and mineral resources. The EFF laments the fact that the mining industry in South Africa is still run mostly by those who were advantaged during the Apartheid period. On the other hand, Abahlali baseMjondolo (Shack Dwellers) is another collective that is struggling for settlement land. See [http://abahlali.org/taxonomy/term/sbu\\_zikode/sbu\\_zikode/](http://abahlali.org/taxonomy/term/sbu_zikode/sbu_zikode/). Accessed 28/05/15.

<sup>40</sup> Hall, R., 'Land Restitution in South Africa: Rights, Development, and the Restrained State' in *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Etudes Africaines*, Vol. 38, No 3 (2004), pp. 654-671, p.654.

have their cases heard. Recently, after the process of land restitution has been shown to have fallen far short of initial goals,<sup>41</sup> the Economic Freedom Fighters led by Julius Malema has attempted to address the same issue.

The one space, however, where landscape has been debated in this country is art history, a discipline that has operated in a terribly depoliticised and ahistorical way.<sup>42</sup> But despite being the subject of photography extensively since the nineteenth century up to today, landscape has always occupied a submerged position in scholarly inquiry and debates around social documentary photography in South Africa.<sup>43</sup> It has, so far, been treated as a metaphoric space of human suffering.<sup>44</sup> This thesis therefore embarks on an analysis of the symptoms and consequences of such disciplinary compartmentalisation of knowledge within the academy, and aims to inspire a fresh, animated approach to the currently

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<sup>41</sup> Driver, T., 'South African Land Reform and the Global Development Industry' in *African Studies Quarterly* / Volume 9, Issue 4 / Fall 2007, p.70.

<sup>42</sup> This point is based on my experience as Fine Arts and History of Art student at different levels, between 1989 and 1995. There has been a prevalence of art history studies that were mostly 'sanitized', not relating South African art history to popular political and historical realities except a few fairly recent publications including *Visual Century: South African Art in Context* (2011). Approaches to these studies were marked mostly by Eurocentrism, the process by which Europe and European cultural assumptions are constructed as universal. See in this context Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, London & New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 90-91.

<sup>43</sup> My discussion of the 'intellectual invisibility' of landscape within photography studies is strongly influenced by David Goldblatt's notion of 'visual furniture' with reference to the everyday, as discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>44</sup> Darren Newbury in his *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2009, pp.257 and 319, touches on Gideon Mendel's role as a social documentary photographer who documented certain scenes of the 1980s popular struggle and then the social impact of HIV/AIDS in post-Apartheid era. All these social *scenes* were *acted* out mainly in landscape settings. I note here that Newbury, too, does not focus centrally on landscape (in his work cited here) as a significant visual component in both cases. Because social and political affairs of the periods covered in his work dominated the news media and mainstream academic debate, landscape took a back seat and most scholars (including Newbury) of visual studies who overlooked it as 'visual furniture' are hardly to blame. Since the advent of the camera in the nineteenth century, landscape has always been photographed from multiple aesthetic viewpoints by most commercial photographers and also as a compositional backdrop in documentary photography from that time up to the time of the Bang-Bang Club that I discuss in Chapter Six. In Chapter One I identify Alfred Martin Duggan-Cronin as one of the first photographers who documented landscape while submerging the position of his human subjects posed in it. The introduction of Goldblatt and Mofokeng in this thesis serves to illustrate how, after Duggan-Cronin, they have redefined landscape in photographic terms while expanding the scope within which the term 'documentary' can be understood.

overlooked or underemphasised relationship between landscape and social documentary photography.<sup>45</sup> Here I question an apparent intellectual complacency in this regard. Embarking on this task is further justified by the hidden significance of landscape in the photographic engagement with the social history of South Africa. I aim at bridging the epistemological gap that, I contend, already has a negative impact on the meaningful production of knowledge around the South African landscape and visual representation more generally as a tool for social critique. However, it may be worth reflecting on why there has always been such an epistemological gap. One may point out that one of the factors could have been the nature of the political struggle in South Africa and its focus on townships.<sup>46</sup> Chapter One of this thesis also alludes to the fact that landscape imagery has often been closely associated with the white colonial imagination that seems to have closed off other possibilities.<sup>47</sup> The imaging and imagination of townships as sites of resistance even during the phenomenon of what art historians have termed ‘Township Art’ also failed to trigger debates around the contribution of the township phenomenon as a significant aspect of landscape construction in South Africa. The succeeding chapters

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<sup>45</sup> This challenge has, for some time now, been an important issue among the current and past Fellows of the Programme for the Study of the Humanities in Africa (PSHA), Centre for Humanities Research (CHR), University of the Western Cape. For the purpose of this thesis, I identify Visual Studies and History of Art as areas of knowledge that display such symptoms of disciplinary compartmentalization. Furthermore, I also argue that this disciplinary partition has had a damaging impact by confining the landscape genre within History of Art as a subject of intellectual engagement. Tools need to be developed in order to change the status quo by developing the importance of landscape as a subject of academic debate within mainstream Visual Studies as well. To clarify further, I am concerned with the social significance of landscape as opposed to a purely aesthetic one. Though this study does not concern itself with aesthetics, there are sections where a tension between ethics and aesthetics creeps in.

<sup>46</sup> Within the South African context, townships are a predominantly black (African, Coloured and Asian) phenomenon, serving both as cheap labour reservoirs and breeding grounds for political consciousness. Most black political activities have almost always been planned and launched from townships. Those include Soweto Uprisings, Sharpsville Massacre and the adoption of the Freedom Charter at Kliptown.

<sup>47</sup> This position is held almost across disciplines with History of Art focusing mainly on the aesthetics of landscape art production by white artists as visual expression of their emotional attachment to the land especially after the Great Trek of the early nineteenth century. Because townships were not meant for opportunities such as owning and working the land, landscape as a basis of the white colonial imagination persisted almost unhindered though one may argue that even the creation of townships was yet another act of landscape construction within the South African social context.

of this thesis will also show that though townships featured prominently in social documentary photography, landscape remained largely neglected within almost all disciplines of knowledge.

Within other southern African countries such as Mozambique, landscape has remained in the background though it has always been included in that country's documentary projects. Robert Rodgers Korstad's seminal work on how documentary projects, including photography, were utilised as therapeutic measures on displaced Mozambican children shows that most content of those projects could have been landscape which is not even mentioned. Most of what Korstad discusses in his article obliquely refers to the contribution of political upheavals to the construction of the Mozambican landscape during anti-colonial and civil wars as well as other challenges that included the "drought and resettlements in urban shantytowns and refugee camps".<sup>48</sup> In Korstad's engagement with photography, among other documentary projects, landscape seems to be at the centre but his silence on its construction is quite clear throughout the article.

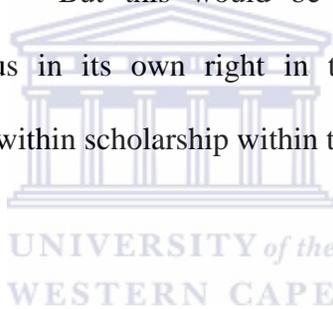
An apparent lack of dialogue between concepts of landscape and debates around photography, which I use as tools for examining discursive power relations in a changing South Africa, gives rise to the multidirectional character of this thesis. In Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's disparate but related methodologies, these practitioners employ the element of the everyday to reconfigure the manner in which documentary photography is to be

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<sup>48</sup> Korstad, R.R., 'Documentary Projects For Refugee and Displaced Children in Southern Africa' in *Journal of Social Development in Africa* (1993), 8, 2, 61-72, pp.61-62. In keeping with my position on 'land' as naturally occurring and 'landscape' being a social construction, it is noticeable that Korstad mentions 'land' in a number of occasions in the article, clearly omitting the role of 'landscape' in shaping the late twentieth-century Mozambican society.

understood in South Africa outside the domain of the sensational. In addition to this fact I make use of specific landscape images by these photographers to illustrate this point, I also am using this study to invite attention to more extended ways of looking at the function of the everyday within post-Apartheid landscape photography.

I also use the term ‘documentary’ very cautiously when I refer to David Goldblatt’s photography because he does not believe in this kind of categorisation. He is simply ‘a photographer’. Here the everyday is seen as an element that repeatedly creeps in, almost unaccompanied by any dramatic historic event, within the contexts of Apartheid and post-Apartheid South Africa.<sup>49</sup> But this would be impossible without proposing landscape as a thematic focus in its own right in the South African mainstream documentary photography and within scholarship within the Humanities.



#### *Key sources consulted*

In order to find ways of addressing what existing scholarship has underemphasised, I consult a body of literature on definitions and critical theories around both landscape and ‘documentary’ photography in South Africa and abroad. Literature consulted for the writing of this thesis ranges from publications on global art history,<sup>50</sup> South African and global social histories, critical theories of landscape and photography, and exhibition

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<sup>49</sup> I expand on this idea in Chapter Three where I look at environmental and economic issues in one of David Goldblatt’s landscape photographs of deserted asbestos mines.

<sup>50</sup> Because the question of landscape photography has not been thoroughly engaged with within visual studies in general, only art history offers a comprehensive account of the development of landscape as a genre of representation in its own right. Within the domain of visual studies, I intend introducing the idea of politicising its representation in the South African context. More contemporary South African art history has not yet built rich theory with which to engage around the question of the political and social significance of landscape. Here I am thinking more specifically about opportunities lost by this discipline in creating a discourse parallel to the one I am trying to initiate here.

catalogues and other publications on David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng.<sup>51</sup> Interview transcripts based on the initial, pioneering efforts by Prof. Patricia Hayes and Farzanah Badsha to generate substantial interview material around Goldblatt, Mofokeng and other relevant photographers have been more than helpful in making sense of these two photographers' ideological positions and practical methodologies. I engage with both local and global sources given that both Goldblatt and Mofokeng are internationally renowned photographers and because landscape and photography affect both social and cultural studies at a global level.

Most of the existing research on these photographers has made a significant contribution but has not exhausted the task of theorising these photographers' work, especially in terms of how they operate within and about the more banal domain of the everyday. The everyday renders access to the notion of landscape far more possible because it encapsulates aspects of social life that are outside the context of grand, dominant narratives on which some photojournalists would focus. Because landscape is so deeply imbedded in everyday social life, it is often neglected yet it is very significant as a 'container' of everyday social activities. In this thesis I therefore argue that landscape provides an enabling environment for productive social critique. This literature also has lacunae in terms of theorising the philosophically-loaded concepts of space and time – concepts which, I contend, have a potential of enriching and complicating our understanding of Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's operational methodologies. These photographers operate within the broader context of a widely-accepted genre of social

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<sup>51</sup> Here I am thinking particularly about how time-space relationship helps complicate landscape both as a concept and also as a theme of representation in South Africa. I am also thinking about the element of the everyday as a special domain within which it becomes productive to engage with operational methodologies employed in documenting landscape as a socially significant entity of visibility.

documentary photography, but this thesis concerns itself with what they do with the theme of landscape as a medium of social critique. This thesis embarks on the necessary spadework to dig deeper into why certain genres have more salience than others – documentary over landscape, if you like - in the context of South African history in particular.

### *Imperialism and textual construction of landscape*

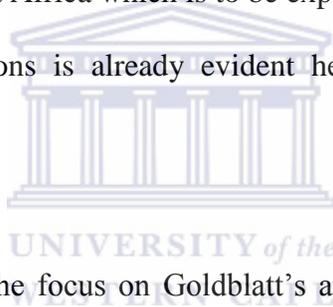
In pursuit of this task, I view landscape and photography as separate but related components of this thesis alongside South African and other histories and historiographies. In addition to the wealth of knowledge derived from travel and transculturation literature extensively critiqued by Mary Louise Pratt, aspects of early South African white poetry, amongst other writing, provide a significant insight into textual constructions of landscape in this part of the world.<sup>52</sup> The South African landscape cannot be viewed outside the context of the social effects of Dutch and British colonialisms as well as Apartheid and post-Apartheid eras. Here I find Elkins' assertion relevant when he views landscape as “something like the ‘dreamworld’ of imperialism.”<sup>53</sup> His point is important in that it leads to the location of the origins of landscape in an imperialist background, while it also implies that one cannot make sense of landscape

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<sup>52</sup> As a prelude to my engagement with the contribution of the Dutch and British colonialisms of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, I first explore dynamics of the textual construction of the African landscape in general and the South African landscape in particular so that we can gain almost a holistic view of the cultural production of landscape before and during the era of the camera. The main thread that seems to run through all these dynamics is the fact that the construction of landscape in a colonial environment is always informed by the coloniser's determination to occupy, name, constructing meaning and exploit the resources of colonised spaces including its original inhabitants. Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (2008) and J. M. Coetzee's *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (2007) are literature sources employed in exploring the role of language in constructing landscape.

<sup>53</sup> DeLue R. Z. and J. Elkins (eds.), *Landscape Theory*, New York & London: Routledge, 2008, p.100. In this thesis I trace the meaning of landscape from this premise and go on to explore strands of thinking around this term, making sense of what landscape may mean in the South African context.

outside the context of imperialist discourses in the case of southern Africa in general and South Africa in particular. To examine this point even further, I touch on the role of textual construction of the South African landscape since the late eighteenth century, before the advent of the camera. In addition to various scholars that I consult in order to examine dynamics of textual and visual construction of landscape across centuries, I also build on Mary Louise Pratt's work, who interrogates the role of travel writing and transculturation, and J.M. Coetzee's analysis of poetry and novels produced by white writers since the seventeenth-century in the Cape Colony. There is a common element here of Africa resisting definition from a European perspective – language not being found to sufficiently define that Africa which is to be explored, conquered and dominated. The question of power relations is already evident here, long before Goldblatt and Mofokeng arrive on the scene.



However, I posit that with the focus on Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's methodological approaches, Elkins' assertion above cannot always hold water because I see landscape as a fluid term due to its instability in terms of how it is constructed across time. As this thesis will show, landscape, as 'something like the dreamworld of imperialism' gets reconfigured within the post-colonial context as subject positions begin to become more and more fluid.<sup>54</sup> De la Croix and Tansey offer a useful narrative of the evolution of the landscape idea within visual art and, for the purposes of this thesis, I trace some of the origins of this idea from the Ancient Roman period, for example, up to nineteenth-century Europe and clarify that it developed both as a concept and as a genre of

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<sup>54</sup> In Chapter Two of this thesis I will interrogate the instability of the hegemonic position of the European subject. I illustrate my argument from the perspective of how and who 'sees' landscape, looking at both unmediated and mediated, mechanised modes of 'seeing'.

representation.<sup>55</sup> Of utmost importance at this point is the issue of spatial reordering or reorganization according to functional and aesthetic sensibilities of the colonising powers, tracing them from the seventeenth-century Dutch occupation up to the British Empire in the case of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century South Africa.<sup>56</sup>

### *Amorphous character of landscape*

The fact that landscape is defined in various but related ways by a selection of scholars cited in this thesis signifies its instability and elusiveness as a concept within the humanities in general and visual studies in particular. When Wells,<sup>57</sup> Mitchell,<sup>58</sup> Jackson,<sup>59</sup> Bright<sup>60</sup> and Nettleford<sup>61</sup> define landscape (Chapter One), they all allude to it as a construction. This resonates well with Miller's assertion (cited in Foster) that landscape "is not a pre-existing thing in itself" and that "it is made into a humanly meaningful space by the living which takes place within it."<sup>62</sup> The fact that this is what Goldblatt understands about landscape (Chapter Three) is helpful for this thesis in terms of identifying a sense of consistency across its two main components: the theory of landscape and photographic practice. This apparent consistency will hopefully serve a

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<sup>55</sup> De la Croix H, and R.G. Tansey, *Art Through the Ages* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.), San Diego, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Washington D.C, London, Sydney & Toronto: Harcourt Jovanovich, 1986, p.831.

<sup>56</sup> In this particular instance, early explorers such as James Chapman come to mind.

<sup>57</sup> Wells, L. (ed.), *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), London & New York: Routledge, 1996, p.295.

<sup>58</sup> Mitchell, W.J.T., 'Imperial Landscape' in Mitchell, W.J.T. (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.5.

<sup>59</sup> Jackson, J.B., 'The Vernacular Landscape' in Penning-Rowsell, E.C. and Lowenthal, D. (eds.), *Landscape Meanings and Values*, Boston & Sydney: Allen and Unwin (undated), p.68.

<sup>60</sup> Bright, D., 'Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography' in Bolton, R. (ed.), *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: The MIT Press, 1989, p.140.

<sup>61</sup> Nettleford, P.A. and E. Stratford, 'The Production of Climbing Landscapes-as-Texts' in *Australian Geographical Studies*. July 1999. 37(2): 130 – 141, p.131.

<sup>62</sup> Foster, J., 'Capturing and Losing the Land: Railway Photography and Colonial Nationalism in Early Twentieth-Century South Africa' in Schwartz, J. and J. R. Ryan (eds.), *Picturing Place*, London & New York: I-B. Tauris & Co., 2003, p.141.

purpose of identifying entry points into the exercise of articulating the concept of landscape and its relevance within South African scholarship. Wells' definition which also refers to 'nature' as integral to what landscape ought to be is problematic for the purpose of this study. I thus problematise the notions of 'nature' and the 'natural' (Chapter One) on the basis of convincing arguments presented by Williams (cited in Macnaghten and Urry).<sup>63</sup> My evaluation of these divergent definitions sets a stage for more open and unbridled ways of understanding landscape construction within the South African context for the purposes of this study. This is the case mainly because of very fluid subjectivities involved in this ongoing discursive construction, especially since the beginning of the period of social documentary photography in South Africa.

Wells' approach to the understanding of landscape, flawed as it may be, opens up a space within which to interrogate this concept from both aesthetic and social perspectives and in conjunction with Jakle, who regards it as "a visual world spatially spread before the eyes."<sup>64</sup> Jakle's definition is based on the "traditional sense of landscape study"<sup>65</sup> which I regard as the art historical perspective compatible with Wells' approach. In this sense Jakle becomes more productive in articulating the question of subjectivity around how we see landscape – how it gets constructed in conformity with our subjective

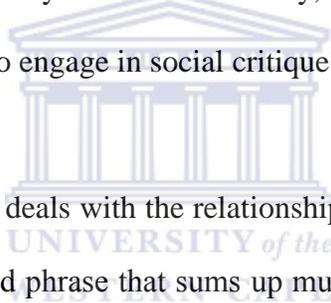
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<sup>63</sup> Macnaghten, P. and J. Urry, *Contested Natures*, London: Sage Publication, 1998, p.8. Williams' rejection of these notions is based on the fact that it is not possible for human beings not to have interfered, in any way, in what is called nature. In concrete terms, I think about the so-called nature reserves within which 'nature' is constructed out of the modernist quest for therapeutic relief from hectic, day-to-day capitalist routine of city life. The problematisation of these terms here should also lead to thinking about how the 'native' has been constructed, through ethnological and ethnographic studies, as 'natural', 'frozen' in time, unprogressive and therefore different from the supposedly 'all-knowing' European subject (white in the case of South Africa). This strand of knowledge is pursued in other disciplines such as heritage studies, but this point shows how multi-disciplinary the question of landscape representation can be.

<sup>64</sup> Jakle, J. A., *The Visual Elements of Landscape*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987, p.16.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

aesthetic and other socially significant sensibilities. I use the aesthetic dimension here to connect landscape to photography - a technique of mediating views of the world that surrounds us. From a theoretical viewpoint, Jakle concurs with Cosgrove who sees landscape “as a way of seeing projected on to land and having its own techniques and compositional forms”. These approaches attest to the idea that landscape is a product of both subjective and conventional constructions, and I interrogate this point in relation to both colonialism and Apartheid which shaped South Africa according to ways in which it was seen by the colonisers. However, the gist of this thesis is the investigation of Goldblatt’s and Mofokeng’s choice of landscape as a means to interrogate power relations more effectively than any other mode. Why, then, is landscape photography such a feasible mode for them to engage in social critique?



In a section of this thesis that deals with the relationship between land and colonisation processes, one may recall an old phrase that sums up much of imperialist discourse: ‘we came, we saw, we conquered’ (Chapter One). I do not necessarily articulate it here, but it is a point of departure towards examining the behaviour that is produced especially by ‘seeing’ ‘new’, unconquered territories. ‘Newness’ in this case is also a colonialist, subjective construction but is not problematised within formal, Eurocentric approaches in the discipline of art history. I regard the land (imagined as an entity that exists before landscape) as a stimulus for colonial projects, as when Jakle says landscapes are centres of human intent and that inclinations to act are cued visually.<sup>66</sup> Mitchell regards landscape as an entity that elicits a broad range of emotions and meanings that may be

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<sup>66</sup> Jakle, J. A., *The Visual Elements of Landscape*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987, p.x. Here I think about both unmediated and mediated vision and regard photography as a tool of inscribing colonial power in a colonised territory.

difficult to specify.<sup>67</sup> Mitchell's point finds expression in a number of ways in this thesis, including the amorphous character of landscape and people's emotional responses and intentions about it. Juxtaposing David Goldblatt's and Nadine Gordimer's emotional responses to the South African landscape is very beneficial in terms of understanding Mitchell's point cited here. I deal with this question of emotional response in various ways in Chapters Three and Four, investigating a possible impact that fiction literature might have on the photographer's mind and his work.

The thesis traces this spatial reordering through the South African lens that has always been marked not only by its dynamism but also by its heterogeneous character in terms of purposes and agendas that it has, all along, had to serve. I will come back to this point on dynamism and heterogeneity of South African photography in a later section where I deal with literature on photography. In Goldblatt's work, issues of land ownership, land use, marginalisation on a racial basis and labour relations are among those that are engaged with through the medium of landscape.<sup>68</sup> In addition to the exploration of the everyday, Mofokeng's work explores conditions of black marginality juxtaposed with spirituality. These issues prevail across the thesis and most of them traverse the official historical epochs of South Africa, answering Bright's question: "What can landscape photographs tell us about how we construct our sense of the world?"<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Mitchell, W. J. T., 'Preface to the Second Edition of *Landscape and Power: Space, Place, and Landscape*' in Mitchell, W. J. T., *Landscape and Power* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.), Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.vii.

<sup>68</sup> Mitchell, W. J. T., 'Preface to the Second Edition of *Landscape and Power: Space, Place, and Landscape*' in Mitchell, W. J. T., *Landscape and Power* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.), Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.vii.

<sup>69</sup> Bright, D., 'Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography' in Bolton, R. (ed.), *The Contest of Meaning*, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: The MIT Press, 1989, p.135. I wish to caution here that there is not just one sense of the world; the world is seen

### *Ways of 'seeing' and knowing*

Our sense of the world is now predominantly mediated by culture and images, as this thesis shows. Most of what we know about the world is visually inscribed and this point implies that knowledge is determined by what has been 'seen'. Harris' assertion: "to see is to know"<sup>70</sup> alludes to the importance of exploratory expeditions embarked upon by explorers from as early as the late fifteenth century, but this phrase is productive for the purpose of this thesis in that I use it also as a point of departure towards thinking about the hegemonic ordering or determination of knowledge (Chapter Two). By the same token, (pre-digital) photography is a mechanised way of 'seeing' or picturing the world and I use this position as a premise from which to theorise the changing subject positions from which this projection happens. However, I question archaic, conventional ways of seeing in colonial outposts, including South Africa, and also strip landscape of its presumed innocence – a sanitised territory that is ready to be occupied and exploited according to the colonial aesthetic sensibilities and functional needs. I unpack the theory of the development of ways of seeing from hegemonic to multiple viewpoints involved in making sense of landscape in general and South African landscape in particular.

The South African landscape has been configured by David Goldblatt as consisting of structures that can suggest what their makers believe in, and what values they hold dear to themselves. In order to make more sense of this configuration, I analyse Goldblatt's

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from various viewpoints. There are multiple subjectivities in the business of viewing the world as this thesis shows.

<sup>70</sup> Harris, B., 'Photography in colonial discourse: the making of 'the other' in southern Africa, c. 1850-1950' in Hartmann, W., J. Silvester and P. Hayes (eds.), *The Colonising Camera*, Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1998, p.20.

mostly black and white landscape photographs that ‘contain’ these hegemonic structures in colonial, Apartheid and post-Apartheid South Africa. Juxtaposed with social issues that Goldblatt is concerned with is the element of the everyday that quietly permeates social, political and economic spheres of life in a segregated South Africa. I investigate its impact here in terms of how it presents fresh ways of thinking about the social documentary genre in South Africa.

Conventionally, social documentation has often been in black and white. Goldblatt switched over to colour a few years after the introduction of democracy in South Africa. Chapter Four introduces Goldblatt’s colour landscape images and investigates ways in which his work benefits formally and thematically from this chromatic evolution. Here I look specifically at the potency of the photographic medium in analyzing the post-Apartheid social conditions in colour. I make a few examples to illustrate that colour expands the space of engagement between the image and the viewer as it gives more visual details that intensify or enhance our understanding of the gravity of deep-seated post-Apartheid challenges.

By way of scaling down this grand, global context within which we think about ‘seeing’, I have to reiterate that most official historical accounts refer to an empty land at the arrival of Europeans in South Africa in the seventeenth century. This is a sanitised view of the land from which the earliest conflicts with the Khoi and frontier wars with the Nguni groups have been effaced. But social documentary photography (since the 1940s) begins to challenge this monocular perspective by critiquing the social realities that are played out in this dynamic space.

It is at this stage that I benefit from the works of historians who have conducted research into South African social history. When, in Chapter Three, I analyse Goldblatt's photographs that frame scenes which negate the notion of sanitised landscapes, showing marks of spatial contestation between the Dutch and the Khoi (Fig.3.4), I turn to historians such as Jolly, Filling and Roux. Jolly and Filling negate the notion of smooth-sailing colonisation processes while Roux, in concurrence with these scholars, enumerates actual frontier conflicts that ensued between the colonising invaders and blacks.<sup>71</sup> Bensusan also offers a comprehensive narrative on the development of South African photography since its invention up to the twentieth century. However, his narrative lacks an engaging critical approach that I find in other authors mentioned here.

I also question Cosgrove's assertion: "Rather than challenging the conventions and ways of seeing inherent in landscape the camera reinforced it,"<sup>72</sup> especially when it comes to the South African context. In South Africa, the subject is further complicated by the fact that there is no unitary white way of 'seeing' and I articulate this point when I investigate various attitudes and writings on landscape by figures such as Nadine Gordimer who influenced and also collaborated with Goldblatt in a few projects. In Chapter Three I deal with this notion of diversity of 'whiteness' on the basis of

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<sup>71</sup> Jolly, R. J., *Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing*, Athens: Ohio University Press; Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1996, p.111. Also see Filling, B., 'Isandlwana' in Filling, B. and S. Stuart, (eds.), *The End of a Regime?*, Glasgow: Aberdeen University Press, 1991, pp.59-60 and Roux, E., *Time Longer than Rope*, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964, pp. 435-436.

<sup>72</sup> Cosgrove, D.E., *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984, p.258.

Goldblatt's Jewishness and accounts offered by Shimoni<sup>73</sup> on the social and economic significance of being Jewish in South Africa in relation to other white groups and black populations.

It is ironic that the European Jewry has at times been constructed by various historical and religious contexts as a 'chosen nation', when this thesis also shows that there have been claims to this notion of 'chosenness' by other non-Jewish national entities over time including the Afrikaners.<sup>74</sup> A common factor in the construction of nationalisms around the world is often a question of land ownership and, on the basis of 'chosenness', marginalisation of the others who fall out of this elite category. It was important for me to theorise and complicate (where necessary) these notions of nationhood and exclusive rights to land ownership because, as I show later, not all Afrikaners subscribed to most notions upon which their nationalism was founded (Chapter Three). The identity of Afrikanerdom is, itself, marked by an element of dynamism and heterogeneity. Goldblatt visually addresses this dynamism (Chapter Three), his methodological approach being informed by his own experience of the Afrikaners, their history and his own Jewishness.

Goldblatt was born in Randfontein, Johannesburg, in 1930 into a white Jewish family of Lithuanian origin.<sup>75</sup> His sharp consciousness of social injustice was also nurtured by his family values that were predominantly marked by liberalism and the rejection of any

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<sup>73</sup> In Chapter Three, where I deal with racial frictions in South Africa, I derive my ideas from Shimoni, G., *Community and Conscience: The Jews in Apartheid South Africa*, Hanover & London: University Press of New England, 2003, pp.11-16.

<sup>74</sup> Thousands of years after the supposed identification of the ancient Hebrew or Israelite nation (which obviously included the descendants of Judah) as a 'chosen nation', the Voortrekkers also made their claim to this notion on the basis of their search for a farming land after they left the Cape Colony in the early nineteenth century. Prof. Hans Engdahl articulates this point in details in recorded interviews of 2007 and 2008 (Appendices 2 and 5).

<sup>75</sup> See interview transcript with David Goldblatt, Appendix 1, 15 May 2006, Cape Town.

nationalism and racism.<sup>76</sup> He became aware of Anti-Semitism as he grew up in his neighbourhood and this is one of the aspects of Jewish history that shaped his own sense of social injustice.<sup>77</sup> He further clarifies the extent of his identification with the plight of the suffering masses, stressing the fact that doing something about it was much better than simply showing sympathy.<sup>78</sup> However, there are diverse views about Goldblatt's ideological position in that he did not support the notion of culture as the weapon of anti-Apartheid struggle at the 1982 Culture and Resistance Festival and the Art for Social Development exhibition in Gaborone, Botswana.<sup>79</sup> This thesis delves deeper in this particular point, pointing out how Goldblatt aimed at preventing the camera from being exploited as a propagandistic tool rather than as a subtle cultural apparatus.

### *Hegemonic perspectives and dynamic subject positions*

Mirzoeff, in his examination of the hegemonic subject, speaks of the perspective system that depends on “the viewer examining the image from one point, using just one eye”<sup>80</sup> as in the case of the mechanised eye – the lens. Such an analogy serves as a threshold from which I examine this dynamic subject position in the South African

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<sup>76</sup> Goldblatt's family was among many Jewish families that had immigrated to South Africa from parts of Europe due to severe Anti-Semitic attitudes and resultant pogroms that reshaped their lives and displaced many of them. One of the most memorable historical events that directly affected the Jews was the Holocaust. In Chapter Three I highlight in much detail what kind of ethnic hatred the Jewish population suffered among the South African whites in general and Afrikaner community in particular.

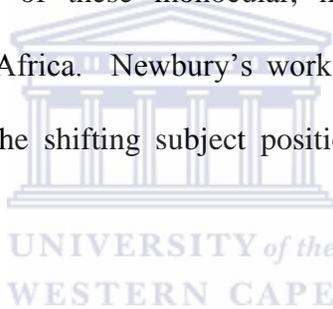
<sup>77</sup> In Chapter Three I provide a more detailed account of Goldblatt's personal experience of anti-Semitism. I highlight an instance when he was physically abused by fellow school boys for 'killing Jesus'. Also see interview transcript with David Goldblatt, Appendix 1, 15 May 2006, Cape Town.

<sup>78</sup> This point is reinforced by the fact that Eli Weinberg, another Jewish photographer who immigrated to South Africa, actively supported the anti-Apartheid struggle by taking photographs that overtly criticized the system and also joined the Communist Party of South Africa.

<sup>79</sup> Concerning the significance of the Festival and Exhibition, the following sources are pertinent: Davis, G.V., *Voices of Justice and Reason: Apartheid and Beyond in South African Literature*, Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi B.V., 2003, p.283; Waller, M., *A Bigger Picture: A Manual of Photojournalism in Southern Africa*, Kenwyn: Juta, 2000, p.113; Peffer, J., *Art and the End of Apartheid* (Volume 2), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009, p.87 and Harrison, R., *The Black Christ: A journey to Freedom*, Claremont: David Philip, 2006, p.xiii.

<sup>80</sup> Mirzoeff, N., *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, London: Laurence King Publishing, 1984, pp.419-420.

context. Around this point I consider Eli Weinberg (Chapter One) as a figure who stands at the cross-roads of a South African photographic genealogy between the old, colonialist tendencies of seeing (Chapman, Duggan-Cronin and others)<sup>81</sup> and more defiant, activist ways in the face of persisting racial segregation in South Africa. I mention the element of defiance here mainly because of how I describe Eli Weinberg's practice of marrying his orthodox commercial photographic career with his political convictions and activism – his overt support of the anti-Apartheid struggle and identification with dispossessed labour (Chapter One). A new category of literature here includes Newbury's *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa* (2009), as it deals directly with processes of the dismantling of these monocular, hegemonic perspectives in the photographic scene of South Africa. Newbury's work cited here also echoes what I articulate in Chapter Two – the shifting subject position and heterogeneous ways of *seeing* in South Africa.



Literature directly constructed around actual works by Goldblatt and Mofokeng has also played a huge role in helping me pin down the components of landscape photography in the visual idioms of these practitioners. For purposes of manageability and also because Goldblatt's career extends from much earlier and has changed in terms of his later focus on colour photography, I look at his work under categories of black and white landscape photographs, that explore and investigate the colonial and Apartheid social history, and colour photographs that focus mainly on the post-Apartheid period. Here I regard my visual analysis as 'reading' since these are visual texts that are pregnant

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<sup>81</sup> I should reiterate here that Alfred Martin Duggan-Cronin's work cannot be simplistically categorised as 'colonialist', though it well may have been, but his work is marked by considerable complexity due to its encapsulation of ethnographic or 'native' studies in his landscape photographs.

with possible meanings. Goldblatt's *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then* (1998), *Some Afrikaners Revisited* (2007) and *The Transported of KwaNdebele* (1989) constitute core sources from which I derive images, curatorial statements, interview transcripts and research material that expands on the suggested meanings that lie beneath the surfaces of images. I source the majority of colour images from his *Intersections* (2005) and *Intersections Intersected* (2008). *Intersections Intersected* contains both black and white and colour images which become useful when I investigate Goldblatt's photographic engagement with the element of time and its relationship to space in landscape theory.

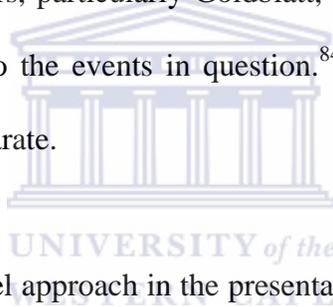
Documentation of exhibited pieces and essays have been sourced from exhibition catalogues, but in the case of David Goldblatt actual published books contain most of the material I needed for this thesis. The catalogue *Thirty-five years of photographs* is very useful in making sense of the paths he has trodden in his pursuit of grand and finer details of South African social history.<sup>82</sup> It also helps in thinking about a chronological order in which Goldblatt investigated this segregated society in a thematic fashion. The shape of this segregated society is investigated also through essays written by authors such as Van Niekerk (*The Transported of KwaNdebele*), Looek (*Intersections Intersected*), Dubow (*South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*) and Danelzik-Bruggemann (*Intersections*). Haworth-Booth's interview with Goldblatt in *Intersections* interrogates his visual language in relation to his quest for what he calls the 'markers of presence' in his landscape photographs (Chapter Four).

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<sup>82</sup> This catalogue was compiled by the South African National Gallery, now part of the Iziko flagship museums.

*Aesthetics or ethics?*

I base my understanding of the structure of things in the political life and troubled South African landscape of the early 1990s upon a selection of imagery and text provided by Marinovich and Silva in their book, *The Bang-Bang Club*.<sup>83</sup> This particular book is helpful in building an argument around sensationalist-type of photography as a counterpoint to David Goldblatt's and Santu Mofokeng's operational methodologies, and suggesting how they occupy a special position in terms of their re-articulation of landscape theme and documentary photography in South Africa. Instead of photographically framing the sensationalist events of the problematic, socially segregated South Africa, these practitioners, particularly Goldblatt, interrogate the marks of human presence and action that led to the events in question.<sup>84</sup> Their responses to the visual economy at the time were disparate.



The fact that there is a parallel approach in the presentation of images and stories about photographing in the 'war zone' is very productive for the purpose of this thesis because it also raises other power-related, aesthetic and ethical issues that are inherent within photography in global and local terms. In this case I return to the question of ethics in the act of consumption by means of the camera in a situation where the photographer is symbolically armed with the camera that 'shoots' both the living, the dying and the dead in that 'war zone'. I complicate the notion of 'taking sides' when I point out that both sides of 'actors' became like cannon fodder in front of the anti-Apartheid camera, the result of which were to be fed to a hungry global media sector that waited to disseminate

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<sup>83</sup> Marinovich, G. and J. Silva, *The Bang-Bang Club*, London: William Heinemann, 2000.

<sup>84</sup> The main point of contrast between the Afrapix Collective and the Bang-Bang Club on the one hand and the two photographers in question on the other hand is articulated in the introductory section of this chapter.

this visual information all over the landscape of progressive political thought. This point serves to question Marinovich's idea of 'atonement' when he was hit by a stray bullet in the conflict zone.<sup>85</sup>

Such ethical issues also arise in my analysis of Santu Mofokeng's black and white landscape photographs (Chapter Five) where, within the photojournalistic context, there is aestheticisation of violence, suffering and death. Mofokeng was born in Newclare, outside Johannesburg, in 1956, and grew up in Orlando East.<sup>86</sup> He was born into a 'grand Apartheid' South Africa, which was marked by legislature that justified and reinforced the consolidation and reorganisation of social spaces along racial lines, prohibiting any harmonious relations across races. Movement of Africans within 'white' areas was strictly controlled. As a black Sesotho-speaking South African, Mofokeng was, by law, regarded as a Qwaqwa citizen in terms of the systematic separation and settlement of blacks along ethnic lines. However, though the risk of being forced back to Qwaqwa always existed, he never had to leave Soweto. Mofokeng's sense of place was therefore shaped by such circumstances into which he was born. I contend that it is such a sense of place that also informs his approach to the photographic framing of landscape.

Among the material by and about Mofokeng that I use in understanding his work are *Santu Mofokeng* (2001) from the Taxi Art Books series (edited by Brenda Atkinson), *Rhizomes of Memory tre Sorafrikanske fotografer Goldblatt: Mofokeng: Hallett* (2000) and *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* No. 11/12 Fall/Winter (2000). What is

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<sup>85</sup> Marinovich, G. and J. Silva, *The Bang-Bang Club*, London: William Heinemann, 2000, p.xiv.

<sup>86</sup> Hayes, P., 'Everyday Life in Soweto: The Photography of Santu Mofokeng' in Crais, C. and T. V. McClendon (eds.), *The South Africa Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, Durham: Duke University Press 2014, p.261.

more beneficial about engaging mainly with *Santu Mofokeng* is that it contains his own essay, 'Lampposts'<sup>87</sup> and Raditlhalo's 'Communities of Interpretation'<sup>88</sup> which provide insight into his understanding of the relationship between landscape and society. It also dissects Mofokeng's childhood background and suggests how it might have impacted upon his photographic methodology that is marked, *inter alia*, by his *Chasing Shadows* series (Chapter Five). In this thesis I trace the development of this idea of *chasing shadows* from the 'Train Church' series up to landscapes of memory both in South Africa and abroad. His *shadows* lead him even to Asia and Europe where he explores sites of memory around past human atrocities against humanity (Chapter Five).<sup>89</sup>

#### *The emergence of photography as a new medium of visual representation*

This section is pertinent to this thesis mainly because photography as a new medium of visual representation occurred as a cultural phenomenon in South Africa within a short time after its invention in Europe. In the South African context, as elsewhere in other parts of the world, photography played a role of being a witness, recording episodes of social dynamism throughout its political history (since the early 1840). A brief reference to the history of the invention of photography is relevant here in that I relate this medium to Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's methodological approaches and their own comments on how they employ it in achieving their objectives. This thesis does not concern itself solely with the content or subject matter and its meaning, but it also looks at how

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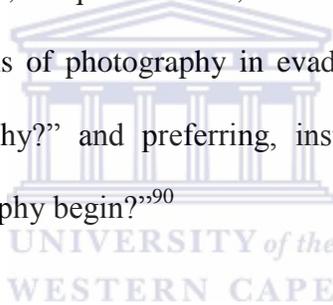
<sup>87</sup> Mofokeng, S., 'Lampposts' in Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, pp.25-40.

<sup>88</sup> Raditlhalo, S., 'Communities of Interpretation' in Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, pp.65-68.

<sup>89</sup> Diserens, C. (ed.), *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: Thirty Years of Photographic Essays*, Munich, London and New York, 2011. Also see Law-Viljoen B., *Train Church* <http://davidkrutpublishing.com/607/train-church> Accessed 25/02/07.

photography is applied to enhance that content. Philosophical questions that were raised when this medium was invented are still relevant today as alluded to in succeeding paragraphs of this chapter. The history of the invention of photography cannot be narrated as a single account. It is a complex and contested account, promoting a deeper engagement with a number of critical questions such as the actual timing and impetus of the invention of photography itself.

Because the camera is the instrument of mediated or mechanised way of seeing, this thesis also traces its history, using Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre's invention in 1839 as a point of departure. However, Jacques Derrida, cited in Geoffrey Batchen, highlights the vested interest of historians of photography in evading the troubling philosophical question, "What is photography?" and preferring, instead, the safe expository one, "Where and when did photography begin?"<sup>90</sup>



While I trace some of the milestones reached in the process of inventing and improving the apparatus by Daguerre and others including William Henry Fox Talbot, I point out that the invention itself was aided, among other things, by increased knowledge of chemicals and the optical principles of photography. I provide this detailed account and argument in the next Chapter, highlighting the fact that the timing of the invention coincided with its conceptual and metaphoric rather than its technical or functional manifestations. Batchen considers what stands out as the main question around the invention of photography, questioning a moment in history when the discursive desire to

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<sup>90</sup> Batchen, G., *Each Wild Idea: Writing Photography History*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002, p.3.

photograph emerged and began to manifest itself insistently.<sup>91</sup> He asks: “At what moment did photography shift from an occasional, isolated, individual fantasy to a demonstrably widespread, social imperative?”<sup>92</sup> All these nuanced questions have been evaded by many historians of photography in the interest of dealing only with a moment and place where photography was invented. Engaging with the question of photography’s beginnings here is necessary in that it can open up a space for interrogating all philosophical questions regarding why, instead of where and when, photography was invented. It necessitates delving deeper in a broader debate around this invention not just as an event but also as a process. When did a need to photograph shift from being an isolated to being a widespread, collective desire? In the social and historical context of South Africa, the most obvious cultural phenomenon that resonates with this question was the emergence of the Afrapix Collective in 1982. However, some may argue that an individual such as David Goldblatt remained ‘isolated’ in that he, out of his own personal conviction, did not support the notion of culture as anti-Apartheid weapon.

The thesis further interrogates the emergence of photography as a process rather than an event, highlighting the *camera obscura* as its predecessor since the Renaissance period, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With Talbot’s experiments with chemicals and optical principles, it became possible to apply the calotype on the basis of utilising a negative instead of a positive which had been introduced by Daguerre. But in addition to this practical possibility, Talbot also engages with a number of philosophical questions

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

flowing from aspects of the inventive processes. At some point he calls the picture a philosophical window.<sup>93</sup> This idea, I contend, most likely flows from Talbot's practical approach of making a picture using his window as a physical and metaphorical frame when he photographed a scene that he could see outside his house at Lacock Abbey. He also looked at the paradoxical question of the absent presence of the photographer in a picture that would, eventually, be fixed on paper. It was this notion of the fixing of a picture even after the eye of the camera had been closed that Talbot engaged with in a serious philosophical manner. It was this complexity of the window that framed the real which interested Talbot and, possibly, many other proto-photographers who launched photography into art. Again, the main point of interest is time that seems to be fixed on paper, later when the invention had been further developed. How can one fix time in this dynamic social world that is marked by so many daily activities? What boggles the mind, albeit in a productive way, is the metaphorical presence of 'nature', camera, image, and photographer even when absent from the picture.<sup>94</sup>

While questions such as 'are the origins of photography to be found in nature or culture?' also baffle the mind, one major point that comes up now and again, when the question of photography occurs, is the fact that an uneasy maintenance of binary relationships cannot be ignored.<sup>95</sup> It is mainly about human beings' desire to visually represent an impossible conjunction of transience and fixity. A picture thus becomes a platform where space becomes time and time space, folding time back to itself, as it were. These ideas were also toyed with before the successful fixing of images on paper when

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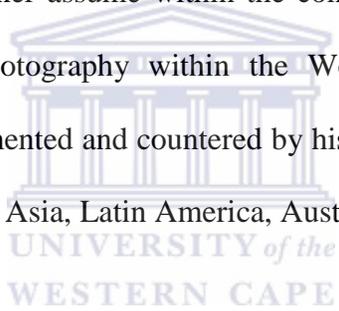
<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p.11.

John Constable, one of the major British nineteenth-century artists, theorised on how one brief moment could be caught from fleeting time, imagining how the temporariness of time could be fixed.<sup>96</sup> This is what he called arrested transience.<sup>97</sup> But why was there such a need in the first place? Where did such a burning desire come from? The human subject's need to protect itself against the loss of the object that is the always-absent real object of desire and the loss of identity was the actual impetus behind the invention of photography.<sup>98</sup>

But how soon was this new invention spread across the globe and how was it received? What status did the photographer assume within the context of the Western art world? Only telling a history of photography within the Western cultural context is not sufficient; it has to be complemented and countered by histories as they have unfolded in other parts of the world such as Asia, Latin America, Australia, and Africa.<sup>99</sup>



Just three months after the 'invention' of photography, the first daguerreotypists reached Cairo and were active in practicing the craft.<sup>100</sup> It proved to be a global rather than a Western medium. This implies many things including the fact that European knowledge and experience were to be decentred. Coupled with this decentralisation of knowledge and experience was a transformed status of the photographer, being seen as the author whose images were appreciating monetary value. This transformation also coincided

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<sup>96</sup> John Constable was one of the British nineteenth-century painters who used landscape in their exploration of the fleeting time. Likewise, landscape, including what Batchen terms 'nature', seems to have played a significant role in the development of the photographic technique especially as early as the 1830s.

<sup>97</sup> Batchen, G., *Each Wild Idea: Writing Photography History*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002, p.13.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>99</sup> Behrend, H., *Contesting Visibility: Photographic Practices on the East African Coast*, Bielefeld: Graz, 2001, p.16.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

with the emergence of ethnography of photographic practices as a new field of knowledge and research.<sup>101</sup> Photographs by contemporary South African photographers including David Goldblatt, Santu Mofokeng, Guy Tillim, Pieter Hugo and Jo Ractliffe are now seriously regarded as important pieces of high value by public and commercial art galleries. These photographers have also assumed statuses of authorship, contributing to the creation of knowledge and research.<sup>102</sup>

But the reception of photography and photographic practices in Africa were marked by a variety of factors such as what Behrend terms ‘spaces of refusal’.<sup>103</sup> Because most parts of North and East Africa had assimilated Islam, the practice of photography, and portraiture in particular, was frowned upon. Holding fast God’s image, embodied by man, by a human machine was considered a taboo.<sup>104</sup> The history of photography in parts of Africa was therefore marked by such tensions. Since the 1980s and after the event of 9/11, this rejection of images has increased along the East African Coast.<sup>105</sup> Various ways and techniques of countering the proliferation of images were employed. They included what Behrend terms the ‘aesthetics of withdrawal’.<sup>106</sup> This practice included ways of theatricalising the surface of the image by veiling, masking, and concealing.<sup>107</sup>

However, in other parts of Africa, South Africa in particular, where Islam did not have such sway over people’s views of image making, photography was well-received and

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>102</sup> Most of David Goldblatt’s published photographs, for example, are accompanied by rich information that is based on research about histories of scenes and individuals that he photographs.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p.17.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p.20.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

integrated into mainstream media economies. In South Africa, for example, many photographers such as Santu Mofokeng, David Goldblatt, Omar Badsha, Paul Weinberg, Sam Nzima and many others have used photographic images in varying contexts and moments. They follow precedents where photography was taken up by earlier practitioners such as Sir John Herschel, Charles Livingstone, Dr. John Kirk, Monsieur M. J. Leger, William Ring, James Chapman, Alfred Duggan-Cronin and Eli Weinberg being significant pioneers. What stands out about this medium in South African is the variety of contexts within which it has always been applied, serving purposes ranging from portraiture to social documentary photography. The fact that it has never been bridled by religion in general, and Islam in particular, also means that it has entrenched itself in any possible social space including photojournalism and as a medium of social critique during the dark years of the Apartheid system. The proliferation of this medium where its presence felt particularly in South Africa has exceeded expectations, and engaged with beyond a location where it was invented.

### *Conclusion*

Centuries after this seminal invention, I now turn to yet another complex account of David Goldblatt's and Santu Mofokeng's metaphoric journeys of their depiction of aspects of the South African landscape during and after the Apartheid era. While it explores complex issues that these practitioners raise and present to the public domain, this thesis also deals with a multifaceted question of how landscape, as a concept and mode of visual representation, can be drawn to the foreground and seen as a medium of social critique within the South African social context. Given the dynamism of the

subject of this study, the account itself will be concluded in an open manner, allowing for further productive and multidisciplinary engagement by other scholars.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Dynamics of textual construction of the South African landscape and the problem of white subjectivity

*“This landscape remains alien, impenetrable, until a language is found in which to win it, speak it, represent it.”*<sup>108</sup>

#### *Introduction*

Historically in South Africa, the phenomenon of photography as a cultural practice has been inextricably linked to imperialist discourse. This is particularly so in the context of landscape photography, especially when “landscape might be seen...as something like the ‘dreamwork’ of imperialism.”<sup>109</sup> This chapter aims to provide a critical analysis of European travel and exploration literature, as one of the main cultural predecessors of actual photography of landscape. It also aims to highlight the almost insurmountable challenges in trying to make sense of a ‘universal’ meaning and definition of landscape from a singular perspective. Why do the meanings and definition of landscape as a social concept and genre of representation seem so elusive? From whose perspective has landscape been defined? How does this elusiveness inform our understanding of the role of photography as a cultural practice that presents landscape as a medium of social critique?<sup>110</sup> Part of the knowledge applied in the construction of this chapter has been derived from seminal works by Mary Louise Pratt and J. M. Coetzee. Succeeding

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<sup>108</sup> Pratt, M. L., *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Second Edition), London & New York, Routledge, 2008, p.7.

<sup>109</sup> DeLue, R. Z. and J. Elkins (eds.), *Landscape Theory*, New York & London: Routledge, 2008, p.100.

<sup>110</sup> I would posit here that even photography itself could be seen as a medium of social critique especially in South Africa where it has reached its most developed form in the late twentieth century. However, this development can be historicised in the context of the role of photography in South Africa as a medium of social documentary but also as a medium of social critique in a country marked by gross inequalities in various spheres of life. Ernest Cole is one of the twentieth-century photographers who moved away from what Newbury terms photographic humanism that took root in the 1950. I would argue that Cole’s book, *House of Bondage*, moved in a direction of utilising photography as a medium of social critique. Landscape itself is not the only medium of social critique and Goldblatt and Mofokeng do not always work in that mode. See Bunyan, B., ‘Ernest Cole: Journeys through photojournalism, social documentary photography and art’ in <http://artblart.com/tag/ernest-cole-house-of-bondage/> Accessed 13/03/16.

chapters deal with landscape theory, philosophical notions of seeing and being seen, literally and through cultural mediation devices such as the camera. My critical analysis of selected landscape photographs by two major South African social documentary photographers, David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng, is informed by specific social and cultural dynamics and this chapter serves as a necessary threshold to a critical engagement with possible ways of seeing landscape as a social, ideological and cultural construction in a global context and also across periods within colonial, Apartheid and post-Apartheid eras in the South African context.

Historical overview of photography as a visual medium in South Africa from the era of the nineteenth-century explorers up to the present will be, in this context, preceded by an analytical overview of travel literature that provides insights into attitudes and accounts that were informed by the subjectivity of the European imperial male subject in contact with the non-Occidental world. At stake here is the role of notions of ‘home’ and ‘distant parts of the world’ in the discourse of landscape production and its representation where they refer to ‘subject’ and ‘object’, ‘powerful’ and ‘powerless’, ‘the explorer’ and ‘the explored’, ‘the invader’ and ‘the invaded’ as well as ‘the coloniser’ and ‘the colonised’.<sup>111</sup> Such notions, I argue, begin to raise the idea of Europe as the proverbial centre and ‘other’ ‘distant parts of the world’ as occupying the periphery. The question of power relations, which is markedly epitomised by apparent binary positions of the subject and the object – the active and the passive - is pivotal here and informs the entire thesis in various specific areas of focus in each chapter. The global history and the evolution of

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<sup>111</sup> This chapter deals mainly with the discourse of travel writing and challenges associated with attempts to decipher meanings and definitions of landscape, but the notions of ‘home’ and ‘distant parts of the world’ – alluding to the European male’s subject position – will be comprehensively unpacked in Chapter Two of this thesis.

landscape as a socially pertinent concept and as a theme of textual or literary and visual representation are also integral to this chapter.

*Histories, possible meanings, and definitions of landscape*

Unlike land, landscape, according to J. Hillis Miller, is “not a pre-existing thing in itself. It is made into a landscape, that is, into a humanly meaningful space, by the living which takes place within it.”<sup>112</sup> Michel Foucault, cited in Wyle and in concurrence with Miller, further emphasises the point about landscape as a spatial entity that is not a pre-existing thing:

A discourse of landscape is not a set of things said and done regarding a pre-existing, external and immutable ‘landscape’, already out there in the world. Instead a discourse of landscape *creates* landscape, makes it really, actually exist as a consequential and meaningful set of beliefs, attitudes and everyday practices and performances – and these collectively comprise what may be termed ‘cultures of landscape’.<sup>113</sup>

But ‘the living which takes place within it’ has quite often been marked by a number of social dynamics informed by the apparent binaries mentioned above. Also, it has been reported on by a number of European travel writers who, after ‘discovering’ the coastal regions, explored the African interior in general and the South African one in particular with a view to discovering more imperial expansionist prospects for the benefit of the economic elite and the general populations back ‘at home’.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Foster, J., ‘Capturing and Losing the Land: Railway Photography and Colonial Nationalism in Early Twentieth-Century South Africa’ in Schwartz, J. and J. R. Ryan (eds.), *Picturing Place*, London; New York: I-B. Tauris & Co., 2003, p.141. This idea of landscape construction and meaning is, again, reiterated by David Goldblatt in the third chapter of this thesis.

<sup>113</sup> Wyle, J., *Landscape*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p.110.

<sup>114</sup> The notion of ‘discovering’ in the context of this thesis will always be treated cautiously because it is questionable and challengeable especially when it is applied to European explorers who claimed to have ‘discovered’ spaces that were already occupied by African inhabitants. The notion itself reinforces the idea of this binary of the explorer and the explored and attaches a degree of power to the foreign explorer while it seems to efface the supposedly explored territory of the local inhabitant.

One of the eighteenth-century travel writers who presented his readership with images of supposedly inferior Khoikhoi of the Cape Colony was Peter Kolb.<sup>115</sup> His descriptions of the Cape Colony begin with houses and churches, which were elements of the European ‘civilisation’, and end with slave lodges and stables, thus equating ‘other’ human beings with animals.<sup>116</sup> In his accounts he further points to supposedly intrinsic inferiority of the Khoikhoi who resist Christianity, among other things. Later on, John Barrow, Lord George McCartney’s personal secretary, after the return of the Cape Colony to the British control in 1806, presents even the San as benign, ingenuous and childlike victims.<sup>117</sup>

Kolb’s accounts depict landscape as virtually empty or in need of some European intervention or occupation in the context of the presence of Africans who resist the European notions of being ‘civilised’. Here Kolb constructs a binary relationship between the Europeans and the Khoikhoi, virtually ruling out any possibility of agency. Anders Sparrman and William Paterson further expand on Kolb’s account by using the analogy of the naturalist, Adam, who is alone in the garden, thus textually rendering the landscape as unpossessed, unhistoricised and unoccupied even by the travelers themselves.<sup>118</sup> Coetzee also touches on this point where he alludes to the garden myth in the Cape Colony from 1652, stating that a return to Eden and innocence failed to take

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<sup>115</sup> Pratt, M. L., *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Second Edition), London & New York, Routledge, 2008, p.47. Kolb was a Dutch travel writer whose work, *Present State of the Cape of Good Hope*, written within a pre-abolitionist world, exoticises the Khoikhoi in their native landscape.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p.50.

root.<sup>119</sup> This idea of virtual absence of the indigenous inhabitants is textually marked by the manner in which Sparrman and Paterson depict the Khoikhoi servants playing very banal roles in the whole colonial scheme – moving in and out on the edges of their stories, fetching water, carrying baggage, driving oxen, stealing brandy, guiding, interpreting, looking for lost wagons.<sup>120</sup> The Khoikhoi are given no names; the authors present them as interchangeable,<sup>121</sup> thus confining them in their constructed subaltern status which confirms the subject position of the European coloniser. Indigenous inhabitants occupy their separate textual homeland in these travel books where they are “produced as objects of formal ethnographic description”.<sup>122</sup> For Sparrman and Paterson, the Khoikhoi are bodies and appendages whereas for Kolb, they are cultural beings.<sup>123</sup> Kolb’s accounts, on the one hand, refer to culture as being inscribed on the bodies of the Khoikhoi and the latter having some intellectual and spiritual attributes<sup>124</sup> while Sparrman’s and Paterson’s accounts, on the other hand, construct them as not undergoing any historical changes or cultural progressions in their lifeways, thus partially challenging the veracity of Kolb’s earlier accounts.<sup>125</sup> This idea of a ‘frozen’ Africa, as subtly implied here, will be expanded upon in a more detailed manner in succeeding sections of this chapter.

The main point that is made by Kolb’s, Sparrman’s and Paterson’s approaches above is the inevitable social construction of landscape which would later lead to more complex and problematic power relations between the Europeans and other Nguni and Sotho

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<sup>119</sup> Coetzee, J. M., *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, Braamfontein, Pentz, 2007, p.1.

<sup>120</sup> Pratt, M.L., *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Second Edition), London & New York, Routledge, 2008, p.51.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, p.52.

inhabitants of the interior. Sparrman and Paterson effectively deterritorialise the Khoikhoi, extracting them, as it were, from the landscape in which they still dwell.<sup>126</sup> This, in essence, takes them out of the economy, culture and history attached to or produced by their native landscape.<sup>127</sup> This cultural displacement or erasure later manifests itself in the social order produced by the power relationship between the European and the African, arguably reducing the latter into a source of free or cheap labour in the context of the colonial, capitalistic economy. It also creates a hierarchy that inevitably produces a tension and a need for resistance against racially determined control and confinement in economically inferior conditions. These conditions are almost always best critiqued through the study of landscape and its representation, often from a myriad of perspectives. However, the supposed binary social positions that should be occupied by the European settlers (not just travel writers) and Africans are not always consistent in terms of racial classification. There are “complexities of life in the contact zone”<sup>128</sup> that occasionally show up only in glimpses, and those include the poverty of some Cape Dutch settlers as in Sparrman’s and Paterson’s accounts of African huts that were homes of European settlers. The supposed binary positions between the European and the African are further muddled up by the blurring of racial lines in that:

In the remotest areas, itinerant European loners are encountered moving from place to place across the lines of difference. Both writers report on transracial sexual alliances and intermarriages – not just the common case of European men and African concubines, but also a tale of a European woman bearing a child by an African lover; of a European man who marries a tribal woman out of true love.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. Also, in this context, ‘contact zone’ refers to metaphorical and literal spaces of racial interface which, in one way or another, contributed to the construction of the South African landscape.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

Such social complexities in the contact zone seem to challenge or even collapse a seemingly seamless order of the constructed binary positions. When racial boundaries are crossed in the manner illustrated above, one then begins to question the veracity of the notion of cultural separation between settlers and indigenous population as alluded to by Kolb. On the other hand, Sparrman's and Paterson's approach of silencing the voices of the indigenous populations may be aimed at glossing over this blurring of racial differences along economic, racial and cultural lines.

The supposed differences in terms of 'the active' and 'the passive' are also challenged by further social complexities that seem to point at the destruction of the contact zone as glimpsed only in the aftermath, in traces on bodies or in anecdotes:

...a woman wounded years ago by a Bushman arrow, a man whose wife and children were murdered, a chief who has had his land taken from him. Conflicts and tensions between indentured African laborers and their European masters are offstage, referred to at times, but not dramatized, elaborated, or witnessed. For example in Sparrman's account the genocidal campaign underway against the !Kung ("Bushman") is represented through a dispassionate, recipe-like description of how the Boers organize a Bushman hunt.<sup>130</sup>

At this point I wish to argue that the textual construction of the South African landscape even from the eighteenth century was marked by the coloniser's strong will to dominate for the specific purpose of occupying the colonial space and exploiting its economic resources at the expense of the local, indigenous Africans. What travel literature keeps on effacing in this context are dramatic conflicts and tensions between the European coloniser and the original inhabitant of the contested space. But this point also touches on the social significance of the landscape itself – how it is directly related to the idea of the living which takes place within a humanly meaningful space which has been marked

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid, p.54.

by a series of politically charged contestations that emanated from both a strong will to dominate and, on the other hand, a strong determination to resist that domination.<sup>131</sup> The recent direct quote above directly alludes to this point about a strong will to dominate and a strong will to resist.

This contestation of space, which extended even beyond the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, also necessitates the examination of perspectives of ‘land’ and ‘landscape’ held by the coloniser and the colonised – the ‘outsider’ and the ‘insider’. In terms of Cosgrove’s argument, landscape is a way of ‘seeing’ determined by specific historical, cultural forces. He associates the evolution of the concept of landscape, as will be discussed in details in this chapter, with early modern capitalism and the relinquishing of feudal systems of land tenure.<sup>132</sup> He further posits that those for whom land is the fabric of their lives, for whom it is livelihood and home environment, land is not seen as landscape. They relate to the land as ‘insiders’.<sup>133</sup> Tackling the problem of human subjectivity as related to how we ‘see’ the land/landscape, Cosgrove further states:

For the insider there is no clear separation of self from scene, subject from object. There is, rather, a fused, unsophisticated and social meaning embodied in the milieu. The insider does not enjoy the privilege of being able to walk away from the scene as we can walk away from a framed picture or from a tourist viewpoint.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> The question of how domination is often imposed over the dominated is here approached from a perspective that is different from that of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (cited in Ashcroft *et al*). Gramsci argues that domination is exerted not necessarily by force but by a more subtle and inclusive power over the economy and over state apparatuses such as education and the media. In the South African socio-political context both violent force and manipulation of the economy and state apparatuses have been instrumental in asserting racial domination that came to be known as Apartheid. On Gramsci’s argument, see Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, London; New York: Routledge, 2000, p.116.

<sup>132</sup> Andrews, M., *Landscape and Western Art*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.20.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

This point is parallel to what happens in the context of landscape art as Coetzee claims: “Landscape art is by and large a traveller’s art intended for the consumption of vicarious travellers; it is closely connected with the imperial eye – the eye that by seeing names and dominates – and the imperial calling.”<sup>135</sup>

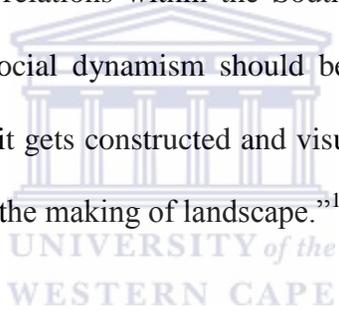
Here I propose to draw an apparent parallel between the replacement of feudal system by early modern capitalism and the spatial and social reorganisation that occurred as a result of colonisation and, later on, the formal Apartheid system in the context of South Africa. I see significant parallels here in the construction of landscape as a concept and genre of representation. However, Cosgrove’s argument around the idea of being ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ may prove too simplistic and therefore problematic if one considers the fact that even ‘insiders’ can position themselves almost as ‘outsiders’ and ‘look’ at land as landscape, interpreting it in aesthetic terms according to their aesthetic sensibilities, as in the case of Santu Mofokeng and many other contemporary photographers of South Africa. Completely ruling out the possibility of such a complex subjective position in relation to how we see space may prove to be problematic.

The concept of landscape can look more complicated in post-independence parts of the former colonised territories in general and post-Apartheid South Africa in particular. On the basis of my critical engagement with Cosgrove around the notions of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ I strongly contend that instead of there being demarcated boundaries

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<sup>135</sup> Coetzee, J.M., *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, Braamfontein, Pentz, 2007, p.179.

between these notions, there is a state of unstable liminality<sup>136</sup> that is located between them. These ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ positions are not static, but they are always marked by a certain level of volatility and dynamism in changing societies. Here I think of political, cultural and economic realities that keep societies in states of motion, thus reconfiguring personal and collective subject positions. I associate these reconfigurations with the fact that almost in any oppressor/oppressed power relationship there is agency. This is the very fact upon which I base my argument against Cosgrove’s notions of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’. The following chapters (Two – Six) show how landscape photography engages with various dimensions of social dynamism in problematic political and economic power relations within the South African context. A complex engagement with aspects of social dynamism should be utilised in understanding the concept of landscape and how it gets constructed and visually represented across time as “the past is never really past in the making of landscape.”<sup>137</sup>



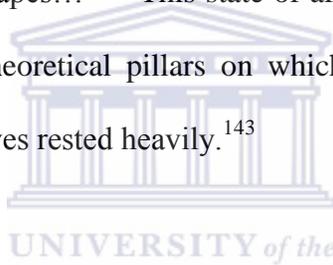
The concept of landscape did not, however, emerge only in the nineteenth century; it has a long history dating back to a time before it occupied a significant position as a cultural construct and as a specific theme of representation in its own right. Since the

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<sup>136</sup> Here I think about an ‘in-between space’, a phrase used by Ashcroft, B. et al in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, London & New York: Routledge, 2000, pp.130-131 to define ‘liminality’. I understand liminality as a state of being ‘neither here nor there’, a state of ‘becoming’, in the South African social context because the manner in which we ‘see’ landscape is shaped by a myriad of factors and cannot be seen as unitary. This thesis shows this diversity of relating to landscape whose construction occurs under power contestations and varied subject positions. Don Mitchell also sees landscape as ‘activity’ which is always in a state of becoming and marked by instability in Wyle, J., *Landscape*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p.107.

<sup>137</sup> Hoffmann, A.G., “*Since the Germans came it rains less*”: *Landscape and Identity of Herero Communities in Namibia*, unpublished Doctoral thesis submitted at the University of Amsterdam, 2005, p.6. The element of time in the construction of landscape is important here because it further intensifies the idea of complexity and social dynamism as conceptual framework within which landscape can be understood.

remotest times it emerged as a backdrop against which human activities take place,<sup>138</sup> and it has gone through very diverse historical epochs after the Ancient Roman period and the late Middle Ages, including the European Renaissance,<sup>139</sup> the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth<sup>140</sup> centuries. The latter is a significant turning point as it marks a phase at which ‘nature’ was pushed to the margins of industrialising societies, an era of Industrial Revolution and subsequent dichotomisation of what was known as nature and society.<sup>141</sup> This is the point in European history when the emergence of landscape as a genre of representation became much more evident than ever before, a point at which, according to Macnaghten and Urry, there emerged “exceptional levels of exploitation and degradation of land and landscapes...”<sup>142</sup> This state of affairs found its expression in the formulation of fundamental theoretical pillars on which claims of (European) human superiority to ‘nature’ and natives rested heavily.<sup>143</sup>



It is at this point that one needs to examine certain paradoxes that emerge through this evolution of landscape. One may propose that marginalisation of what was known as

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<sup>138</sup> De la Croix, H. and R.G. Tansey, *Art Through the Ages (8<sup>th</sup> ed.)*, San Diego, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Washington D.C, London, Sydney & Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986, p.831.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p.546.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p.831. De la Croix and Tansey argue that the nineteenth-century Romanticism elevated landscape painting to the level of first importance as it began to encourage the expression of moods and feelings animated by experiences of nature undominated by man. See also Birmingham, A., *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition 1740-1860*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1986, p.1. According to Ann Birmingham, the emergence of landscape as a major genre in England towards the end of the eighteenth century coincided with the enclosure of the countryside, thus defining specific spaces within and beyond which humans might or might not move.

<sup>141</sup> Macnaghten, P. and J. Urry, *Contested Natures*, London: Sage Publications, 1998, p.7. Close engagement with these authors’ contentions around the terms ‘nature’ and ‘natural’ has resulted in problematisation of these terms. Wherever these problematic terms are mentioned in this study, they will be used cautiously and be within quotation marks. In this study I argue, firstly, that one cannot claim to be in ‘nature’ simply by being out there in the countryside. That domain is always permeated by the phenomenon of landscape. Secondly, this study contends that landscape is constructed both socially and culturally; such a notion emerges more clearly from Chapters Three to Five where I conduct visual analysis of landscape images by David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng.

<sup>142</sup> Macnaghten, P. and J. Urry, *Contested Natures*, London: Sage Publications, 1998, p.7.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

nature,<sup>144</sup> as alluded to above, has a direct bearing on how landscape positioned itself in relation to society. At the hands of society, ‘nature’ suffered marginalisation, was rendered inferior and, ironically, two apparently contrasting attitudes then developed. The first was a yearning to conquer and control ‘nature’ which was then beyond the bounds of human domain.<sup>145</sup> The second was a nostalgic feeling, fuelled by a yearning for immersion in this ‘nature’ for therapeutic reasons – a sense of longing to escape the tensions of the industrialised human domain.<sup>146</sup>

This romanticisation of ‘nature’ manifested itself in nineteenth-century Europe, especially in England, and was happening parallel to ambitious, adventurous imperialist activities of appropriation and conquest<sup>147</sup> of ‘nature’ and *natives* beyond Europe. One of the main features of nineteenth-century European modernisation was a strong urge to explore, discover and conquer the unknown, and Africa was one of the main examples.<sup>148</sup> The position of Africa as the unknown is epitomised in the elusiveness of the meaning of its landscape. Coetzee highlights this point in relation to how it has always been difficult to find a suitable language to define it. As has been highlighted above, in the context of travel writing, language was seen as an apparatus used in trying to penetrate it – to

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p.15. The use of the term ‘nature’ often proves to be problematic because, according to Macnaghten and Urry, nature is inseparable from human history and there is no single nature, but natures. Such natures are also geographically and socially constituted. Pertinent to this thesis is the point that the ideas of nature, as seen in a Western, colonialist perspective, are fundamentally intertwined with dominant ideas of society.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p.13. Macnaghten and Urry refer specifically to the sea as one feature of nature that is untamed.

<sup>146</sup> De la Croix, H. and R.G. Tansey, *Art Through the Ages* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.), San Diego, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Washington, D.C, London, Sydney & Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986, p.869. One of the main consequences of pushing nature to the periphery of civilised society was the appearance of civilisation as, according to nineteenth-century painter Paul Gauguin, what makes people sick.

<sup>147</sup> Mitchell, W.J.T., ‘Imperial landscape’, in Mitchell, W.J.T. (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.20.

<sup>148</sup> Silvester, J. et al, ‘This ideal conquest: photography and colonialism in Namibian history’ in Hartmann et al (eds.), *The Colonising Camera*, Cape Town: UCT Press, 1998, p.10. In his book, *Silver Images*, 1966, Dr A. D. Bensusan gives a comprehensive account of the role of photography in exploratory activities in southern Africa, among others, from the nineteenth to the twentieth century.

conquer it - when he relates: “This landscape remains alien, impenetrable, until a language is found in which to win it, speak it, represent it.”<sup>149</sup> Here I argue that occupying, conquering and defining the African landscape were seen as necessary prerequisites for the imperialist enterprise. However, while the rifle would be seen as the literal weapon appropriate for the accomplishment of this dream, the camera was later perceived as one of the tools for the production of knowledge that would lead to success in such a global phenomenon. Johannes Fabian, cited in Michael Bollig, asserts that colonial mapping and photography played meaningful roles in “efforts of colonial inscription...”<sup>150</sup> Arguably, mapping and *in-scription*, in addition to textual construction already dealt with above, are some of the most visually inclined methods of asserting power or authority that pertains to ownership and consequent exclusive use or occupation of a newly-acquired territorial space.<sup>151</sup> This is one of the ways, one may argue, through which landscape itself can be seen as a *medium* in its own right and, as Mitchell, cited in Hayes, argues, “not so much a specialised *genre* of representation...”<sup>152</sup> (my emphasis).

Land ownership, labour relations, socio-political and economic dynamics were informed by the overriding question around the relationship between the coloniser and

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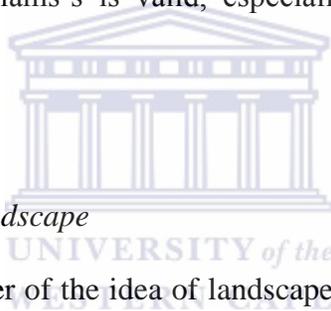
<sup>149</sup> Coetzee, J.M., *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, Braamfontein, Pentz, p.7.

<sup>150</sup> Bollig, M., ‘Visions of Landscapes: An Introduction’ in Bollig M. and O. Bubenzer (eds.), *African Landscapes. Interdisciplinary Approaches*, New York: Springer, 2009, p.20. Also see Bensusan, A. D., *Silver Images*, Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1966, p.103. This study will concern itself with the relationship between photography and landscape and social implications thereof. Scholars such as Eleanor M. High and Gary D. Sampson have interrogated the role of the colonial camera in a much broader approach. The collection of essays in their edited book *Colonialist Photography*, published in London and New York by Routledge (2002) is profoundly useful in gaining a deeper and broader insight into uses of the colonial camera in colonised spaces.

<sup>151</sup> Ashcroft *et al* give a more detailed discussion of the significance of cartography within the grand scheme of colonisation in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, London & New York: Routledge, 2000, pp.31-34.

<sup>152</sup> Hayes, P., ‘Camera Africa: Indirect Rule and Landscape Photographs of Kaoko, 1943’ in Miescher, G. and D. Henrichsen (eds.), *New Notes on Kaoko*, Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2000, p.56.

the colonised – the dominator and the dominated. As has been alluded to in the sections dealing with travel writing above, in the centre of this complex power relationship is landscape. Here I wish to argue that landscape cannot exist alongside nature; it is its antidote, according to arguments advanced by scholars such as Williams, Macnaghten and Urry. Williams, cited in Macnaghten and Urry, argues: “...to speak of man [sic] ‘intervening’ in natural processes is to suppose that he might find it possible not to do so, or to decide not to do so. ‘Nature’ has to be thought of, that is to say, as separate from man, before any question of intervention or command, and the method or ethics of either, can arise.”<sup>153</sup> One of the purposes of this thesis therefore is to interrogate the extent to which this contention of Williams’s is valid, especially in the context of the South African social history.



### *Meanings and definitions of landscape*

Given the amorphous character of the idea of landscape as a concept, there is no single way of defining it. There are diverse but related definitions of landscape which include: “...vistas which encompass both nature and the changes which humans have effected in the natural – including sea, fields, gardens, buildings, canals, etc.”<sup>154</sup>; “...a natural scene mediated by culture”<sup>155</sup>; “...a space deliberately created to speed up or slow down the process of nature”<sup>156</sup>; “...a historical construction that can be viewed as a record of the

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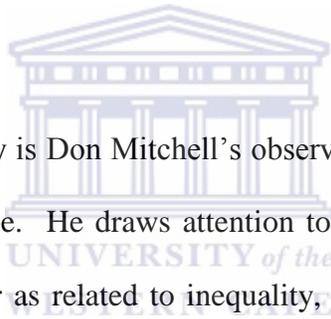
<sup>153</sup> Macnaghten, P. and J. Urry, *Contested Natures*, London: Sage Publications, 1998, p.8.

<sup>154</sup> Wells, L. (ed.), *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), London & New York: Routledge, 1996, p.295.

<sup>155</sup> Mitchell, W.J.T., ‘Imperial Landscape’ in Mitchell, W.J.T. (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.5.

<sup>156</sup> Jackson, J.B., ‘The Vernacular landscape’ in Penning-Rowsell, E.C. and Lowenthal, D. (eds.), *Landscape Meanings and Values*, Boston & Sydney: Allen and Unwin (undated), p.68.

material facts of our social reality and what we have made of them”<sup>157</sup> and “...the external world mediated through subjective human experience...as a construction, a composition of the world.”<sup>158</sup> The second and third definitions cited here are apparently free from a colonialist mode of viewing and experiencing the physical world whereas the rest connote conscious, human-modified relationships which are essentially influenced by Western thought concepts such as “God, Idealism, Democracy, Modernity, Society, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, etc”.<sup>159</sup> Pertinent to note here are Wells’s and Mitchell’s definitions which allude to the somewhat problematic reference to ‘nature’ and the ‘natural’ which are supposed to have been affected, acted upon or interfered with by humans.



Directly pertinent to this study is Don Mitchell’s observations around the role of power in the construction of landscape. He draws attention to questions of cultural, political, but above all, economic power as related to inequality, domination and resistance. He illustrates his point by stating:

Certain groups of people, institutions and ideas possess power, and so are dominant or hegemonic, are ‘powerful’ in the colloquial sense, while others are comparatively if not wholly powerless, and are pushed to the literal and figurative margins of the prevailing cultural, political and economic order...Power is exercised to constrain, limit, forbid, detain and so on.<sup>160</sup>

In a more direct and highly nuanced manner Mitchell, pointing out the role of ‘differences’ in power relations, further argues that “social groups with differing access

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<sup>157</sup> Bright, D., ‘Of Mother Nature and Malboro Men: An Inquiry into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography’ in Bolton, R. (ed.), *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: The MIT Press, 1989, p.140.

<sup>158</sup> Nettleford, P.A. and E. Stratford, ‘The Production of Climbing Landscapes-as-Texts’ in *Australian Geographical Studies*. July 1999. 37(2): 130-141. p.131.

<sup>159</sup> Macnaghten, P. and J. Urry, *Contested Natures*, London: Sage Publications, 1998, p.8.

<sup>160</sup> Andrews, M., *Landscape and Western Art*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.111.

to power, financial and social resources, and ideological legitimacy, contend over issues of production and reproduction in place. Out of these contestations the form of the landscape is produced.”<sup>161</sup> This point can be directly linked to Zukin’s definition of landscape, which I see as pertinent to this study and the South African context of landscape construction, as “a contentious, compromised product of society, shaped by power, coercion and collective resistance.”<sup>162</sup>

The definitions given above suggest that the term ‘landscape’ is not only elusive and even – to the photographer David Goldblatt – but also undesirable. As we shall see, his fellow photographer Santu Mofokeng also relates to the term in a very enigmatic way. Here I now wish to buttress the idea around the elusiveness of the landscape term by highlighting its relevance in the contemporary South African photographic scene. Goldblatt’s photographic career path in particular led him to document ‘landscape’, but as he says in a landmark comment, this is only “for the lack of a better word.”<sup>163</sup> Given that this study explores the question of power relations in landscape photographs by David Goldblatt (born in 1930) and Santu Mofokeng (born in 1956), one of the objectives of this chapter is to disentangle those theoretical and methodological problematics integral to South African photographic history and discourses of landscape representation. This is important to try and accomplish before we can examine the work of these two photographers individually and in closer detail, and explore the complexities of their relationship with what has been going on in the land (see Chapters Three to Five).

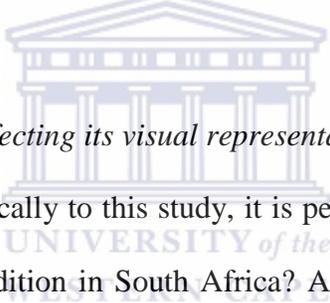
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<sup>161</sup> Wyle, J., *Landscape*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p.157.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> See transcript of the interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt, 22 January 2008, Cape Town.

In the South African intellectual context, the debates on landscape representation have formally and most frequently been the business of art historical studies. The discipline of art history and, by extension, landscape, has been marked by often grossly ahistorical and depoliticised analysis.<sup>164</sup> As Hight and Sampson argue, this happened “prior to the impact of Marxist methodology and literary criticism on art historical scholarship in the 1970s”,<sup>165</sup> when art historians, assessing European and American representations of colonised races, tended to “minimize art’s connections to historical movements and to associated colonialist ideologies.”<sup>166</sup> Art historian Linda Nochlin has been identified as one of the leading scholars in her discipline to lead the attack on this ahistorical, depoliticised approach, under the influence of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*.<sup>167</sup>



*Landscape and some factors affecting its visual representation*

Relating this argument specifically to this study, it is pertinent to ask: Who constructed the landscape photographic tradition in South Africa? As an artistic practice, landscape representation has its histories, globally and locally. How has landscape with social significance entered the medium of photography in the South African context? Beside a tradition of settler and amateur photography that already exists, David Goldblatt, for example, is one of the prominent South African photographers often labeled ‘documentary photographers’.<sup>168</sup> The second chapter of this thesis in fact addresses the manner in which the compartmentalisation of genres within photography, globally, has

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<sup>164</sup> Hight, E. M. and G. D. Sampson, ‘Photography, “Race”, and Post-Colonial Theory’ in Hight, E. M. and G. D. Sampson (eds.), *Colonialist Photography*, London: Routledge, 2002, p.8.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Other South African contemporary landscape photographers who are largely commercial and amateurish in approach include Obie Oberholzer, Koos van der Lende, Mark Dumbleton, Carl Smorenberg and Hugh-Daniel Grobler. They focus more on the aesthetic aspects of landscape images devoid of human figures. Most of their images conform to the idea of the ‘spectacle of nature’.

always been marked by a problematic fluidity, especially if one considers the genre of documentary photography and even the theme of landscape. One can notice an obvious sense of ambivalence on the part of David Goldblatt when he traces the possible beginnings of his interest in treating what is covered by the term ‘landscape’:

Well, I’m interested in everything that I see. I try to be interested in everything that I see around me; I’m interested in the world in which I live, South Africa. And, I can’t possibly be actively interested in everything that I see, but in something that interests me more and for the last few years in particular I’ve become interested in, for the lack of a better word, landscape. By the landscape I mean the way in which we have shaped the places that we live in – the land that we live on, the land that we farm, the land that we turn into townships, the land that we turn into suburban homes. I’m interested in this phenomenon. Just as, over the years, I’ve become interested in various aspects of this...of South African society, I have become, in the last few years, particularly interested in this aspect.<sup>169</sup>

Again, this particular extract alludes to Goldblatt’s dislike of labeling or compartmentalising his subject matter or even being labeled ‘documentary photographer’. However, it also sheds light, I contend, on his consciousness of the conditions and circumstances under which the colonialist, Apartheid and post-Apartheid South African landscape was constructed. Moreover, this also suggests Goldblatt’s unwillingness to depict landscape *per se* (instead of depicting the land which is simply ‘there’), but it is from this particular premise that this study of power relations in landscape photography becomes necessary. It seeks to address the apparent epistemological gap in South African photographic genealogies which have never, in isolation and in sufficient depth, interrogated what it means to photographically document in a dynamic country such as South Africa. What social issues and disciplinary debates does this raise? This is largely why the approaches and genealogies of art history are raised for critical discussion in the next section below.

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<sup>169</sup> See transcript of the interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt, 22 January 2008, Cape Town.

The fact that Goldblatt regards landscape as a ‘phenomenon’ (be it social, cultural, economic or political), I posit that it is an area worthy of academic inquiry from the perspective of South African photographic history and discourse. Again, I contend here that by ‘phenomenon’ Goldblatt implies spaces that bear the traces of human habitation which, in the South African context, have always been marked by, among others, instances of military contestations and marginalisation of the subjugated.

One of the landscape phenomena that made a lasting impression on Goldblatt’s mind were the mine dumps that dominated his childhood surroundings in Randfontein, Johannesburg, and their relationship to the whole issue of exploitative, hard labour that mostly blacks had to endure at the time.<sup>170</sup> As Chapter Three of this thesis will suggest, this experience caused Goldblatt to be conscious of the level of racial inequality, humiliation of the oppressed, and, in this particular case, the environmental and economic injustice associated with mining activities.

In addition to what Goldblatt experienced as social injustice (Chapter Three), his memories of Randfontein and its character as a place are based mainly on “its locality, its localness, its eccentricity.” Goldblatt recalls how each place was intimately part of the fabric of people’s lives before individuated places, such as shops, became homogenized under post-war modernisation.<sup>171</sup> Again, this point alludes to Goldblatt’s discomfort in

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<sup>170</sup> See transcript of the interview by Prof. P. Hayes and Farzanah Badsha with David Goldblatt, 28:08:2002.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. Most probably, this refers to the aftermath of the World War II but it also suggests the extent to which Goldblatt’s sense of place and emotional attachment to it played a significant role in his development as a photographer.

yet another instance of landscape construction and it suggests why, I contend, ‘landscape’ (as opposed to ‘land’) can be regarded as a trigger in his personal and professional life. There are interrupting factors, as highlighted above, which seem to rock his emotional boat, as it were, that stimulate and compel him to explore, starting with the places that defined his early existence in Randfontein. Regarding the latter, Goldblatt had this to say: “...I grew up with a sense that...there was something almost invisible, something in my guts that related to this place and that became much stronger when I became a photographer.”<sup>172</sup>

*Exploratory expeditions:<sup>173</sup> ‘Frozen’ time and effaced conflict*

The appropriation of space for imperialist purposes usually involves ideological confrontation that often develops into physical conflict between the coloniser and the colonised, but colonial photography virtually concealed such strained social relationships and violence that were embedded in a space such as southern Africa. The photograph, quite intentionally, attempted to efface the contested character of the narrative of exploration in the image, and put forward the vision of the gun-carrying explorer as hero.<sup>174</sup> Exploratory expeditions often consisted of “a series of brutal conquests of the native people of the interior”, especially the Khoisan during the earlier period of Dutch occupation of South Africa.<sup>175</sup> Edward Roux enumerates, in his list of events, a number

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<sup>172</sup> See transcript of the interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt, 15 May 2006, Cape Town.

<sup>173</sup> Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin give a broader historical narrative of exploration and travel in order to contextualise the whole discourse of discovery, colonisation and exploitation of world territories foreign to Europe in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, London & New York: Routledge, 2000, pp.95-98. This account foregrounds the complex activities of imperialistic colonisation of the non-Occidental world since the Renaissance period. It also renders the role of the camera, as discussed in this thesis, more comprehensible.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p.139.

<sup>175</sup> Jolly, R.J., *Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing*, Athens: Ohio University Press & Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1996, p.111. Also see Filling, B.,

of important South African history milestones, including bloody conflicts between the Dutch and the Khoi chief Gonnema as early as 1673, first Xhosa War of 1779, war with Hintsa in 1834, Battle of Blood River in 1838 and Anglo-Zulu War in 1879.<sup>176</sup>

While the colonial camera attempts to silence and efface such brutal conflicts of the past, Barbara Bender, in her argument that past activities leave their mark (signatures) upon the land, asserts that landscapes can never stay still and that feelings and engagement with place and landscape are always in the making.<sup>177</sup> Obviously, the camera, in its framing of space, tends to ‘freeze’ the motion or passing of time.<sup>178</sup> This is mainly due to the mechanical nature and inherent technical limitations of the camera, but this should also be seen as analogous to the colonialist tendency of ‘freezing’ time as in the case of seeing Africa as fixed, stagnant and unchanging – a continent ‘frozen’ in time, having culture, but no history.<sup>179</sup> Bender’s argument that alludes to the dynamic character of the landscape, as opposed to the conservative, colonialist notion of a temporally ‘fixed’ or

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‘Isandhlwana’ in Filling, B. and S. Stuart, (eds.), *The End of a Regime?*, Glasgow: Aberdeen University Press, 1991, pp.59-60. Colonial photography had specific objectives including that of supplementing widely read travel accounts with romanticized and idealized versions of colonial landscapes, showing it with highly cherished characteristics in such as wideness, ruggedness and wilderness. This view or attitude towards colonial landscapes is one of the hallmarks of modernity in most the Occidental world where human society had distanced itself from and elevated itself above nature in the face of industrial revolution while, at the same time, there developed a feeling of nostalgia for the ‘lost paradise’, nature. A detailed account of this modernist nostalgia, with its impact on a modernised mind of Europe, is also provided by Xakaza, M. M. in an essay titled ‘From Bhengu to Makhoba: Tradition and Modernity in the Works of Black Artists from KwaZulu-Natal in the Campbell Smith Collection’ in Proud, H. (ed.), *ReVisions: Expanding the Narrative of South African Art*, Pretoria: SA History Online & UNISA Press, 2006, pp.36-37.

<sup>176</sup> Roux, E., *Time Longer than Rope*, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964, pp. 435-436.

<sup>177</sup> Bender, B., ‘Landscape and Politics’ in Buchli, V. (ed.), *The Material Culture Reader*, Oxford & New York: Berg, 2005, p.136.

<sup>178</sup> The notion of time is dealt with in more detail at a theoretical level in Chapter Two of this thesis, but the idea of a temporally ‘frozen’ Africa is dealt with in this chapter in relation to Alfred Martin Duggan-Cronin’s work.

<sup>179</sup> Xakaza, M.M., ‘From Bhengu to Makhoba: Tradition and Modernity in the Work of Black Artists from KwaZulu-Natal in the Campbell Smith Collection’ in Proud, H. (ed.), *ReVisions: Expanding the Narrative of South African Art*, Pretoria: SA History Online & UNISA Press, 2006, pp.35-37. Here ‘history’ alludes to temporal progression which is associated with progress. This progressive element is afforded the colonising powers, not the subjugated.

‘frozen’ Africa,<sup>180</sup> is suggestive in terms of the focus of this thesis on two important South African photographers, David Goldblatt (b. 1930) and Santu Mofokeng (b.1956), whose critical view of landscape, I would argue, takes the social dynamism and temporal progression into cognizance.

What emerges strongly from this notion of ‘freezing’ the motion or the passing of time by use of the camera, as it were, is the colonialist construction of the dominated spaces as outside the industrialised centres of Europe. This dynamic plays itself out throughout the colonial and Apartheid periods. Numerous individuals in their capacities as colonial officials and private individuals have often displayed the same colonialist attitude, including photographers such as Duggan-Cronin who will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. In fact his main aim was to use the camera to ‘freeze’ the so-called natives from ‘losing’ their primitive state, as it were, as he was worried that “year by year the Natives were becoming more and more civilised, and any delay in the work would mean that valuable records of the Natives in their primitive state would be lost for all time.”<sup>181</sup> Duggan-Cronin even went to the extent of providing a map indicating the regions where each ‘tribe’ was located in their respective homelands. This implies the extent to which the colonial outpost, including its original inhabitants, had become a subject of epistemological significance and an object of commercial consumption, in this case through both cartographic and photographic means. More importantly, this “(false) sense of urgency that each moment’s passing meant missed opportunities to document a

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<sup>180</sup> Bender, B., ‘Landscape and Politics’ in Buchli, V. (ed.), *The Material Culture Reader*, Oxford & New York: Berg, 2005, p. 136.

<sup>181</sup> Bensusan, A. D., *Silver images*, Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1966, p.104.

race or races on the verge of extinction”<sup>182</sup> also points to the colonialist *fear* of losing the so-called natural ideal – a paradise lost to the modernised societies of the West, the centre. It is also arguable that this *fear* also alludes to the West’s attempts to maintain the advanced/backward dichotomy associated with the coloniser and the colonised, respectively. It was imperative for the colonisers to preserve this constructed divide in order to safeguard the racial hierarchy on top of which rested ‘whiteness’.<sup>183</sup>

Here I should point out that when Duggan-Cronin photographed his subjects in their original, rural settings, he did so in ways that could be described as ‘landscape’ settings. It is regrettable that this photographer’s contributions to landscape within the South African genealogy of photography have been so grossly overlooked and downplayed. Duggan-Cronin’s methodology also alludes to his idea of *attaching* land to the natives, as it were, instead of deterritorialising them as in the case of Sparrman and Paterson above. I posit here that, conservative as it may seem, this methodology can be seen as an important threshold from which to anticipate the ushering in of the South African social documentary tendencies later in the century.

### *Origins of photography and its relationship to landscape*

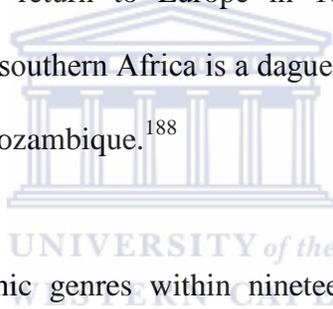
It is necessary at this point to trace the European origins of photography and to examine its relationship with the South African landscape. Since the invention of photography in

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<sup>182</sup> Croft, B. L., ‘Laying Ghosts To Rest’ in Hight, E. M. and G. D. Sampson (eds.), *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Place*, London & New York: Routledge, 2002, p.24.

<sup>183</sup> On the question of racial inequality in Apartheid South Africa, Melissa E. Steyn provides a detailed, personal reflection based on her Apartheid and post-Apartheid experiences of ‘whiteness’ in her *Whiteness just isn’t what it used to be*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001, pp. x-xi.

1839 by Louis-Jacques-Mande Daguerre (1787-1851),<sup>184</sup> extending well into the 1850s,<sup>185</sup> there was an undisputable proliferation of photographic images in British colonies, including South Africa. However, this great breakthrough was preceded by the invention of the *camera obscura* that was already known since the time of Leonardo da Vinci.<sup>186</sup> The history of photography in South Africa certainly dates back to the era of colonial exploratory activities, with important moments constituted by the photographic expeditions of James Chapman, for example.<sup>187</sup> Peter Metelerkamp has argued that photography in South Africa is almost as old as the medium itself, pointing out that an astronomer, Sir John Herschel, discovered the action of hyposulfates on silver, coined the term “photography” after his return to Europe in 1838 and that the first known “photographic” image made in southern Africa is a daguerreotype by E. Thiesson of 1845 of a native woman of Sofala-Mozambique.<sup>188</sup>



One of the main photographic genres within nineteenth-century South Africa was landscape. Thinking of landscape as a culturally mediated view can be limiting if that

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<sup>184</sup> Daniel, M., ‘Daguerre (1787-1851) and the Invention of Photography’ in [http://www.metmuseum.org/TOAH/hd/dagu/hd\\_dagu.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/TOAH/hd/dagu/hd_dagu.htm) Accessed 05/02/07.

<sup>185</sup> Snyder, J., ‘Territorial Photography’, in Mitchell, W.J.T. (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.175.

<sup>186</sup> Benjamin, W. (ed. Jennings, M. W. et al and trans. Jephcott, E. et al) *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, Cambridge & London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008, p.274. See also Bazin, A. and H. Gray, ‘The Ontology of the Photographic Image’ in *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Summer, 1960), pp.4-9 in <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1210183?seq=3> Accessed 17/12/10.

<sup>187</sup> Bester, R., ‘The politics of the photographic encounter in colonial southern Africa’ in Stevenson, M. (ed.), *Thomas Baines: An artist in the service of Science in Southern Africa, 1-17 September 1999*. Exhibition Catalogue, London, p.138. James Chapman has been singled out here not because he was the pioneer photographer in southern Africa, but mainly because he emerges as one of those early photographers who seem to have engaged quite profoundly with colonial space and other elements that punctuated it in visual terms. Of course there were many earlier photographers in this genealogy who set the stage for the South African photographic scene and they are mentioned in more detail elsewhere in the text.

<sup>188</sup> Daniel, M., ‘Daguerre (1787-1851) and the invention of Photography’ in [http://www.metmuseum.org/TOAH/hd/dagu/hd\\_dagu.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/TOAH/hd/dagu/hd_dagu.htm) Accessed 05/02/07.

mediation is thought of only in terms of processes of visibility – of image-making processes. Both written and oral landscape epic poetry, for example, are devoid of visual imagery and rely, instead, on literary imagery of visible or imagined spaces.<sup>189</sup> This point serves to caution against a possible assumption that landscape portrayal and cultural mediation more generally are only or predominantly in visual terms.

Important issues are at stake here, emanating from such mediation or constructions. In addition to the ecological or environmental realities that inform the relationships between humans and what they conceive of as their domain, there are other more power-related dynamics that play themselves out in social, political and economic terms. It should be stressed here that these power dynamics get inscribed on landscape when it is perceived as an organization of space in terms of who owns or uses the spaces and also in terms of how such spaces were created and changed.<sup>190</sup> I must caution, however, against simplistic duality or binarism with which this idea of landscape construction may be associated. At stake here is not just the oppressor and oppressed as static, constant players on the stage of power contestation. Instead, the colonized subject of South Africa should be seen as playing a significant role of resistance, thus reconfiguring and disrupting the order within which the dominant subject set out to construct landscape.

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<sup>189</sup> Here I am thinking specifically about two main traditions of landscape representation which differ fundamentally from each other due to cultural distance, that is, the English landscape painting tradition which derived most of its inspiration from Romantic nature poets on the one hand and the South African Nguni recited, unrecorded poetry which also did not inspire any painting tradition during pre-colonial period. Here I wish to emphasize the culturally diverse ways in which space is represented. On the English painting tradition, see De la Croix, H. and R. G. Tansey, *Art Through the Ages* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.), San Diego, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Washington D. C., London, Sydney & Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986, pp.831-834. Many praises of Zulu kings, for example, have an element of subjectivisation of landscape due to its perceived grandeur and majesty.

<sup>190</sup> Bright, D., 'Of Mother Nature and Malboro Men: An Inquiry into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography' in Bolton, R. (ed.), *The Contest of Meaning*, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: The MIT Press, 1989, p.125.

Here the question of urgency is very important as this thesis will show in Chapters Two, Four, Five and Six of this thesis. In the South African context, as the thesis will try to argue, power relations were increasingly compounded by the expansionist policy and resultant colonialist projects of the British Empire from the nineteenth century, and carried over into Apartheid and post-Apartheid eras.

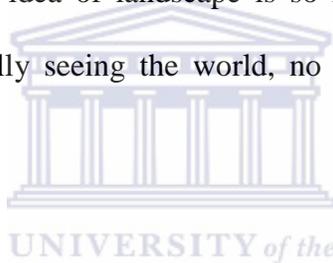
The focus on the British imperial activities does not, in any way, suggest that Britain should be misconstrued as the sole imperialist power here or elsewhere; other non-European territories were subjected under a number of foreign powers. South Africa was first colonised by the Dutch in the seventeenth century, but it was mainly the British and the French who actively introduced and nurtured the medium of photography as an alternative form of picture-making in Africa. For the purpose of this chapter, I contend that the photographic engagement with landscape by early British explorers discussed below had strong colonialist undertones and can provide a convenient threshold from which to trace the power implications of photography in South Africa.

Now I turn briefly to the point I made earlier about ‘landscape’ and knowledge disciplines. There is a danger of confining the term ‘landscape’ within the disciplinary parameters of the humanities instead of liberating it and exploring other possible approaches outside the modern disciplinary structures we take for granted.<sup>191</sup> Recorded knowledge has a lot to do with power relations between the coloniser and the colonised –

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<sup>191</sup> In the context of this thesis, the whole question of how ‘landscape’ is perceived and defined seems to be closely linked with the studies within the humanities – history, cultural studies, aesthetics and art history, among others. At stake here is a possible danger of assuming that such a disciplinary approach reflects what humans in general understand about ‘landscape’. This thesis, given its focus on varying phases of South Africa’s history, should also take into cognizance other possible ‘invisible’ histories that often get somewhat overlooked in the academic domain.

the European and the African – in this context, and much of the knowledge of pre-colonial (though also socially constructed) views may have been lost or discarded permanently. A number of definitions of landscape, cited in this chapter, are embedded within elitist approaches to the understanding of space and time that, in actual fact, may overlook local or indigenous, pre-colonial notions of a sense of place and existential concepts attached to it. How static or dynamic are these definitions, especially if one considers numerous social, political and economic repositioning of humans in changing global affairs? How have new democracies helped redefine this concept, thus possibly shifting and unsettling some of the established notions that have accumulated over time? It appears here that while the idea of landscape is so imprecise and ambiguous, it is essentially a way of specifically seeing the world, no matter how naturalized it may seem.<sup>192</sup>



*Some philosophical dimensions of the emergence of photography*

It is crucial, however, to realise that the history of the invention of photography cannot be narrated as a single account without looking at other more complex philosophical questions around the medium itself. The actual timing and impetus of the ‘invention’ itself have to be revisited. Alluding to the apparent gap in philosophical engagement with the whole history of the invention of this medium, Jacques Derrida, cited in Geoffrey Batchen, highlights what he calls a vested interest of photography’s historians in evading the troubling philosophical question, “What is photography?” and preferring, instead, the safe expository one, “Where and when did photography begin?”<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Cosgrove, D. E., *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984, p.13.

<sup>193</sup> Batchen, G., *Each Wild Idea: Writing Photography History*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002, p.3.

While I trace some of the milestones reached in the process of inventing and improving the apparatus by Daguerre and others including William Henry Fox Talbot, I point out that the invention itself was aided, among other things, by increased knowledge of chemicals and the optical principles of photography. The timing of the invention coincided with its conceptual and metaphoric rather than its technical or functional manifestations. While Batchen considers what stands out as the main question around the invention of photography, he questions a moment in history when the discursive desire to photograph emerged and began to manifest itself insistently. He asks: “At what moment did photography shift from an occasional, isolated, individual fantasy to a demonstrably widespread, social imperative?”<sup>194</sup> Historians of photography have evaded such pertinent questions in the interest of dealing only with a moment and place associated with the invention of photography.<sup>195</sup> Engaging with the question of photography’s beginnings from this particular angle is necessary in that it opens up a space for interrogating some philosophical questions regarding why, instead of where and when, it was invented. It necessitates delving deeper into a broader debate around this invention not just as an event but also as a process. The main question is: ‘when did a need to photograph shift from being an isolated to being a widespread, collective desire?’ To paraphrase this question, Derrida can be said to be asking: ‘when did a need to photograph shift from being Daguerre’s desire to being a widespread, collective desire, also witnessed outside the Western world?’ Batchen cautions against the common use of the circumstances of photography’s invention to establish the medium’s continuity with a linear development

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>195</sup> Because so many names of inventors of photography have been mentioned in addition to that of Daguerre’s, it may be proper to suggest that there is no single place and moment where and when this medium was invented. It was a process rather than an event. This is what other scholars are highlighting.

of Western practices of representation dating back the Renaissance period.<sup>196</sup> He further argues that any questioning of photography's origins also represents a questioning of the course of its history as a whole.<sup>197</sup>

Instead of simply offering a list of people who claimed, at one time or another, to have the first to have practiced photography is, according to Batchen, not “particularly pertinent to an investigation of the desire to photograph.”<sup>198</sup> I therefore interrogate the emergence of photography as a process informed mainly by this desire rather than as an event. With Talbot's experiments with chemicals and optical principles, it became possible to apply the calotype on the basis of utilising a negative-positive method which Daguerre and his friend M. Nicephore Niepce had not discovered.<sup>199</sup>

But in addition to this practical possibility, Talbot also engages with a number of philosophical questions flowing from aspects of the inventive processes. At some point he calls the picture a philosophical window. This idea, I contend, most likely flows from Talbot's practical approach of making a picture using his window as a physical and metaphorical frame when he photographed a scene that he could see in outside his house at Lacock Abbey. He also looked at the paradoxical question of the absent presence of the photographer in a picture that would, eventually, be fixed on paper. It was this notion of the fixing of a picture even after the eye of the camera had been closed that Talbot engaged with in a serious philosophical manner. It was this complexity of the window

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<sup>196</sup> Batchen, G., *Each Wild Idea: Writing Photography's History*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002, p.3.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Daguerreotype, p.11 (bibliographical details not available). Daguerre and Niepce had formed a partnership with a view to perfecting their discovery.

that framed the real which interested Talbot and, possibly, many other proto-photographers who launched photography into art. Again, the main point of interest is time that seems to be fixed on paper, later when the invention had been further developed. How can one fix time in this dynamic social world that is marked by so many daily activities? What boggles the mind, albeit in a productive way, is the metaphorical presence of 'nature', camera, image, and photographer even when absent from the picture.

While questions such as, 'are the origins of photography to be found in nature or culture?' also baffle the mind, one major point that comes up now and again, when the process of photography occurs, is the fact that an uneasy maintenance of binary relationships cannot be ignored. It is mainly about human beings' desire to visually represent an impossible conjunction of transience and fixity. A picture thus becomes a platform where space becomes time and time space, folding time back to itself, as it were. These ideas were also toyed with before the successful fixing of images on paper when John Constable, one of the major British nineteenth-century artists, theorised on how one brief moment could be caught from fleeting time, imagining how the temporariness of time could be fixed. This is what he called arrested transience. But why was there such a need in the first place? Where did such a burning desire come from? The human subject's need to protect itself against the loss of the object that is the always absent real object of desire and the loss of identity was the actual impetus behind the invention of photography.

But how soon was this new invention spread across the globe and how was it received? What status did the photographer assume within the context of the Western art world?

Only telling a history of photography within the Western cultural context is not sufficient; it has to be complemented and countered by histories as they have unfolded in other parts of the world such as Asia, Latin America, Australia, and Africa. Just three months after the “invention” of photography, the first daguerreotypists reached Cairo and were actively practicing the craft. It proved to be a global rather than a Western medium, implying many things including the fact that European knowledge and experience were to be decentred. Coupled with this decentralisation of knowledge and experience was a transformed status of the photographer, being seen as the author whose images were appreciating in monetary value. The next point refers to a much later period. This transformation also coincided with the emergence of ethnography of photographic practices as a new field of knowledge and research. Photographs by contemporary South African photographers including David Goldblatt, Santu Mofokeng, Peter McKenzie and Cedric Nunn are now seriously regarded as important pieces of high value by public and commercial art galleries. These photographers have also assumed statuses of authorship, contributing to the creation of knowledge not confined within the Western systems.

But the reception of photography and photographic practices in Africa were marked by a variety of factors such as what Behrend terms ‘spaces of refusal’. Because most parts of North and East Africa had assimilated Islam, the practice of photography, and portraiture in particular, was frowned at. Holding fast God’s image, embodied by man, by a human machine was considered a taboo. The history of photography in parts of Africa was therefore marked by such tensions. Since the 1980s and after the event of 9/11, this rejection of images has increased along the East African Coast. Various ways and techniques of countering the proliferation of images were employed. They included

what Behrend terms the ‘aesthetics of withdrawal’. This practice included ways of theatricalising the surface of the image by veiling, masking, and concealing.

The acceptance and application of this medium in South Africa dates back to as early as the nineteenth century with figures such as Sir John Herschel, Charles Livingstone, Dr. John Kirk, Monsieur M. J. Leger, William Ring and James Chapman being significant pioneers. Alfred Duggan-Cronin, Constance Stuart-Larrabee, Leon Levson and Eli Weinberg came into the scene in the twentieth century. What stands out about this medium in South African is the variety of contexts within which it has always been applied, serving purposes ranging from portraiture to social documentary photography. The fact that it has never been bridled by religion in general and Islam in particular also means that it has entrenched itself in any possible social space including photojournalism and as a medium of social critique during the dark years the Apartheid system. The proliferation of this medium where it made its presence felt, particularly in South Africa has exceeded expectations, and engaged with beyond locations where its invention was achieved.

#### *Nineteenth-century colonialist attitudes and subjective ways of looking*

The attitude of many nineteenth-century photographers in southern Africa was often marked by colonialist ways of looking that framed colonial space through photographic vision as a romanticised, exotic subject. The extent of this constructed exoticism of the colonial space was further reinforced by the idealisation of landscape that, in the perspective of Hayes’ argument, is framed as a black landscape, virtually rendering white

men absent from it.<sup>200</sup> ‘Blackening’ the landscape in this context, I argue, should be understood as another way of exoticising it, divorcing it from what would be seen as ‘normal’ to the colonial eye. This practice of ‘blackening’ or ‘exoticising’ should be seen as a strategy of ‘separating’ the industrialised from the unindustrialised – the coloniser from the colonised.<sup>201</sup> Colonialism, as the form of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century imperialism that concerns us here, “entails the ideological occupation and settlement of physical and metaphysical spaces.”<sup>202</sup> Photography was employed, in addition to the rifle, as another ideological tool in accomplishing this project. Further defining colonialism in the context of socio-political power imbalances and its attendant spatial implications, Said (cited in Jacobs) proposes that it “is a specific articulation of imperialism associated with territorial invasions and settlements.”<sup>203</sup> Territorial invasions and settlements were practiced by and for the sole benefit of the ‘Self’ and to the detriment of the newly conquered ‘Other’ – who frequently became the object of a complex range of imperial perceptions and visualisations.<sup>204</sup>

The question may arise: To what extent has the concept of ‘the gaze’ (whether colonial or otherwise) been oversimplified in its constant usage? It is important to stress that ‘the gaze’ is deliberately imposed in the context of imperial ‘Othering’ of subject peoples,

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<sup>200</sup> Hayes, P., ‘Camera Africa: Indirect Rule and Landscape Photographs of Kaoko, 1943’ in Miescher, G. & D. Henrichsen (eds.), *New Notes on Kaoko*, Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2000, p.68.

<sup>201</sup> This particular synthesis of ideas around the question of the exotic is based on my reading of Bill Ashcroft’s, Gareth Griffith’s and Helen Tiffin’s work on the concepts of post-colonial studies in their *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, London & New York: Routledge, 2000, pp.94-95 and 209-210.

<sup>202</sup> Bester, R., ‘The politics of the Photographic encounter in colonial southern Africa’ in Stevenson, M. (ed.), *Thomas Baines: An artist in the Service of Science in Southern Africa, 1 – 17 September 1999* Exhibition Catalogue, London, p.137.

<sup>203</sup> Jacobs, J. M., *Edge of Empire: Colonialism and the City*, London & New York: Routledge, 1996, p.16.

<sup>204</sup> Here I use the terms ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ in general post-colonialist sense to refer to ‘coloniser’ and ‘colonised’ – the ‘normal’ and the ‘exotic’. My understanding of these terms is based on Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, London & New York: Routledge, 2000, pp.169-173.

including colonised spaces. The camera best exemplifies this intrusive, mediated colonial way of seeing in Africa where the appearance of exotic environments and peoples is ‘captured’ and re-arranged.<sup>205</sup> In looking at the problematic concept of ‘the gaze’, it is arguable that since there is not just a single form of ‘*Othering*’, there also can be no single, homogenous form of ‘the gaze’; there most likely are heterogeneous forms, instead. One may argue here that since colonial discourse was never a unitary system, “transferrable from one colony to another and conforming to identical objectives and modes of operation,”<sup>206</sup> ‘the gaze’ should be understood to be multi-faceted and should not be taken for granted as unidirectional.

“The photographic gaze is about power and domination and submission....The dominators call the shots”.<sup>207</sup> In the implied claim of ‘the look’ (as this study will call it) being a one-way process (the coloniser on the colonised), how can, or does, this power hierarchy get unsettled or disrupted? Is it not possible to challenge such a fixed notion of power hierarchies? In the final analysis, ‘the look’ is not just objective, but, in many instances, it is subjective in that the photographed subject matter often gets “systematically romanticized”<sup>208</sup> in the process of deliberate selectivity and exclusion.

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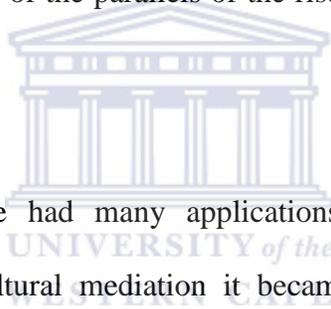
<sup>205</sup> Ranger, T., ‘Colonialism, Consciousness and the Camera’ in *Past and Present*, No. 171 (May, 2001), pp.203-215, Oxford University Press, in [http://www.jstor.org/sici?sici=0031-2746\(200105\)171%3C203%3ACCATC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-G](http://www.jstor.org/sici?sici=0031-2746(200105)171%3C203%3ACCATC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-G), p.203 Accessed 24/05/2010.

<sup>206</sup> Harris, B., ‘Photography in colonial discourse: the making of ‘the other’ in southern Africa, 1850-1950’ in Hartmann, W., Silvester, J. and Hayes, P. (eds.), *The Colonising Camera*, Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1998, p.20.

<sup>207</sup> Ranger, T., ‘Colonialism, Consciousness and the Camera’ in *Past and Present*, No. 171 (May, 2001), pp.203-215, Oxford University Press, in [http://www.jstor.org/sici?sici=0031-2746\(200105\)171%3C203%3ACCATC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-G](http://www.jstor.org/sici?sici=0031-2746(200105)171%3C203%3ACCATC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-G), p.204 Accessed 28/05/2010.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

The concept of ‘the look’ necessitates deeper contemplation around the question of power dynamics in the relations between the bearer of ‘the look’ and the object of ‘the look’. One may argue at this point that more nuanced interrogation of the concept may yield a myriad of possibly hidden variables especially because the project of colonialism has never been a homogenous phenomenon; it has always varied in specificities of time, geographic area and colonising power, although it is generally accepted that imperialist expansion and colonisation were motivated mainly by the European hunger for Africa’s economic resources.<sup>209</sup> It is necessary to remember that space was not just confined to merely being a politicised concept, but it was also associated with the rise and development of capitalism, one of the parallels of the rise and development of landscape in western modern Europe.<sup>210</sup>



While photographic practice had many applications from the nineteenth-century onwards, as a medium of cultural mediation it became somewhat analogous to the practice of imperialism in that it could be associated with a desire to dominate and control the subject of vision outside the metropole.<sup>211</sup> In concrete terms, the various practices that take place alongside colonialism – exploration, Christianisation and ethnography, to mention only a few - sought to organize and arrange the ”domination of

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<sup>209</sup> Le Billon, P., ‘The Geopolitical Economy of ‘Resource Wars’’ in Tuathail, G. O., S. Dalby and P. Routledge (eds.), *The Geopolitics Reader (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*, Oxon & New York: Routledge, 2006, p.203.

<sup>210</sup> Mitchell, W.J.T., ‘Imperial Landscape’ in Mitchell, W.J.T. (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.7.

<sup>211</sup> Bester, R., ‘The politics of the Photographic encounter in colonial southern Africa’ in Stevenson, M. (ed.), *Thomas Baines: An artist in the Service of Science in Southern Africa, 1 – 17 September 1999*. Exhibition Catalogue, London, p.137.

physical space, the reformation of natives' minds, and the integration of local economic histories into the Western perspectives".<sup>212</sup>

### *Dimensions of power relations in photography*

I now wish to investigate some of the power relations involved between the photographer and the photographed. This exercise will help provide useful insights into the power wielded by the medium of photography and what that has to do with landscape and society particularly in South Africa. Power relations between the colonial photographer and his subject are alluded to in James Chapman's book called *Travels*, in which instances of "alarm and flight in fear of the camera, as well as a belief that God was in the camera"<sup>213</sup> are mentioned. Such a relationship is formulated and imposed from a Western perspective and the colonial photographic practice was therefore, on one level, about the articulation of dichotomous metropole-colony relationships. Political inequalities were asserted in various ways from colonial to Apartheid eras through racially biased legislation, control of people's movement, evictions, resettlements and infliction of fear through state violence. The tendency to employ photography as a propagandistic tool<sup>214</sup> continued well into the twentieth century, reflecting and presenting visual historical moments of socio-political events and conditions at a given moment.

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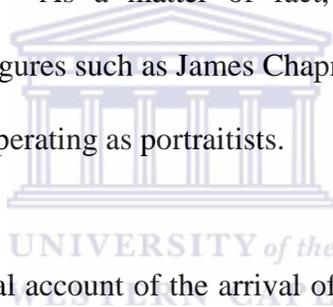
<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Bensusan, A. D., *Silver images*, Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1966, p.141.

<sup>214</sup> In an interview, dated 30/12/2007, by the candidate with Santu Mofokeng, the latter asserts that even struggle photographs were informed by the choices of subject matter as in the case of the white police beating the rioting Blacks. Mofokeng argues that here the photographic medium was employed as a propagandistic tool to perpetuate a notion that only white police officers were responsible for the beatings, the tear-gassing and the shootings.

*A short genealogy of early South African photographers*

This section highlights the circumstances under which photography was introduced in colonial South Africa. It is also aimed at examining the varied and dynamic roles of the camera within a modernising South Africa. James Chapman, active during the second half of the nineteenth century, earned himself a reputation of being “the first white man to have crossed Africa from coast to coast,”<sup>215</sup> while Charles Livingstone and Dr. John Kirk were “the first explorer-travelers in the world to use a camera on their journeys.”<sup>216</sup> However, the camera was not just a slave of imperialist agenda; it was also used by private individuals for their personal aims, especially for commercial purposes as in the depiction of human portraits. As a matter of fact, almost all other independent photographers, as opposed to figures such as James Chapman, Thomas Baines and Alfred Martin Duggan-Cronin, were operating as portraitists.



Bensusan presents a contextual account of the arrival of such pioneer photographers on the shores of southern Africa:

As the only practical route to the Far East in those days was via the Cape of Good Hope, it is almost certain that men like Shepherd, possibly Bourne, the French amateur at Sydney, and later G. B. Goodman also of Sydney, must have disembarked at either Table Bay or Algoa Bay en route to their destinations, and hence became the first photographers to visit the Southern shores of Africa.<sup>217</sup>

The advent of the camera thus marked a robust tidal wave of photographic culture that inevitably began to flood the southern African shores and, over time, started to penetrate the interior. It is important to point out here that Africa in general, and southern Africa in

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<sup>215</sup> Bensusan, A. D., *Silver Images*, Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1966, p.25.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

particular, came into contact with the camera that was still undergoing a continuous process of improvement, as I shall attempt to summarise below.

The first photographic process, daguerreotype, was succeeded by the collodion process that was introduced by Gustave Le Gray at the beginning of the Wet-Plate Period and was brought to the stage of its fruition by Frederick Scott Archer in 1851 (collodion was a chemical substance discovered in 1847 and used as a means of protecting wounds). The significant point around this process is that as it “spread throughout the world photography soon became a popular pursuit within the reach of all.”<sup>218</sup> According to Lake Price, “the process may be said to have superseded all others.”<sup>219</sup>

The nineteenth century was marked by a number of successive experiments and subsequent inventions of photographic processes which succeeded daguerreotype. In 1849, A. W. Roghe, from Frankfurt, Germany, introduced the use of paper negative (calotype) process and, in 1854, J. Newman from America introduced the Galvanic process while his fellow countryman, Henry Selby was the first to take stereoscopic portraits in 1855.<sup>220</sup> From 1858, almost all photographers could take portraits on leather, yet another technological milestone within the practice of photography. A new process of chronotype was introduced by William B. Barclay in 1860. This proliferation of photographic processes afforded many photographers opportunities to try and test various technological possibilities within the trade.

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Concerning paper negative process, also see Batchen, G., *Each Wild Idea: Writing Photography History*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002, p.4 where William Henry Fox Talbot is mentioned as a figure that also developed this approach.

It was against this technological backdrop that Parisian citizen, Monsieur M. J. Leger, apparently motivated by a love of travel and adventure, embarked on his long sea voyage to India en route the southern African coasts and disembarked in Port Elizabeth as early as 1846.<sup>221</sup> After establishing his studio in Grahamstown (the frontier), together with William Ring, a local bookseller, stationer and tobacconist, Leger staged his first exhibition ever to be held on the continent of Africa.<sup>222</sup> On Leger's departure, Ring returned to Port Elizabeth in April 1847 and set up his own studio. When Ring moved to Cape Town around 1849, there already were Carel Sparmann, and his assistant E. Jones, and Dr S. N. H. van Sweel, all of whom were daguerreotypists. Also using the process of daguerreotype were William Waller, who emerged on the scene around February 1848, and John Paul (probably the last successful daguerreotypist to reach Cape Town in 1851) who "described himself as "Professor of the Daguerreotype art with true and correct portraits any time between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. in any weather *in the short space of 20 seconds.*"<sup>223</sup>

After the death, on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1851, of Daguerre, Gustave Le Gray, the painter and photographer put forward the process of collodion, but Frederick Scott Archer soon effected some improvements on it in 1851. Most of these technological innovations had a very significant impact and bearing on the direction which was to be taken by photography for quite some time in the nineteenth century in that even James Chapman

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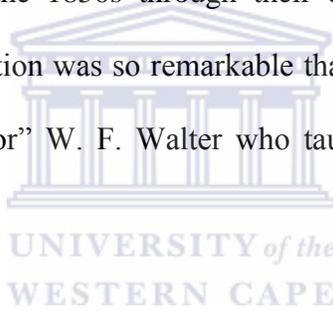
<sup>221</sup> Bensusan, A. D., *Silver Images*, Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1966, p.9.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

probably used the wet-plate process.<sup>224</sup> It is interesting to note that the development of photography as a medium of visibility happened not only on a technological front, but also on an ideological one.

One may argue here that photography, versatile or adaptable as it still is in terms of its functional intentions, kept on developing in multiple directions, thus fulfilling various colonialist, everyday goals – and in fact continues to do so. As a cultural practice, photography was also embraced as a subject of instruction by some key individuals in the Cape. S. B. Barnard and F. A. Y. York from London were to have a great impact on photography in the Cape in the 1850s through their contribution as practitioners.<sup>225</sup> Barnard's and York's contribution was so remarkable that it stimulated constructive and productive rivalry in “Professor” W. F. Walter who taught the practice and theory of photography in Cape Town.<sup>226</sup>



This rivalry, one may argue, served as a catalyst for growth and perhaps critical consideration of the medium both at technical and ideological levels. However, photographic culture had started thriving even outside Port Elizabeth and Cape Town in the 1850s at a slower pace as in the case of Graaff-Reinet where James Henley, a portraitist, produced his work by the daguerreotype process. The 1869 exhibition of photographs, probably portraits, by S. B. Barnard made yet another contribution to the propagation of photography as a cultural practice that was to be eventually brought to the public domain. In fact the 1860s marked the beginning of the proliferation of numerous

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p.14.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., p.15.

studios also in Durban. James Pulleyn, for example, ran his photographic studio at 314/6 West Street.<sup>227</sup> Photography had, up to this point and including 1906, been dominated by a remarkable pictorialism in the sense that most of what was produced then was studio portraits. In the same year (1906), Cape Town City Hall hosted the first important International Photographic exhibition of its kind, featuring 629 prints.<sup>228</sup>

The massive production of photographic prints in the early years of the twentieth century was also accompanied by the emergence of the trend of the depiction of landscape and outdoor scenes which gained impetus over the next three years since the landmark exhibition of 1906.<sup>229</sup> Following such important developments, the first South African publication on photography was produced in 1909 in which thirty-eight South Africans were covered, including Alfred Martin Duggan-Cronin of Kimberley and James Black of Pretoria.<sup>230</sup> The advent of the Great War drove pictorial photography into the doldrums until 1922.<sup>231</sup> It is important to note at this point that this advent marked a significant shift in terms of the role played by photography in the political and social spheres of life in South Africa.

It was in the persons of individuals such as Alfred Martin Duggan-Cronin that this shift from mere pictorialism to more inclusive thematic modes occurred. His approximately 4 000 photographic prints, still “housed in the Duggan-Cronin Bantu Art Gallery at Kimberley”, cover the cultural, social and economic life of almost all the indigenous

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid., p.20.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., p.86.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

ethnic groups in southern Africa and have been hailed as a great ethnological collection.<sup>232</sup> Duggan-Cronin had come out from Ireland and had joined the De Beers mining company in South Africa as a night watchman.<sup>233</sup> When he returned to Ireland in 1904 he purchased a ten shilling box camera with which he took his first photographs in Madeira.<sup>234</sup> Back in South Africa, where he then worked both as compound guard and dispenser at the convict hospital, Duggan-Cronin came into contact with people from different ethnic backgrounds whom he started photographing until this became a serious life study.<sup>235</sup> Careful attention to Duggan-Cronin's archive shows that he has been grossly underrated by being seen merely as an anthropological/ethnographic photographer. There is a need for deeper engagement with his interest in landscapes of rural areas from which most mine workers came. His practice of symbolically reuniting the blacks with their homelands was also accompanied by his acquisition of knowledge of local histories of each place.<sup>236</sup> It is in this perspective that Duggan-Cronin's work is over-categorized as ethnic studies instead of paying attention also to the documentary element inherent in his career.

### *The rise of South African documentary photography*

The dominant legacy of Duggan-Cronin as well as other earlier colonial photographers within the South African photographic genealogy is marked, among other things, by the

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<sup>232</sup> See South African History Online, in <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/thesis/photography-liberation/chapter-three.htm>, p.102 accessed 14/07/2010.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> I am grateful to my supervisor, Prof. P. Hayes, who has drawn my attention to this aspect of the larger rural body of work by Alfred Martin Duggan-Cronin.

subjugation of Africans through blatant photographic categorisation,<sup>237</sup> as has been suggested above. In thinking about the South African genealogy of photographers in the later decades of the twentieth-century, Leon Levson (1883-1968),<sup>238</sup> Eli Weinberg (1908-1981), Constance Stuart-Larrabee (1914-2000) and Ernest Cole (1940-1990) spring to mind. This section will show how Levson has been paraded as a photographer who documented social conditions in South Africa from the 1940s to the 1960s, providing unusual insight into African rural and urban life in this period. Such a simplistic view of Levson may be problematic, misleading and superficial. Minkley and Rassool provide a comprehensive, critical argument on Levson's role in the history of the South African photographic scene.

What seems to have been misrepresented as Levson's 'resistance'<sup>239</sup> photography is disentangled by Minkley and Rassool. Aspects of his career are revisited and deconstructed, suggesting that since the 1940s, Levson actively dealt with the 'native' question, not with a view to exposing the social and labour relations that were based on race, but with a view to depicting a cultural meeting point between the ruling white elite, including the white employer, and the oppressed black masses. His work was, on many occasions, used for various, sometimes conflicting, political and intellectual agendas

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<sup>237</sup> South African History Online, in <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/thesis/photography-liberation/chapter-two.htm> accessed 02/08/2008.

<sup>238</sup> Minkley, G. and C. Rassool, 'Photography with a difference: Leon Levson's camera studies and photographic exhibitions of native life in South Africa, 1947-1950' in Bank, A. (ed.), *Kronos 31, Journal of Cape History*, November 2005, p.197. This note also serves as an important point that can be juxtaposed, in a productive way, with Note 108 below. What is highly arguable, therefore, is that Leon Levson's main role in the genealogy of the South African photography is that of a pioneer of social documentary photography, representing a shift away from the aesthetics of mere pictorialism.

<sup>239</sup> Minkley, G. and C. Rassool, 'Photography with a difference: Leon Levson's camera studies and photographic exhibitions of native life in South Africa, 1947-1950' in Bank, A. (ed.), *Kronos 31, Journal of Cape History*, November 2005, p.207.

aimed at dealing with the native question in a socially segregated but industrially advancing South Africa.<sup>240</sup>

The Mayibuye Centre exhibition, *Margins to Mainstream: Lost South African Photographers*, held at the Centre for African Studies at the University of Cape Town from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 1996,<sup>241</sup> sought to construct Levson as one of the lost South African photographers and a ‘resistance’ photographer, having been engaged in ‘resistance’ social documentary photography in South Africa.<sup>242</sup> In essence, Levson’s major role since the 1940s was to image South Africa’s Apartheid modernity and how it impacted upon the native population, even propagating ideas around ‘good’ treatment of native labourers in urban, industrial environments, including mines and compounds.

In comparing Levson with Duggan-Cronin, for example, it is important to observe that the latter used his camera to reunite, as it were, the African with the land while the former depicted the urban (white) industrial spaces as “transitional zones - between the break-up of tribalism and the contact of cash and prestige...”<sup>243</sup> What contrasts Levson with the later resistance and social documentary photographers is that his subjects were “imaged as relatively stable, managed, and luminal spaces of transition.”<sup>244</sup> On the basis of this argument, Levson cannot be seen as an important precursor, or ‘originator’, for that matter, of the subsequent ‘struggle’ photographic tradition.

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid.pp.196-7.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., p.184.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p.208.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., p.212.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

David Goldblatt, who was aware of Levson's work since the mid or late 1940s, concurs with Minkley's and Rassool's position of argument.<sup>245</sup> He is of the opinion that when the collection was brought and subsequently exhibited in the Robben Island Mayibuye Centre, housed at the University of the Western Cape, it was "abused".<sup>246</sup> Essentially, Goldblatt is aware of the erroneous framing of Levson's work within the genre of 'resistance' photography even in other exhibitions mentioned above. What Levson was recognised for, in addition to his portraits, was his depiction of life in South Africa, as is well articulated by Minkley and Rassool.

Setting an important precedent for resistance photography within the South African context was Eli Weinberg, a trade unionist and member of the Communist Party of South Africa who, since the 1940s, uncompromisingly sided with dispossessed labour and made photographic portraits of well-known resistance leaders such as Nelson Mandela. Born in the port of Libau, Latvia, Weinberg's attitude and approach to his work was influenced by the Soviet "Social Realist Schools."<sup>247</sup> It is pertinent here to provide more background knowledge around Weinberg given his importance as a photographer who, I argue, stood at the crossroads of the South African photographic history. As a child he experienced the social impact of World War I and the October Revolution of 1917, and these events led to his socialist political development.<sup>248</sup> What seems to have alerted Weinberg to the realities of social injustice, even before he moved to South Africa should be the murder

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<sup>245</sup> This viewpoint was conveyed by David Goldblatt in an e-mail he addressed to the author on 05/08/2008.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> South African History Online, in <http://www.sahistory.org/pages/library-resources/thesis/photography-liberation/chapter-two.htm> accessed 02/05/2008.

<sup>248</sup> South African History Online, 'Eli Weinberg: 1908-1981' in <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/weinberg.e.htm> accessed 03/05/2008.

of his mother, his sister and other members of his family in a Nazi concentration camp.<sup>249</sup> He married his political life in South Africa to his resistance photography. Siding with the dispossessed, Weinberg became one of those who, on 16 December 1961, clandestinely put up posters announcing that Umkhonto weSizwe (the military wing of the African National Congress (ANC)) had been formed.<sup>250</sup> On the night of this date, military acts of sabotage were committed in the country.<sup>251</sup> As a photographer he undertook assignments for *New Age*, an independent and progressive weekly newspaper that supported the ANC.<sup>252</sup> It is this progressive approach to photography that was to follow in later years, especially during the 1970s.

Intersecting with Eli Weinberg was Constance Stuart-Larrabee (1914 - 2000) whose career Darren Newbury identifies as having been propelled into the public eye by World War II and other factors such as the flourishing of the illustrated press which provided a space “for the production and dissemination of photographic essays.”<sup>253</sup> This particular historical moment of South Africa is very significant because it marks the emergence of a social documentary photography that would begin to describe urban black society “alongside the dominant paradigm of ‘native studies’, which until then had accounted for most photographs of black South Africans.”<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

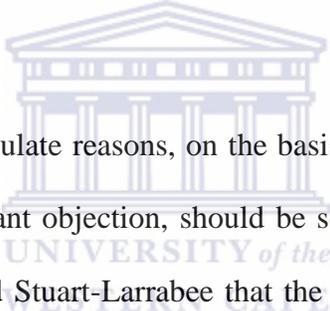
<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Newbury, D., *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2009, p.8.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

Here I wish to reiterate that this emergence of an alternative voice in the photographic scene was yet another way in which photography was beginning to reconfigure itself, moving towards a position where it could challenge the visual hegemony of the time. The subjective position of the ‘native studies’ photographers was being challenged, and this point should be seen in light of the arguments that will be advanced about the systematic obliteration of the ideological centre of the subject as will be articulated later in Chapter Two. Tracing this phenomenon of the gradual emergence of photographic voices from below, this section should be used as a point of departure in examining the developments that finally culminated in an open defiance against the hegemonic view of the South African society.



In Chapter Four below I articulate reasons, on the basis of visual analysis, why David Goldblatt, in spite of his constant objection, should be seen also as an artist, but it was during the years of Levson and Stuart-Larrabee that the status of photography as an art form was growing. Newbury offers a productive insight into the relationship between photography, society and politics in post-war and early Apartheid South Africa, thus helping to contextualise, for the purpose of this study, the meaning of landscape documentation which David Goldblatt would embark on professionally almost two decades after the period under scrutiny in this section.<sup>255</sup>

The stage for a socially embedded mode of photographic operation was further consolidated by, among others, the emergence of *Drum* magazine (launched as *The*

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<sup>255</sup> It should be borne in mind that David Goldblatt’s documentation of landscape occurred only by default. His aim was to explore the social values, as manifested in structures that were held dear by the racially segregated South Africa.

*African Drum* magazine)<sup>256</sup> in 1951 under the ownership of James R. A. Bailey<sup>257</sup> and the editorship of Anthony Sampson.<sup>258</sup> *Drum*, “modelled on the British *Picture Post* and the US *Life*”,<sup>259</sup> emerged as an epitome of a marriage of black urban culture and politics, with more emphasis on black culture which had, up until the 1950s, been disregarded by the white-oriented media.<sup>260</sup> Jurgen Schadeberg, the first *Drum* photographer and mentor who nurtured the blossoming of prominent black photographers,<sup>261</sup> and later Bob Gosani, Peter Magubane and Alf Khumalo, “gave life to the campaigns and people who made history.”<sup>262</sup> It is strongly arguable that this situation, paralleled by widespread black political consciousness which was already prevalent at the time, served as a seedbed for the nurturing and the flourishing of what can be called committed photography. This point is of profound significance if one thinks about yet another contemporary successful black photographer, Santu Mofokeng, whose contribution to photography will be examined in depth in Chapter Five of this thesis. It is important at this point to highlight Jurgen Schadeberg’s role as a photographer in his own right. Among Apartheid South African socio-political scenes that he framed include those of forced removals and resultant displacements, restrictions of black people in so-called whites-only urban spaces due to pass laws and black political leaders during the Treason Trial.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Newbury, D., *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2009, pp.9 and 83.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, p.83.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81.

<sup>259</sup> Newbury, D., in <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a780333673&db=all> Accessed 07/08/2008.

<sup>260</sup> Weinberg, P., ‘Apartheid – a vigilant witness: A reflection on photography’, in Campschreur, W. and J. Divendal (eds.), *Culture in Another South Africa*, London: Zed Books, 1989, p.61.

<sup>261</sup> Altschuler, J., ‘Jurgen Schadeberg’ in Clark-Brown, G. (ed.), *The South African Art Times* magazine, December 2010 – January 2011, Vlaeberg: Global Art Information, 2010, p.45.

<sup>262</sup> Weinberg, P., ‘Apartheid – a vigilant witness: A reflection on photography’, in Campschreur, W. and J. Divendal (eds.), *Culture in Another South Africa*, London: Zed Books, 1989, p.61.

<sup>263</sup> Altschuler, J., ‘Jurgen Schadeberg’ in Clark-Brown, G. (ed.), *The South African Art Times* magazine, December 2010 – January 2011, Vlaeberg: Global Art Information, 2010, p.44.

*Drum* and, later, other media houses employed Ernest Cole (1940-1990), one of the earliest black South African photojournalists to expose to the world the stark realities of the Apartheid society.<sup>264</sup> Born as Ernest Levi Tsoloane Kole,<sup>265</sup> Cole left school when Bantu Education was introduced by the Apartheid regime.<sup>266</sup> Before he was employed as an assistant to a Chinese studio photographer, Cole was, according to the laws of the time, regarded as an unskilled labourer since he had not completed school.<sup>267</sup> As a studio assistant, he obtained basic knowledge of photography and his first Yashika twin lens reflex camera.<sup>268</sup> He had a brief stint as design and production assistant with *Drum* magazine in 1958, where he worked under its chief photographer, Jurgen Schadeberg, before he proceeded to the then *Bantu World* newspaper (later called *The World* and now known as *Sowetan*) as photographer.<sup>269</sup> In the early 1960s, he then became the first black freelance photographer.<sup>270</sup> Using his newly constructed Coloured identity (after changing his surname from Kole to Cole), Cole managed, in 1966, to visit France, England and the United States to showcase his Apartheid photographs.<sup>271</sup> The following year his book,

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<sup>264</sup> South African History Online, 'Ernest Cole: 1940-1990' in

[http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/cole\\_e.htm](http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/cole_e.htm) accessed 10/09/2008.

<sup>265</sup> Newbury, D., *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2009, p.176. Gunilla Knape also offers more detailed account of Cole's professional life covering the period from 1958 to 1966 in 'Notes on the life of Ernest Cole (1940 – 1990)' in Knape, G. (ed.), *Ernest Cole: Photographer*, Gotenborg: Steidl, 2010, pp.225-230.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> South African History Online, 'Ernest Cole: 1940-1990' in

[http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/cole\\_e.htm](http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/cole_e.htm) accessed 22/10/2008.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid. See also Newbury, D., *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA Press, pp.176-177.

<sup>269</sup> Newbury, D., *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2009, p.177.

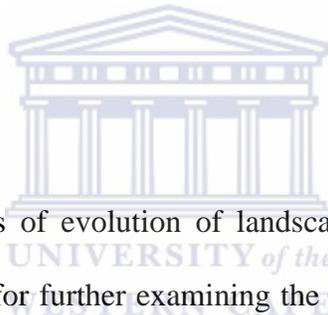
<sup>270</sup> South African History Online, 'Ernest Cole: 1940-1990' in

[http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/cole\\_e.htm](http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/cole_e.htm) accessed 27/11/2008.

<sup>271</sup> Firstenberg, L., 'Representing the Body Archivally in South African Photography' in *Art Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Spring, 2002), pp.58-67, College Art Association, p.59. It is very important here to recognise the role played by the South African photography in this era in informing the international community

*House of Bondage*, was published by Random House, Canada, and was banned in South Africa due to its focus on the then social realities.<sup>272</sup> It contained a series of photographic essays, set in the 1950s and 1960s, which served as an indictment of the inhumane conditions under which blacks had to live during the Apartheid era.<sup>273</sup>

Though Cole later stopped producing still photographs, when he took up filmmaking in Sweden, his work remained important.<sup>274</sup> It was used by the ANC in their newsletters and magazines such as *Sechaba* (*Nation* in Sesotho). Some were even used by the United Nations (UN) Special Committee against Apartheid and the International Defence and Aid Fund.<sup>275</sup>



### Conclusion

The engagement with aspects of evolution of landscape as a concept, as articulated above, has raised possibilities for further examining the question of power relations and how they get framed photographically in South Africa. In this vein, close examination of Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's work shows their response to their environment insofar as it pertains to various dynamics of social, political and economic realities of life in South Africa, both Apartheid as well as post-Apartheid. While they by no means claim to be necessarily landscape photographers, their tendency to frame a proliferated number of

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about life under Apartheid. Cole's contribution towards the promotion and maintenance of the visual economy in this manner is parallel to that played by the print media of the time.

<sup>272</sup> Newbury, D., *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA Press, p.173. See also Firtenberg, L., 'Representing the Body Archivaly in South African Photography' in *Art Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Spring, 2002), pp.58-67, College Art Association, p.59.

<sup>273</sup> Newbury, D., *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2009, p.174.

<sup>274</sup> South African History Online, 'Ernest Cole: 1940-1990' in [http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/cole\\_e.htm](http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/cole_e.htm) Accessed 27/04/2008.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

peopled landscapes, with numerous markers or inscriptions of official and popular experiences, beliefs, attitudes and actions, the landscape component in Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's work, warrants deep interrogation. In his subtle exploration of the landscape as a site of potential social meaning, Goldblatt has addressed the materiality of culture and the way structures reveal mindsets of their builders. It is Goldblatt's role of, perhaps, unwittingly and unwillingly, inserting and elevating landscape as a theme of photography in South Africa that is of profound importance for the purpose of this and other forthcoming chapters. Among the South African photographers of socially significant themes, it is David Goldblatt who is redefining landscape as a historicised, politicised phenomenon in South Africa.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Ways of seeing: From hegemonic to multiple viewpoints of landscape.

*“Rather than challenging the conventions and ways of seeing inherent in landscape the camera reinforced it (sic).”<sup>276</sup>*

*Introduction: The construction of landscape as an object of ‘consumption’*

In what ways can landscape, as a literal and metaphoric object, be viewed beyond its mere redefinition as an historicised phenomenon? In this chapter my critical engagement with ways of seeing landscape is partially informed by, but seeks to transcend, my fine arts and art history disciplinary backgrounds. My approach is also influenced by the fact that landscape has, since the early 1990s, always been my own artistic and, later, academic focus. As a practicing artist, focusing on landscape, my own critical understanding of the theme has always been limited due to considerable lack of meaningful critical engagement with available knowledge within art history.<sup>277</sup>

Of major import here is to trace or to theorise the developments of constructed, Westernised and hegemonic ways of seeing landscape in colonised, ‘othered’ regions. This view (and ideological consumption) of landscape from one dominant subject position has, since the years of struggles against imperialist colonialisms, been challenged. In the visual idiom of a photographer like Santu Mofokeng, this colonised

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<sup>276</sup> Cosgrove, D. E., *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984, p.258. This statement is problematic and is contradicted in the main text.

<sup>277</sup> Before I enrolled as a student of the Post-graduate Diploma programme in Museum and Heritage Studies, jointly offered by the University of the Western Cape, University of Cape Town and the Robben Island Museum, in 2004, almost all my exhibition catalogue essays are marked by this absence of serious critical engagement. Too many opportunities are thus lost in such a situation and this is the case with a considerable number of exhibition catalogue essay authors within the discipline of art history.

object has subsequently even been reclaimed.<sup>278</sup> It is in the context of this study that I look at landscape as a socially significant entity which has been visually represented firstly through painting and graphic means and, secondly, also through photographic means. This disciplinary background manifests itself now and again in this and other chapters but is applied in conjunction with other scholarly ideas and theories from other social science and humanities knowledge bases. In this chapter I will also look at the relationship between text and image in order to tackle the question of the creation of meaning. Older art history paradigms that conceive of landscape as a site of scenic beauty or subliminal awe,<sup>279</sup> and consequently of aesthetic appreciation and visual representation, tend to efface all other practical, social implications that are associated with humanity's relationship to it, especially if it is conceived of as "a visual world spread spatially before the eyes,"<sup>280</sup> or as "a container of physical structure and functional meaning in the traditional sense of landscape study." These tend to efface a myriad of narratives usually connected to episodes of political contestation.<sup>281</sup> The fact that landscape shapes us and that we, in turn, shape it, will be elaborated in more detail in Chapter Three, and can be understood in very basic visual terms. David Goldblatt, cited in Chapter Three of this thesis, deals with the idea that while humans shape landscape, it,

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<sup>278</sup> These thoughts are based on an early interview by Prof. P. Hayes and Farzanah Badsha with Santu Mofokeng, 24/07/2005, Johannesburg.

<sup>279</sup> Based on most of my observations around how landscape is conceptualized and visualized, I could narrow down the whole landscape experience into two basic categories: the picturesque and the sublime. The picturesque is mostly aesthetically pleasing, being marked by elements of beauty while the sublime evokes, among others, feelings of awe and a meditative response. The sublime evokes an array of intense emotional responses that also transcend the material. This point is discussed in detail in Chapter Five of this thesis in which the element and implications of infinity of space are interrogated. Whenever such issues are examined, it should be borne in mind that cultural and temporal gaps may inform our understanding of such romantic concepts. It may even be questionable if such concepts can be applied to photographs made by a black, postcolonial/post-Apartheid South African photographer of the twenty first century, such as Santu Mofokeng.

<sup>280</sup> Jakle, J. A., *The Visual Elements of Landscape*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987, p.16.

<sup>281</sup> This point is part of the main discourse of landscape photography as critically engaged with from the social science point of view.

in turn, shapes them too. In practical terms Goldblatt sees landscape as a social construct, mentioning what we do to it as various ways in which we construct it specifically according to our needs,<sup>282</sup> not just as a site of scenic beauty. His photography then facilitates a way of perceiving such ways of seeing.

When Jakle refers to landscape as the environment that surrounds us and also as a multifaceted thing,<sup>283</sup> the question arises as to how else the concept of space as a visual representational term can be understood. Since every visible and tangible object occupies positive space and since whatever is unoccupied space at any given moment is therefore negative, Jakle's point alludes to very basic spatial elements that both surround and confront us on a daily basis. Though landscapes function as centres of human intent,<sup>284</sup> such positive and negative spaces are, I argue, almost impossible to notice outside the pictorial context since, to borrow from David Goldblatt's expression,<sup>285</sup> they become 'visual furniture' – part of the mundane - and since they are exposed primarily to our vision, they also influence social behaviour because "inclinations to act are cued visually."<sup>286</sup> An element of the everyday that runs through the chapter deals with, among others, how Goldblatt is able to convince the public that the mundane is part of a broader social life in South Africa, thus bringing some "uneventful and overlooked aspects of lived experience into visibility.

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<sup>282</sup> See Chapter Three of this thesis.

<sup>283</sup> Jakle, J. A., *The Visual Elements of Landscape*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987, p.ix.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> See Chapter Four of this thesis.

<sup>286</sup> Jakle, J. A., *The Visual Elements of Landscape*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987, pp.x and 16.

### *On the everyday*

At this point I wish to define the everyday as related to how it affects our construction of meaning within the domain of documentary photography because the everyday shares a sense of not being seen with landscape.<sup>287</sup> Building on bodies of argument that were partly inspired by Sigmund Freud's 1901 lecture, *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*,<sup>288</sup> I posit that the everyday is that aspect of social narratives (presented and accessed through various representational means) which is marked by very common and very familiar phenomena which have been very little examined.<sup>289</sup> In Freud's case studies of psychoanalysis, we are alerted to these phenomena by what are termed 'parapraxes', also called Freudian slips.<sup>290</sup> But for our purposes here, I wish to engage with the notion more broadly in the sense that "there is nothing everyday about everydayness."<sup>291</sup>

Even more relevant is the manner in which Walter Benjamin stretches the idea of the everyday specifically within the domain of photography itself, pointing to what he terms 'optical unconscious'.<sup>292</sup> In his 'Little History of Photography', Benjamin looks, among other things, at photography's contribution as an art form and specifically relates it to aspects of everyday human activity. He touches on a very hardly noticeable disjuncture between the camera and the eye in terms of how what he terms 'nature' speaks to them.

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<sup>287</sup> This sense of virtual invisibility dominates, for example, most of David Goldblatt's and Santu Mofokeng's landscape photographic images. However, though landscape is such a central visual feature in documentary photography in general, it tends to remain virtually unnoticeable.

<sup>288</sup> Freud, S., 'Parapraxes', translated by James Strachey, in Highmore, B. (ed.), *The Everyday Life Reader*, London & New York: Routledge, 2002, p.39.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> Personal conversation with Prof. Ciraj Rassool, 12/03/09.

<sup>292</sup> Benjamin, W., 'Little History of Photography', Selected Writings Volume 2 1927-1934, p.510, in <http://www.totuusradio.fi/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/benjamin-little-history-of-photography.pdf> Accessed 08/03/16. Also see Walter Benjamin's illustration of this notion, based on Freudian theory, in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illustrations*, New York: Schocken Books, 1969, p.15, in <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/benjamin.pdf> Accessed 15/03/16.

He posits that it is another ‘nature’ which speaks to the camera rather than to the eye in the sense that “a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious.”<sup>293</sup> He further argues that though we have an idea, for example, what is involved in the act of walking, we surely “have no idea what happens during the fraction of a second when a person actually takes a step.” Photography is identified as a medium through which “we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis.”<sup>294</sup> Here Benjamin expands, at a deeper level, on insights offered by Freud’s ‘parapraxes’.

It is plausible to relate these definitions to the practical manner in which Goldblatt and Mofokeng (in Chapters Three, Four and Five of this thesis) utilise landscape, with social meaning invested within it, as a dynamic phenomenon which has received very little examination or critical consideration during the period marked by ‘struggle’ photography in Apartheid South Africa. The familiarity and commonality of landscape almost pushed it to the background of the collective social psyche; it became *forgotten* and *unnoticeable* albeit temporarily, if we examine this from the perspective of Freud’s examination of the everyday within the context of psychoanalysis, where Freud’s interest lay in the ways in which the unconscious manifests itself in the everyday.<sup>295</sup> It also is very pertinent to Benjamin’s examination and engagement with the notion of ‘optical unconscious’ already articulated above. Michel de Certeau also talks about everyday practices (‘ways of operating’ or ‘doing things’) that at times appear as “merely the obscure background of

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Freud, S., ‘Parapraxes’, translated by James Strachey, in Highmore, B. (ed.), *The Everyday Life Reader*, London & New York: Routledge, 2002, p.39.

social activity...”.<sup>296</sup> Practically and in the context of South African documentary photography, it is this obscurity of landscape that may have started as an occasional, ‘unusual’ or difficult focus of attention, but which has since been elevated to an increasingly important photographic space of exploration in Goldblatt’s and Mofokeng’s photographic careers.

It is also within the context of the everyday and activities accompanying it, as alluded to above, that images can be seen to be made up of signs to which we, in most cases and perhaps subconsciously, tend to attribute meanings.<sup>297</sup> The viewer attributes meaning to an image through an interpretative exercise that is aided by certain constructed rules that codify, as it were, an assumed meaning of the image.<sup>298</sup> The central decisive element in this process of decoding visual signs contained in an image is the subject or agent, the viewer who is engaged in the process of not just looking, but ‘reading’ *across and into* the image on display or in a book. It is the decisive role of the viewer that complicates the location of the source of meaning, but this argument also alludes to the fact that meaning is constructed not by the image or its maker, but by the interpretative exercise of the viewer.

The idea of linking up the documentary practice with reality also necessitates a critical engagement with the concept of the everyday. Such an engagement with the everyday is necessarily about dissecting the core of the change of the balance of class forces in the

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<sup>296</sup> De Certeau, M., ‘General Introduction to the Practice of Everyday Life [1980]’, translated by Steven Rendall, in Highmore, B. (ed.), *The Everyday Life Reader*, London & New York: Routledge, 2002, p.64.

<sup>297</sup> Mirzoeff, N., *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, London & New York: Routledge, 1999, p.15.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

industrialising West.<sup>299</sup> The notion of the everyday, a product of modernist capitalism, sounds specifically associable with the description of the commonplace, but the waves of revolutions, particularly those of 1848 in France, brought about the identification of this concept as constituting a set of identities possessing a specific aesthetic valency.<sup>300</sup> This marked a significant shift in social consciousness in that, for example, Manet started codifying the ordinary, the ugly and the prosaic as the modern.<sup>301</sup>

This rejection of modern idealism through which the ideal beauty was imagined to signify life, was a cultural gesture that alluded to the elevation of the working class and its everyday, materialist ideals. More significantly, this focus on the everyday – the quotidian – was also symptomatic of the rise of the working class movement and that of the bourgeoisie.<sup>302</sup> In the centre of this phenomenon was the cultural focus on the realities of urban decay or what Manet saw as the damaged beauty of the new industrialised Paris.<sup>303</sup> I argue here that industrialisation and deterioration of urban social life promoted a critical glare on this concept in the midst of constant redefinition of modernity due to intellectual conflicts that emanated from classism of that era of social upheavals. This constant redefinition of modernity, in my view, is an interesting symptom of the problematic social position of the European male subject in that his monocular view of life was often subjected to waves of attacks by the working class. Successive revolutions across Europe, redefining the centre of society, were some of the factors that, in my view, brought about the emergence of intellectual changes in the

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<sup>299</sup> Roberts, J., *The art of interruption*, Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1998, p.15.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

manner in which the world, especially urban, capitalist economies and their daily impact on the proletariat was reconfigured. As the proletarian demands for social and political emancipation intensified, culture also reflected this reality. As the new urban photography of Charles Marville, for example, also started to contribute towards the redefinition of the modern, a cultured sector of the bourgeoisie began to focus on the everyday experience of lower social classes and abused it as a source of exotica and paternalistic indulgence.<sup>304</sup> This kind of condescension seems to have prevailed over time across the cultural and geographical spectrum wherever societies were marked by elements of socio-economic inequalities.

Chapter Four will raise this point as a concern around the moral implications of photographing poverty and this will be specifically directed at the career of David Goldblatt as a white, middle-class photographer whose camera is often focused on aspects of impoverishment in both Apartheid and post-Apartheid South Africa. However, a close scrutiny of his photographs which emphasise landscapes will also show what it means to document mundane aspects of life in a changing country such as South Africa. All these ideas about the everyday evoke, in my view, isolated manifestations of intellectual and socio-political transformations that eventually lead, quite often, to the collapse of structuralist approaches to social critique, as in the case of some of Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's social documentary photographs.

There is a complicated theoretical relationship between seemingly similar concepts such as space, place, and landscape. These are often used interchangeably because there

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

seems to be a very thin line differentiating them. This is partly due to the fact that landscape itself, with the subtle power that it exerts over people, elicits a broad range of emotions and meanings that may be difficult to specify,<sup>305</sup> as is also the case with David Goldblatt's and Santu Mofokeng's struggles with the enigma of landscape (Chapters One and Five of this thesis). Santu Mofokeng's notion of *chasing shadows*, as will be expanded upon in Chapter Five of this thesis, refers to these ineffable *shadows* which are *chased*, as it were, by photographic means in sacralised spaces of the Motouleng caves. Admittedly, in spite of all the definitions of the landscape concept discussed in Chapter One, it is still largely marked by a seemingly inherent or intrinsic sort of indeterminacy of affect that seems to constitute whatever force it can have.<sup>306</sup> As landscape often manifests itself as the background within which figures, forms, or narrative acts emerge, it therefore exerts the passive force of setting, scene, and sight.<sup>307</sup> It is this passivity of its force as an entity that renders landscape virtually "the 'overlooked,' not the 'looked at,' and it can be quite difficult to specify what exactly it means to say that one is 'looking at the landscape.'"<sup>308</sup>

Connected to the notion of 'looking' are historic power struggles that emanate chiefly from what has been seen. Besides the fact that there is a tendency to emphasize the functional aspects of landscape, it is the aesthetic<sup>309</sup> appeal that, first and foremost, determines the behaviour around it, as will be argued in this chapter. The aesthetic

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<sup>305</sup> Mitchell, W. J. T., 'Preface to the Second Edition of *Landscape and Power: Space, Place, and Landscape*' in Mitchell, W. J. T., *Landscape and Power* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.), Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.vii.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Black, J., *The Aesthetics of Murder*, Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991, p. ix. Aesthetics, from Greek *aistheta*, means 'perceptible things'.

appeal can be seen as emanating from the fact that landscape, as a social and cultural product, is also “a way of seeing projected onto land and having its own techniques and compositional forms...”<sup>310</sup> Imperialist activities, prevalent mainly since the Italian Renaissance, are examples of human behaviour shaped by vision and, subsequently, feelings of desire or greed to own what has come to be known through perception. Harris states that “to see is to know”,<sup>311</sup> and seeing has always been pivotal during all exploratory voyages undertaken from Christopher Columbus in the late fifteenth century<sup>312</sup> until the nineteenth century. Indeed each exploration also implicitly encouraged further expeditions - to see further.

The notion that seeing, whether literally or through cultural mediation, is knowing can be expanded by further identifying the element of subjective selectivity and the processing that occurs in the mind, for the “study of landscape visualisation concerns not only the reality of landscape, but also the images derived as repositories of place meaning formed and interpreted in the mind.”<sup>313</sup> This is true especially in terms of Yi-Fu Tuan’s observation that: “The eyes explore the visual field and abstract from it certain objects, points of focus, perspectives,”<sup>314</sup> but vision is not presented as an objective exercise. It is subjective and it conforms to the subject’s attitude which also determines intent, as Jay

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<sup>310</sup> Cosgrove, D. E., *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984, p.269.

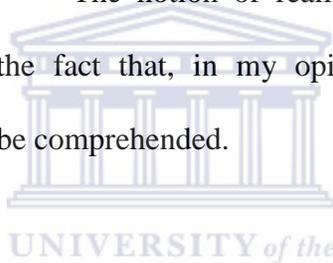
<sup>311</sup> Harris, B., ‘Photography in colonial discourse: the making of ‘the other’ in southern Africa, c. 1850-1950’ in Hartmann, W., J. Silvester and P. Hayes (eds.), *The Colonizing Camera*, Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1998, p.20. This phrase also applies to the concept of ‘the gaze’ which will be discussed in this chapter.

<sup>312</sup> Wilde, R., ‘The European Overseas Empires’ in <http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/colonialimperialism/a/ovoverempires.htm>. Accessed 09/10/11. See also Flint, V. I. J. in <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/127070/Christopher-Columbus> Accessed 09/10/11.

<sup>313</sup> Jakle, J. A., *The Visual Elements of Landscape*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987, p.16.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

Appleton asserts: “Behavior ... is influenced by a person’s attitude toward the environment, not so much as it is, but as he thinks it is.”<sup>315</sup> On the basis of this point I would further argue that an image of landscape, as a representation of reality, also complicates the notion of its accuracy or authenticity because there can be no uniform way of conceptualising the reality of any given environment, especially after the erasure of the hegemonic view of landscape and its reclamation by cultural and other means. Here I refer to an extract from Santu Mofokeng’s September 2008 catalogue of an exhibition held in Johannesburg: “In Santu Mofokeng’s ‘Landscape’ at Warren Siebrits this month, he speaks of the need to ‘...take psychic ownership of the land...inherited from the Apartheid ancestor.’”<sup>316</sup> The notion of reality is also clouded by a lot of uncertainty that stems from the fact that, in my opinion, there are many cultural perspectives from which it can be comprehended.



Reality, as related to the exercise of seeing landscape, has in a country like South Africa been largely determined, or constructed, by the sovereign, white settler male subject who, on the basis of his ‘rational’ self-consciousness within a largely disembodied mind, is endowed with a will to power.<sup>317</sup> I therefore argue here that reality is very much a subjective concept. This tendency to construct reality persists up to, or even beyond, the period of nineteenth-century exploration of other territories further

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> [http://www.artthrob.co.za/08sept/listings\\_gauteng.html](http://www.artthrob.co.za/08sept/listings_gauteng.html) Accessed 12/06/2009.

<sup>317</sup> Cosgrove, D. E., *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984, p.xvii. Here I am conscious of multiple whitenesses in South Africa since 1652 caused by layers of migration into South Africa – the Dutch, the English, the French and many smaller European ethnic groups that moved into South Africa - and the manner in which whites claimed the land for themselves. I therefore posit that this multiple white identity in an occupied territory necessitated that whites view landscape from a Eurocentric perspective. It should also be noted here that whites also held diverse political ideologies which further complicated the manner in which they viewed landscape.

away from the metropolitan centre.<sup>318</sup> The subject occupies his position at the centre of history in the discourse of which he is constructed and presented as the hero (or anti-hero) of the emerging social formation.

*Hegemonic views: Seeing and picturing space from the Renaissance to contemporary era*

Cosgrove attributes “the origins of the landscape idea to the experience of bourgeois citizens in the Italian city states in relation to land, and to the humanist culture generated out of their experience, paying specific attention to the spatialities connected to new technologies of vision and representation (linear perspective).”<sup>319</sup> This particular point has a direct reference to the manner in which the Renaissance subject conceptualised, perceived and tried to represent the world as a picture - the object perceived only from his subjective position and perspective. This Renaissance manner of seeing and representing landscape has manifested itself even within the context of colonial and Apartheid South African art. South Africa, as a former British colonial outpost in particular, has been made to conform to the aesthetic taste, apolitical and possessive way of seeing by the white male subject (the artist). Chapter One of this thesis touches on the role of photographer James Chapman<sup>320</sup> as a colonial cultural practitioner involved in the mediation of this particular way of ‘seeing’. Here I also think of some white South African painters who were active in the late nineteenth century, Jan Volschenk and Pieter Hugo Naude. Although Shaun de Waal asserts that these artists’ work is “the first

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<sup>318</sup> This point has been elaborated upon in Chapter One especially with reference to the emergence of photography as a cultural practice in southern Africa, including South Africa, and the evolution of landscape as a photographic genre.

<sup>319</sup> Cosgrove, D. E., *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984, p.xvii.

<sup>320</sup> Bester, R., ‘The politics of the photographic encounter in colonial southern Africa’ in Stevenson, M. (ed.), *Thomas Baines: An artist in the Service of Science in Southern Africa, 1-17 September 1999*. Exhibition Catalogue, London, p.143.

glimpse of an artistic vision engaging with life as lived in South Africa, for its own sake, rather than as a ‘report’ to the colonial master”,<sup>321</sup> it remains apparent that black art (often termed ‘utilitarian’ rather than ‘fine’ art) was completely ignored or marginalized. It is also pertinent here to point out that this way of seeing and representing the South African landscape also corresponded with the socio-political reordering of space by the colonial and Apartheid regimes. It tended to efface facets of landscape as a lived space within which socio-political occurrences took place. From the art historical viewpoint, such a hegemonic and sanitised view stems from the fact that colonial South African landscape, as part of the ‘*Othred*’ entity, has been constructed as a seductive spatial expanse, inviting the white male subject to possess and exploit ‘her’ in ideological and practical terms.<sup>322</sup> This constructed passivity further effaces any possibility of the emergence of agency within the framework of power relationships that were inevitable in this process of landscape construction. At a cultural level, the centre of the colonial and Apartheid South African art arena was manipulated largely by the white male artist while black art, on the cultural periphery of the racially segregated society, only assumed a secondary and, at times, categorically suspect position.<sup>323</sup>

This Western practice of seeing has a history that is marked by complexities of its evolution since the time of Leon Battista Alberti and Filippo Brunelleschi, two of the

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<sup>321</sup> De Waal, S., ‘South African Art’ in <http://www.southafrica.info/about/arts/art.htm> Accessed 08/12/10.

<sup>322</sup> This point should bring to mind a commonplace phrase: ‘I came, I saw, I conquered’ which, in this instance does not refer to the Latin expression ‘*veni, vidi, vici*’ used by Caesar but it alludes here to the attitude and behaviour of the white male subject, in this case represented by the artist. This has far-reaching implications within the context of South African visual representation in that both the nineteenth-century artist and photographer saw this colonised space not only as an object of occupation but that of subjugation as well.

<sup>323</sup> This is especially true since art was seen also as a cultural tool of exposing conditions under which marginalised races lived under Apartheid. More importantly, the South African art has thus been racialised, black art being known as ‘township’ art around the 1960s and some black artists such as Gerard Sekoto and Ernest Mancoba going into exile for better career opportunities.

Renaissance Italian pioneers of the idea of linear perspective.<sup>324</sup> What is important to note about this way of seeing is that it ignores the binocular character of human perceptual experience; rather, it focuses on the monocular one, thus emphasising the totalising, centralised authority of the subject in his visual organisation and ordering of the visual world. With regard to the subject's hegemonic position and the manner in which the visual world has been constructed, Mirzoeff observes: "The perspective system, for example, depends upon the viewer examining the image from one point only, using just one eye."<sup>325</sup> It should be noted here that the idea of ocular, instead of binocular, way of seeing is closely related to photographically mediated vision in which one lens is focused on the object. This is very much analogous to the dominant subject's attitude and his subjectively determined way of seeing the world.<sup>326</sup>

It is pertinent to point out here that David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng are part of the South African photographic genealogy, dating back to Eli Weinberg's time that has challenged and collapsed such a dominant subject's view of seeing the world, as will be articulated in much detail in Chapters Three, Four and Five of this thesis. Mofokeng, through his complex ways of obliterating this centre, invites the viewer of some of his photographs to participate alongside the object-cum subject in this process. The silhouetted figure of a child in his enigmatic *Afoor family bedroom, Vaalrand* (Fig.

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<sup>324</sup> Cosgrove, D. E., *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984, p.xvii. Such Renaissance intellectual and artistic evolutions were advanced by Leonardo da Vinci whose works have become almost synonymous with the movement itself. See also Honour, H. and J. Fleming, *A World History of Art* (Seventh Edition), London: Laurence King Publishing, 1984, pp.419-420.

<sup>325</sup> Mirzoeff, N., *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, London & New York: Routledge, 1999, p.8.

<sup>326</sup> This point will be dealt with in details in a section dedicated to the role of photography in seeing and representing landscape.



Fig. 2.1 Santu Mofokeng, *Afoor family bedroom, Vaalrand*. 1988.

2.1)<sup>327</sup> defies the confinement in object position; it is either facing towards or away from the unseen viewer, thus exempting himself/herself from being part of the looked-at.

The viewer is also compelled to look at the illuminated mundane objects over the figure's shoulders, thus equalising the subject and the would-be object. This introduction of multiple subject positions and heterogeneous ways of seeing is of profound importance in mapping out divergent directions that Goldblatt and Mofokeng and many of their fellow South African photographers after Weinberg would take. This point is further reinforced by the mushrooming of photographic collectives, missions, areas of emphasis and visual economic stimuli at given historical moments.

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<sup>327</sup> Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, p.48.



Fig. 2.2 Santu Mofokeng, *Ray Phiri*, *Shareworld*. 1986.

While it may not be feasible always to compartmentalise photographers in any way, it should be noted here that the following chapters allude to ways in which these two photographers, the Afrapix Collective and the Bang-Bang Club assumed their self-determined subjectivities in the documentation of South African social history. Mofokeng's *Ray Phiri*, *Shareworld* (Fig. 2.2) and *Concert*, *Sewefontein* (Fig. 2.3) are further examples of this collapsing of this central, hegemonic view of what is seen (photographed). Figure 2.3 raises possibilities of thinking about unordered, irrational ways of seeing photographically framed figures in disparate definitions (high and low) and focuses (sharp and blurred outlines).

The act of viewing has, since the nineteenth-century, been complicated by connections to social and technical changes or advances, eventually ushering in the period widely



Figure 2.3 Santu Mofokeng, *Concert, Sewefontein. c. 1988.*

referred to as ‘modernity’. These connections have been identified by Martin Jay while Timothy Mitchell has expanded on Martin Heidegger’s insight that “modern societies characteristically represent the world to themselves as a picture”.<sup>328</sup> Mitchell has related this practice to the modern West’s depictions of other non-Occidental societies and their landscapes.<sup>329</sup> Since the manipulation of knowledge sought to perpetuate and consolidate the subject’s position of exclusive authority, visualisation of landscape was ordered according to the rationalised thinking that would justify the confinement of the ‘Other’ in their position of inferiority. This, I propose, was a modernist, positivist ordering of the knowledge of the world and its presentation all around the ideologically

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<sup>328</sup> Cosgrove, D. E., *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984, p.xvii-xviii.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

universalised centre. The theory of knowledge is marked largely by instability because it is often shrouded in a contestation around who determines or validates knowledge in academic circles, especially when it comes to the discipline of anthropology and its relationship with photography.<sup>330</sup> This point is led from a premise in which anthropology viewed photography as a mechanical device of seeing that became central to the promotion and recording of landscape during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>331</sup>

*Gendered 'Othering' and the politics of representation*

It may be imperative, at this stage, to engage with the gender implications of the authority of the subject. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the essence and position of the male subject, the female and all other non-Occidental entities are relegated and confined to the social, political and economic periphery; in their constructed invisibility and virtual absence, they occasionally assume a banal position around the centre that is necessarily occupied by the advanced subject. I would point out here that whenever they appear on the scene, they are often portrayed in their roles of servitude towards the fulfillment of the subject's goals,<sup>332</sup> but would also add that there has often been an element of agency in such power relationships. In the social context of South Africa it is pertinent to note that white women, for example, have often been seen playing a

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<sup>330</sup> Rohde, R., 'How we see each other: subjectivity, photography and ethnographic re/vision' in Hartmann, W., J. Silvester and P. Hayes (eds.), *The Colonizing Camera*, Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1998, p.190. Rohde's point is specifically related to the relationship between anthropology and photography, but it is also applicable in this particular context given that photography was used as a device of knowledge production insofar as representation of landscape was concerned.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., p.xxiii.

<sup>332</sup> Some of the realities that have always marked the social relationships between the powerful subject and the dominated populations include exploitation of cheap labour. This has been a central feature almost in all specific situations of colonial occupation and exploitation of economic resources. This issue has been explored in photographic terms by both David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng, as mentioned in Chapters Three and Five of this thesis.

secondary role to their male counterparts. In her position of servitude, in a complex gender relationship with the subject (the bearer of the look), the female (as is the case with landscape) is also objectified and is being looked at by the subject. Borrowing from Berger's observations of the treatment of the female subject in painting, for example, I would argue that the position of servitude or passivity of a seen landscape is analogous to that of the nude female. Berger speaks of the 'ideal' spectator who is always assumed to be male while the image of the female is designed to flatter him,<sup>333</sup> in other words and specifically in terms of looking at landscape, to meet his ideal standards of social and visual aesthetic order. This is analogous to the objectification of landscape which is visually appropriated or consumed as the external world which evokes a sense of desire within the dominant subject. The subject may therefore have a voyeuristic, passionate desire to subject this gendered landscape<sup>334</sup> to his colonising gaze. The landscape 'way of seeing' entailed detachment from the land<sup>335</sup> on the part of the powerful subject and this has a direct implication for his centredness as a viewing subject that was also impersonated by uniformly male artists and visual critics and patrons of the Renaissance to Modern periods, who appear and communicate to us as an *eye* that is disconnected from any corporeal or sensual aspects of being.<sup>336</sup> The disconnected, disembodied *eye* manifests itself in the nineteenth-century Age of the machine during which the camera, as a 'magical', technological device of visual experience and representation, takes the central place within modernity in practical, mythical and rhetorical terms.<sup>337</sup> This issue is relevant here because Mofokeng's methodology of picturing the world, as has been

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<sup>333</sup> Berger, J., *Ways of Seeing*, London: Penguin Books, 1972, p.64.

<sup>334</sup> Cosgrove, D. E., *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984, p.xviii.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*

highlighted above, seeks to reconnect and re-embody the *eye* of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries so that the camera may be unfixed from a single, monocular (in a philosophical sense) perspective. Though outside the domain of landscape, curated *Black Photo Album*, as discussed in detail in Chapter Five, takes this idea of changing subject positions even further in that the sitters have determined the photographer-photographed relationship and how they should appear in those pictorial frames. The complexities of this self-assertion within the mechanised representational politics are thrashed out in Chapter Five.

An important issue related to nineteenth-century use of colonial vision has to do with the subject's ability to visually appropriate supposedly denuded space as commodity.<sup>338</sup> Here I argue that this aesthetically appealing space also becomes a medium of capitalist exchange between the metropolitan centre and the colonial outpost – two spatially disparate domains that are also marked by complex, dynamic social relationships that vary over time.<sup>339</sup> Between these two domains lies one of the most important and effective media of human contact, albeit for various purposes and on accounts of perceived fundamental differences, tourism, which DeLue associates with landscape.<sup>340</sup> Here DeLue uses a literary character of the nineteenth century, Henry David Thoreau, whose significance as a literary figure lies in the fact that he has been positioned within the nineteenth century, a century of Western modernity and increase in the quest for knowledge, exploration and conquering of far-away places and natives. Here I use

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<sup>338</sup> Cosgrove, D. E., *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984, p.257.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.91-92.

<sup>340</sup> DeLue, R. Z., 'Elusive Landscapes and Shifting Grounds' in DeLue, R. Z. and J. Elkins (eds.), *Landscape Theory*, New York & London: Routledge, 2008, p.3. It should be noted here that, from a few travel accounts touched on by DeLue, landscape is mostly a fictionalised entity.

tourism as an area of interface between the knowledge of the metropole and that of the colonial outpost. Whether Thoreau is a non-fictional or fictional figure, it seems fitting to utilise him as a figure around whom this idea can be imagined. He visits ‘far-away’ places that evoke within him a sense of curiosity born out of the experienced exoticised spaces.<sup>341</sup> This sounds like a microcosmic situation of the activities that led to the project of colonialism, thus taking us back to the question of landscape evoking particular behaviours that inform social relationships within a contested space. In this context tourism can be seen as a significant impetus and manifestation of the ‘look’ on ‘fossilised’,<sup>342</sup> romanticised spaces.

Here the ‘look’ is reciprocal, with the object returning it in marking a complicated ontological relationship between the supposedly civilised tourist (subject) and the supposedly primitive native.<sup>343</sup> From the perspective of the dominant subject, this capitalist channel of human traffic promotes the culturally, socially, temporally and spatially distant ‘*Other*’. If such human traffic may be regarded as yet another example of human behaviour associated with landscape experience, I would also suggest here that such behaviour is mostly induced, among others, by landscape poetics and travel narratives.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> This ‘fossilisation’ stems from a colonialist attitude that seeks to situate colonised spaces outside Western history that are associated with human progress. An essentialised colonial space is imagined to be occupied by human species that are ‘living’ examples of what humanity looked like or was about during the age of temporally distant primitiveness. In this context, time is used as a signifier of difference.

<sup>343</sup> DeLue, R. Z., ‘Elusive Landscapes and Shifting Grounds’ in DeLue, R. Z. and J. Elkins (eds.), *Landscape Theory*, New York & London: Routledge, 2008, p.3.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., pp.3-4. This has to do more about the roles of poetic and travel narratives.

In the context of this human traffic and reciprocal ways of ‘looking’, one can draw an interesting analogy of violence ensuing, as it were, between the ‘looker-on’ (the subject) and the ‘looked-at’ (the object) due to power tensions that seek to define the status and form of their relationship. The following narrative begins to articulate the complex character of the reciprocity of ways of looking during one of Thoreau’s encounters during a tour of landscape:

In the chapter entitled “Sunday,” he describes his encounter with a group of men on a bridge in Chelmsford under which he and his traveling companion, his brother John, sailed. These men, he writes, “leaned impudently over the rails to pry into our concerns, but we caught the eye of the most forward, and looked at him till he was visibly discomfited.” Thoreau then associates this looking with violence, describing the gaze as penetrating as a knife, even as he disarms said gaze, characterizing it as indirect or ineffective.<sup>345</sup>

It may be pertinent to note here that there are supposedly ‘natural’<sup>346</sup> scenes that are constructed as national spectacles of wonder on account of their marginality as opposed to the subject’s centrality.<sup>347</sup> The constructed reality of landscape here could be associated with the extent to which the latter is largely fictionalised even in visual narratives mediated by sophisticated mechanical apparatuses such as photography. However, DeLue recalls Henry David Thoreau’s account of his personal, unmediated experience of the slopes of Mount Ktaadn (1864), for example, where he felt emotionally persuaded to ask some ontological questions such as: “*Who are we? Where are we?*”<sup>348</sup> Here Thoreau’s account of his experience as a traveler in the landscape space also reveals

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid.,p.6.

<sup>346</sup> This term has been problematised in the last chapter, hence such a cautious use of it, especially to point out its misuse and problematic assumptions that surround it.

<sup>347</sup> DeLue, R. Z., ‘Elusive Landscape and Shifting Grounds’ in DeLue, R. Z. and J. Elkins (eds.), *Landscape Theory*, New York & London: Routledge, 2008, p.5.

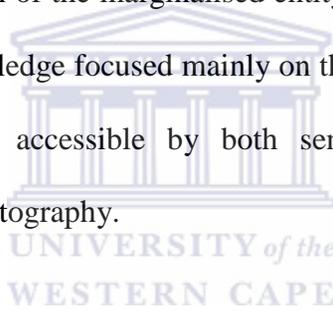
<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

how he felt its illusionistic animation as he became conscious of seemingly manifold forms of seeing that arise within it.<sup>349</sup>

*Landscape photography and knowledge*

It may be pertinent here to interrogate the practical implications of the advent of photography as an illusionistic medium employed in representing landscape and its components and what that has to do with the politics of knowledge. The notion of photographic representation as a form of knowledge - of knowing the object - persisted throughout the nineteenth century. This fitted within the idea of knowledge which aimed at the control and appropriation of the marginalised entity on the periphery of society.<sup>350</sup>

This version of positivist knowledge focused mainly on the representation of the material world that was immediately accessible by both sensory experience and cultural representation, in this case, photography.



What difference would it have made if Thoreau did not, for example, have to literally reach the landscape that he wished to experience? One of the modern age media of representation upon which he probably would have depended is photography – a supposedly veritable way of recording knowledge, turning the world into a picture.<sup>351</sup> Here I propose that Martin Heidegger’s contention that “nothing in the world exists any longer except in and through representation, that is, in images”,<sup>352</sup> alludes to the fact that for the nineteenth-century subject in possession of a camera, the knowledge of the world

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Slater, D., ‘The Object of photography’ in Evans, J., *The Camerawork Essays*, London: Rivers Oram Press, 1997, p.92.

<sup>351</sup> Jussim, E., *The Eternal Moment*, New York: Aperture Foundation, Inc., 1989, p.10.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

is no longer capable of being ascertained, recorded and archived without visual representation. In this way, I argue, knowledge was being concretised, imagined and imaged to reside primarily in the domain of visual data that only the dominant subject could collect or manipulate. Heidegger's claim about the notion of the world being a picture implies that the subject possesses power to fashion the world in any way that suits his aesthetic sensibilities and imperialist agendas, hence his belief that "he is producing the world in producing its representation."<sup>353</sup> This further implies that our knowledge of the world, our relationship to the world, our relationship to each other and to ourselves, depends entirely on who is representing the world to us, hence the notion of our mediated understanding of and relationship to the world.<sup>354</sup>

In essence, it can also be implied that modernist representation is not just about imitating what happens to be within the range and focus of photographic, or any other, medium of framing. It also entails who and what is being represented and by whom, for what purposes and with what effect on which viewers.<sup>355</sup> The business of representation itself is highly loaded with the politics of race, class and creed, in my opinion, but any contemporary argument would reject this totalising representational approach. Such a rejection of modernist thinking is analogous to an attack against old, established conventions of viewing the world – the imposing ideological superstructure that claims the subject's centrality and the universality of his reason.

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

Philosophical critical engagement (albeit from disparate positions) advanced by scholars such as Marx, Nietzsche, Bataille, Derrida, and Foucault have surely prevailed since the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, marking, I would claim, the prevalent de-centring of the subject.<sup>356</sup> On this account I would further argue that the plural character of these scholars' critical positions toward subjectivity and its implication for the essence of consciousness raises questions concerning the meaning of problematic concepts such as truth and reality. Monolithic political representations of the world could no longer be acceptable. One of the proponents of this contemporary way of thinking about knowledge, Harold Lasswell, was concerned with representation insofar as it was related to the politics and the study of public opinion.<sup>357</sup> In this vein, and in line with Lasswell's concern, it is also arguable that the singular, universalised, ocular vision by the modern subject becomes challenged by possibilities of the emergence of multiple subjectivities that make various claims as to how else knowledge of the world is to be comprehended and presented. As the erstwhile position of the subject gradually becomes more and more porous, episteme becomes pluralised and dynamic.

Concerning the question of representation and power, Lasswell was "in favour of the notion of political pluralism which served to challenge the absolutist dogmas of modernism concerning the universality of art, the worship of abstract ideas, and the liberation of the working classes through science and utopian design (of which the Bauhaus was the perfect model)".<sup>358</sup> These points allude, in my opinion, to the extent to

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<sup>356</sup> Benhabib, S., 'Review [untitled]' in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 84, No. 12 (Dec., 1987), pp. 752-757, *Journal of Philosophy, Inc.*, p.754.

<sup>357</sup> Jussim, E., *The Eternal Moment*, New York: Aperture Foundation, Inc., 1989, p.11.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

which modernist idealism came under attack,<sup>359</sup> hence there is a strong relationship between modernism and realism. Photography had been projected as a medium intrinsically biased toward realistic representation, but it had often imitated modernists, attempting both idealism and transcendence through a pursuit of abstraction.<sup>360</sup> This is interesting in that it can serve as a counterpoint if one looks at the role of photography within the South African documentary context where, especially in the 1980s, photography and other art forms were largely employed as weapons of anti-Apartheid struggle. This immediately defines how realism had to be understood in this particular case – from the social and cultural perspectives.<sup>361</sup>

#### *On documentary photography*

It may be useful at this point to engage specifically with some controversial concepts especially when it pertains to social documentary photography globally and locally. The term ‘documentary’ itself superficially implies documenting what was there at the moment of photographing. It also implies *reality* instead of speculation, and realism instead of idealism. However, documentary photography has been marked and complicated, since its inception as a distinct term in the 1920s,<sup>362</sup> by a persisting

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<sup>359</sup> Ibid., p.12. Realism, as a post-Romantic, nineteenth-century concept and painting movement in Europe emerged alongside public debate on the implications of the invention of photography in 1839. However, the kind of Realism that emerged with painters and writers such as Gustave Courbet, Honore Daumier, Gustave Flaubert, and Charles Baudelaire focused mainly on social aspects of contemporary life, their concerns being marked by sincerity, honesty and ‘truth’. In photography, realism is often associated with naturalism, the honest manner of the depiction of the outward appearance of the world and its objects. This realism is also shrouded by unresolved debate around whether photography can really depict a truth or the ‘truth’.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

<sup>361</sup> I posit here that the South African social conditions as well as visual representation of this period would not allow for the luxury of playing around with almost intellectually inaccessible approaches such as abstraction. The realistic approach would be the most appropriate way of visually representing social conditions for local and foreign consumption.

<sup>362</sup> Solomon-Godeau, A., *Photography at the Dock*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p.169.

controversy. As a controversial notion, Hight and Sampson view documentary photography “as an ideal balance of aesthetic representation and the insightful comprehension of a given situation”<sup>363</sup> that has been subjected to critical scrutiny “for its contribution to a biased discourse of ‘official’ knowledge”. Solomon-Godeau has identified a paradoxical way of understanding what documentary photography is. She claims that it is:

...“just about everything” or alternatively, “just about nothing.” In support of the former reply, one could argue that insofar as any photographic image expresses an indexical relation to whatever appeared before the lens at the moment of exposure, that image is a document of *something*. From this expansive position, no photograph is more or less documentary than any other.<sup>364</sup>

The apparent logical inconsistencies of definition and epistemological vagueness of the term corresponds with David Goldblatt’s observations:

You always can’t help being a witness if you’re taking photographs...look; photographs become forensic evidence – the evidence of what was in front of the camera. Eh, this is an inevitable consequence of taking photographs, except in the case of highly creative work that you might do with computers and cameras, studios...eh, and for the rest, if you’re concerned with photographing a world around you, your camera is a witness. I don’t find the term ‘documentary photography’ very useful. I avoid these terms because for me there’s either photography or there’s no photography. And almost any photograph that you can think of is a document; it’s evidence of something that was in front of the camera...what is a documentary photograph? I don’t know. Is a fashion photograph a documentary photograph? Can be, why not?<sup>365</sup>

Goldblatt’s contention, no matter how banal it may seem, is compelling in that it should then be asked why it took so many decades for documentary photography to be identified as a genre or a term. It should also be asked if photography would never have been seen as performing a documentary function should it not have been so categorised in the late

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<sup>363</sup>Hight, E. M. and G. D. Sampson., ‘Photography, “Race”, and Post-Colonial Theory’ in Hight, E. M. and G. D. Sampson (eds.), *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*, London; New York: Routledge, 2002, p.15.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> See transcript of an interview with David Goldblatt by the candidate on 22/01/08, Cape Town.

1920s in America. Again, Goldblatt makes a productive distinction between documentary photography and ‘highly creative work’ that, as he signals, would not function as evidence of what was in front of the camera at the moment of photographing.

*The rise of ‘documentary’ photography: a history and implications*

Goldblatt, as this study shows, does not categorise himself as a documentary photographer. For him, anything that he documents photographically is automatically to be regarded as falling within ‘documentary photography’ without necessarily building a terminological wall around it, specifying it as ‘documentary’.<sup>366</sup> The problematic aspect of the definition of this term is also the fact that, as Solomon-Godeau mentions, it arrived late within the photographic lexicon.<sup>367</sup> This raises questions such as: What was it called before the 1920s? Why is it being called ‘documentary’ only around the 1920s?<sup>368</sup> Goldblatt’s views resonate with the notion of photography having always been seen as fulfilling obviously the objective, the documentary function, since its invention. The necessity of the use of the term as a newly named (though always in existence) genre stems mainly from the fact that there had been an historic agenda of art photography throughout the nineteenth and much of the early twentieth centuries which was used to counter the popular notion of photography as a brute mimetic “medium with claims for its subjective and expressive mediations.”<sup>369</sup> This, as well as Goldblatt’s line of argument, seeks to put documentary photography squarely within the domain of

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<sup>366</sup> I will deal with Santu Mofokeng’s views on the connection between what he regards as artistic creativity and the term ‘documentary’ in Chapter Five.

<sup>367</sup> Solomon-Godeau, A., *Photography at the Dock*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p.170.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, p.171. Although it took decades for this term to emerge in the photographic scene, documentary photographic practice was thoroughly established by the 1860s. Its pioneers included Desire Charnay, Samuel Bourne, Felice Beato, Matthew Brady and Francis Frith.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*

objectivity. It suggests that documentary photography should be informational, reportorial or non-aesthetic in approach and intent. However, the weight of Goldblatt's argument lies in the fact that his own work on landscape photography, though contemporary scholarship may categorise it as 'documentary', is often more intellectually engaging rather than just informational, reportorial or non-aesthetic. As argued in details in Chapter Six of this thesis, it is Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's elements of critical engagement that have helped expand, rather than attenuate, the notion of documentary photography in South Africa.

It is, at this point, pertinent to look at the methodological implications of Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's return to the theme of landscape within the context of the South African documentary photography. The early photographic activities since colonial southern Africa in general and South Africa in particular were marked by their apolitical character, tending to efface the social component which was by no means innocent. Landscape, as a bone of contention between the powerful and the powerless (from the colonial through to the Apartheid era in South Africa)<sup>370</sup> is now being reclaimed, in my view, from its former colonial/Apartheid confines and is being projected from an alternative perspective. Within the documentary context, Goldblatt and Mofokeng are no longer projecting landscape merely as a passive entity ready to be occupied and exploited, but as a lived space marked by dynamic socio-political occurrences. As Chapters Three, Four and Five will show, landscape is able to be presented by these two photographers as a site invested with both physical and spiritual meanings, thus liberating it from redundant aestheticism.

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<sup>370</sup> This does not imply that the post-Apartheid period is practically free from the evils of the past. As a matter of fact, most of Goldblatt's colour landscape photographs confirm this point, with the majority population still living in squalid conditions on major urban peripheries.

It is also pertinent to note here that Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's methodologies allow them to treat the everyday and landscape as significant components that often permeate each other within the documentary photographic context. In this manner Goldblatt and Mofokeng are among those South African photographers who turn Cosgrove's claim (cited at the beginning of this chapter) around. The camera now challenges the conventions and ways of seeing supposedly inherent in landscape. Instead of reinforcing such conventions, these photographers' cameras collapse them, especially within the context of 'documentary' photography.

However, it is Walker Evans (1903 – 1975), one of the most influential artists of the twentieth century, who can be identified as strongly influential in what became known as the 'documentary style or tradition' in the American photography.<sup>371</sup> Evans started off as a photographer marked by:

...the influence of European modernism, specifically its formalism and emphasis on dynamic graphic structures. But he gradually moved away from this highly aestheticized style to develop his own evocative but more reticent notions of realism, of the spectator's role, and of the poetic resonance of ordinary subjects.<sup>372</sup>

A brief historical account behind the role of Evans in the coining of this term is pertinent. When, in June 1935, he accepted a job offered by the US Department of the Interior to photographically depict a government-built resettlement community of unemployed coal miners in West Virginia, he then negotiated this opportunity into a full-time position as an "information specialist"<sup>373</sup> in the Resettlement Administration. This was a New Deal Agency within the Department of Agriculture, aimed at dealing with the Great

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<sup>371</sup> Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, 'Walker Evans (1903-1975)' in [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/evan/hd\\_evan.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/evan/hd_evan.htm) Accessed 08/03/16.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

Depression at the time.<sup>374</sup> Evans' defining moment came when he took leave of absence from the Resettlement Administration in order to travel to the South with the writer James Agee who had been commissioned by *Fortune* magazine to work on an article on tenant farmers. Evans would do the photographic component of the assignment though Agee's text on three Alabama families was ultimately rejected. But the whole collaborative work then resulted in "a lyric journey to the limits of direct observation"<sup>375</sup> called *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.<sup>376</sup> It is fair to say that Evans' photographs expressed the whole collective experience of the Great Depression in quite a fresh, revealing manner. Everyday elements do emerge occasionally in the work of members of the Afrapix Collective such as Omar Badsha.<sup>377</sup> This chapter will attempt to argue that David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng have contributed towards a productive reconfiguration of the notion of the everyday, giving it a more archival function in terms of historical and potentially philosophical layers present. This latter claim pertains, especially, to Mofokeng's focus on the apparent conflation of the material and the spiritual in his sacred landscape scenes and Goldblatt's insistence on a dispassionate focus on the complexities of social life in South Africa. Such an insistence on 'dispassion' amounts to an apparent plea for an objective approach to a subject matter and themes already tainted by numerous aspects of social, political and economic

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<sup>374</sup> Ibid.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> Krantz, D. L., 'Politics and Photography in Apartheid South Africa' in *History of Photography*, Volume 32, Number 4, Winter 2008 from [http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/artsmediaculture/protest\\_art/pdf/Krantz\\_revised.pdf](http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/artsmediaculture/protest_art/pdf/Krantz_revised.pdf), p.292 Accessed 09/08/09.

inequalities. It is a plea, I contend, that works overtly against the tendency to de-archive<sup>378</sup> knowledge, as is the case with aspects of ‘struggle’ photography.

This point on de-archiving knowledge is based on my interpretation of the social function of ‘struggle’ photography: that it tends claustrophobically to confront the viewer more with anxiety-producing images rather than with intellectually empowering images that aim systematically to archive the social history of South Africa. When, in September 1938, the Museum of Modern Art opened Evans’ retrospective exhibition of the work produced in the first decade of his career, it also published a book called *American Photographs*, containing his photographic images. The book contains, among other things, images of cotton farmers, Appalachian miners, war veterans, fast food outlets, barber shops and country churches – all epitomising collective expressions of American desires, despairs and traditions.<sup>379</sup> For many artists, the book still serves as the benchmark against which all photographic monographs are measured.<sup>380</sup> In spite of all the influence exerted by Evans within his artistic community of the twentieth century, he responded, when asked by Leslie Katz in 1971 whether photographs could be documentary as well as works of art, thus:

Documentary? That is a very sophisticated and misleading word. And not really clear. You have to have a sophisticated ear to receive that word. The term should be documentary style. An example of a literal document would be a police photograph of a murder scene. You see, a document has use, whereas art is really

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<sup>378</sup> In the context of this thesis and in my own interpretation, de-archiving knowledge is the failure to store and meditate upon any stimulus that has a potential of providing knowledge from which more productive critical engagement could emanate. In the context of Goldblatt’s and Mofokeng’s methodological approaches, knowledge is produced and archived, as it were, as opposed to what was often done in the context of ‘struggle’ photography.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

useless. Therefore art is never a document, though it certainly can adopt that style.<sup>381</sup>

Evans' pursuit of the documentary in photography, rather than aestheticism or symbolism, also suggests claims to the ability of a photograph to provide impartial and scientific visual information. The more it is imbued with such qualities the more factual and reliable it may be. Pertaining to fact as the basis on which documentary claims are founded, Jussim and Lindquist-Cock observe:

Fact is associated with scientific precision, which always implies specifics rather than generalities. Visually, scientific precision is identified with purity of vision. Photographers today generally claim to be finding, recording, impartially observing, witnessing, exploring themselves – anything but making works of art.<sup>382</sup>

With a view to attempting to pin this down, in terms of how it came to exist, I propose regarding Jussim's and Lindquist-Cock's observation as the most salient:

...the Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographers of the 1930s were pushed to defend themselves against accusations of partiality toward their subjects. In defining their mission, which was to bring the plight of economically depressed Americans to the attention of the general public, they were forced to define themselves by a term more easily understood in the cinema of the time: documentary.<sup>383</sup>

From this observation, it is deducible that the term 'documentary' was born out of a need for photography and cinema to distinguish and occupy their respective spaces.<sup>384</sup>

However, the question of ethics and morals in terms of the powerful position of the photographer and the vulnerability of the victims of the American Depression became the

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<sup>381</sup> Langham, D., 'Walker Evans and Documentary photography' in <http://davidlangham.blogspot.co.za/2013/02/walker-evans-and-documentary-photography.html> Accessed 08/03/16.

<sup>382</sup> Jussim, E. and E. Lindquist-Cock, *Landscape as Photograph*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985, p.55.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> Solomon-Godeau, A., *Photography at the Dock*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p.170.

most compelling reason for such a definition. The basic goal was to justify the photographic consumption of the victims so that it would not appear as a means to visually feast on human suffering (see Chapter Six).

It seems almost impossible for documentary photographers to operate solely within the superficial grid of impartiality or objectivity. Apart from the fact that it may be impossible for the photographer not to be selective in terms of composing a coherent image, Dorothea Lange, one of the FSA group, who points out a difference between documentary photography and the 'document', suggests that a document remains haunted by qualities such as the meaning of the episode, the circumstance or the situation that can only be revealed by a quality to which the artist responds.<sup>385</sup> There is an interpretive role of the photographer who now operates also as an artist; this collapses the notion of documentary photography as objectively informative, factual or non-aesthetic. If this argument was to be applied to what 'documentary' implies in the context of landscape depiction in global terms, 'pure fact', among others things, could occupy the centre. The FSA group's mandate was to dispassionately establish 'facts' in the form of unadulterated photographic documents.<sup>386</sup> However, the notion of adulteration within the context of documentary photography can imply a number of processes, including the manipulation of colour in photographs, airbrushing unwanted compositional elements or approaching the subject in a particular manner that may project an intended appearance of the final picture. In the South African socio-political context, for example, documentary photography has also been understood to respond to a changing country without being

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<sup>385</sup>Jussim, E. and E. Lindquist-Cock, *Landscape as Photograph*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985, p.55.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

neutral.<sup>387</sup> In the context of the notion of culture as an anti-Apartheid weapon, this applies mainly to the Afrapix Collective, whose members also asked at the historic 1982 Culture and Resistance festival in Gaborone, Botswana, how photographers might hit back with cameras.<sup>388</sup> This, again, collapses the notion of documentary photography as being dispassionate. In a nutshell, it should be noted that while documentary photography may be associated with all the ethical and moral conventions discussed here, it can easily lend itself to serving different functions in different contexts. However, specific conditions in South Africa produced a narrowing and hardening of understandings of documentary as a genre dedicated to exposing the conditions of the majority population under Apartheid.

### *The construction of meaning*

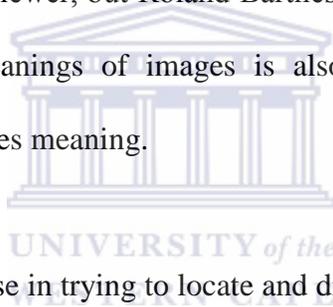
This construction of meaning may get complicated in the context of the South African social documentary photography, especially in the case of David Goldblatt's methodology of operation. If Goldblatt applies subtlety and irony in his photography, he allows a space for direct engagement and interpretation of the image based just on visual signs contained in the picture format. The level of intimacy remains constant or, in some cases, becomes intense, but given the usual specificity of most of the images, text is often inserted to buttress the process of decoding, making sense of an assumed meaning. As will be shown in the proceeding chapters, the hidden intent of the landscape photographer is bound to come into play due to an operational imperative to direct the viewer's

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<sup>387</sup> Staffrider Magazine, *South Africa through the Lens: Social Documentary Photography*, Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1983, p.36.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid. See also Peffer, J., *Art and the End of Apartheid*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009, pp 77-79. See also Newbury, D., *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2009, p.220.

attention to social issues with which the photographer is concerned. I would further argue that the construction of meaning is still culturally and socially determined in cases of specific images dealing with specific social issues. When the photographer, who is basically also a cultural practitioner, employs tools that aid intellectual accessibility to an image, the process of interpretation takes place within a context of a particular social awareness that the image is trying to evoke. So, what appears in most images analyzed in the following chapters is that the emergence of the photographer's intent rises to the surface of the image when text has been inserted to buttress its appearance, an application to the determination of meaning. According to Mirzoeff,<sup>389</sup> meaning is really the construction of the agent, the viewer, but Roland Barthes's<sup>390</sup> interrogation of the role of etymology in formulating meanings of images is also worth examining in that he investigates how culture signifies meaning.



Using an etymological premise in trying to locate and dissect meaning within the image, it becomes necessary to go down to the root of the word *image*, *imitari*.<sup>391</sup> What renders meaning so elusive seems to be the central problem that confronts the semiology of images: “can analogical representation (the ‘copy’) produce true systems of signs and not merely simple agglutinations of symbols?”<sup>392</sup> Barthes argues that linguistic signification, instead of identifying meaning on the basis of signs, further complicates the image's ineffable richness instead of exhausting it.<sup>393</sup> He further implies that, on the basis of that

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<sup>389</sup> Mirzoeff, N., *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, London & New York: Routledge, 1999, p.15.

<sup>390</sup> Barthes, R., ‘Rhetoric of the image’ in [http://writing.syr.edu:16080/~danentwi/Barthes\\_Rhetoric of the Image.pdf](http://writing.syr.edu:16080/~danentwi/Barthes_Rhetoric_of_the_Image.pdf), p.269.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid.

ineffability, the image itself serves only to limit meaning.<sup>394</sup> Barthes conceptualises a process in which the meaning gets into the image since it does not automatically project it.<sup>395</sup> David Bate also identifies the semiotic confusion as the source of the assumption that photographs can produce meaning.<sup>396</sup> On the basis of his understanding that the image may contain some messages, Barthes asks how meaning gets into the image, where it ends, and what is located beyond its end-point.<sup>397</sup> He then provides examples of factors that inform the extent to which meaning may enter the image and thus be detectable. He mentions the advertising industry in which the signs are rendered more emphatically in order to allow for optimum reading.<sup>398</sup>

Here meaning also enters the image through the employment of previously known signs that directly refer to the advertised brand. This is possible to operate also in the context of documentary or landscape photographs. Visual emphasis of the commonplace signs associated with the brand and the intended message about the function or benefits of using the brand dominate the image and project themselves in directly legible terms as central referents of the image.<sup>399</sup> Most of what appears in the image is intended to be shown rather than just implied, given the directness and emphasis of the visual message. The denotative aspect of the image is more immediate here while the conveyance of the connotative aspect may need more attention in that it may most likely be provided through the creative application of elements such as lighting, colours, and the absence of

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<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> Elkins, J. (ed.), *Photography Theory*, New York & London: Routledge, 2007, p.253.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

any possible barrier to the reading of the image.<sup>400</sup> Barthes touches on the benefits and challenges inherent in the use of both images and text (language) insofar as the readability of images is concerned.

In other categories of images, other than in the advertising industry, meaning becomes more and more complex. One of the factors that render such images more complex is context. In most cases, for example, David Goldblatt's and Santu Mofokeng's landscape images are taken and should be interpreted within a social context. They are therefore not simple metaphors with readily available tools of interpretation or deciphering. They mostly project what is meant to be shown on the surface and then require the viewer to try to decipher what is actually implied. (Deep analysis of many of Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's landscape images analysed in this thesis often proves to be multilayered, but not necessarily contradictory, in their implied meanings). Metaphorically speaking, such images are pregnant with often overlooked dimensions of thought and analysis. The fact that some images show landscapes as pictures, that is, as flat pieces of paper with clusters of tonal values created by light-sensitive emulsions,<sup>401</sup> also implies that it may be much safer to refer to implications as opposed to meanings at moments of encounter between the viewer and the image.

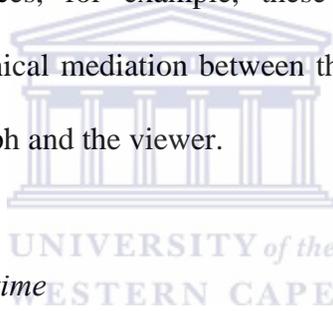
For Rosalind Krauss, when photographic meaning is understood within a theory of the causality of the image - the index as a sign caused by its referent - it is often confused

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<sup>400</sup> Barrett, T., *Criticizing Photographs*, Mountain View, California, London and Toronto: Mayfield, 1990, p.35.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

with the meaning that the picture has.<sup>402</sup> She contends that the graphic marks produced jointly by the camera and photography may well be indexical (referring to what the camera was pointed to at the moment) but have no necessary relation whatsoever to the meaning attributed to the image.<sup>403</sup> Graphic marks on the two-dimensional surface of the photographic print are only a collection of illusionistic elements which pretend to carry the meaning of what is claimed to have been photographed. I also contend that the chemical reaction that occurs in the camera only records graphic marks which then get inscribed on a printed physical photographic support, but that has nothing to do with what is imagined to have been a photographic vision. Whatever claims are made for the camera capturing scenic spaces, for example, these only serve to neutralise the supposedly impersonal mechanical mediation between the subject and the photographer and then between the photograph and the viewer.



*'Truth' and reality: space and time*

The historical and cultural contextualisation of such images facilitates the determination of implied meanings, not just meanings that are imagined to flow from the image itself. I therefore argue that meanings of images are not just given, natural or intrinsic to images; they are constructed around contexts within which they are perceived to be located. Even meaning, I would contend, cannot be taken to constitute *the truth*; it constitutes *a truth*. This point alludes to the extent to which photographic meaning is only a subjective construction rather than objective truth. This is especially true about Goldblatt's images

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<sup>402</sup> Elkins, J. (ed.), *Photography Theory*, New York and London: Routledge, 2007, p.253.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

where he is economical with the amount of information that he provides around them, thus allowing for more interactive space between the image and the viewer.

The act of photographing and that of viewing the product of the photographic event are actually complicated by the element of time that never allows for claims of reality because the photographed space is never the same in the constant flow of time. Space, as a constructed entity, is constantly under a transformational process in that it is, for example, impossible to jump into the same river twice. However, due to the modern spectator's wish to freeze time in space, spaces retain the same names irrespective of temporal transformation. Reality, as a concept related to space and time, seems to be a figment of the imagination, but it is constructed and imagined to be in existence. Again, if Goldblatt's methodology of documenting space is taken into consideration here, it should be noted that he returns to spaces again after the passing of time and takes more photographs as his manner of following up on the past events of documentation. As observed in the proceeding chapters, he finds and photographs transformed spaces due to human interference or impact of social changes. Ironically, such spaces retain their names due to humanity's wish to freeze time and nostalgically cling to the past while claiming to be perpetually progressive. Michel Frizot makes a significant point when he asserts that photography, in this sense, is a contradictory cultural medium which supplements our senses while it, at the same time, contradicts them.<sup>404</sup> While there is an imagined reality of the never-ending flow of time, our senses dictate a false conviction of a space frozen in time by virtue of it being represented visually on a two-dimensional, supposedly unchanging support. This point collapses the whole notion of photography as

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<sup>404</sup> Ibid., p.272.

attached to reality and all claims around the documentary practice that is often seen as the most reliable source of understanding a supposedly captured reality.

### *Conclusion*

The above engagement with landscape theory and practice has raised a number of questions about assumptions that are often taken for granted in the discipline of visual culture, particularly in landscape representation. Landscape has been examined as an object that is subject to complex ways of seeing and this has been examined also in terms of an understanding that these ways of seeing are not always borne by the dominant, colonising subject; they can be 'violently' reciprocal. This alternative way of understanding 'violence' is symbolic but it finally manifests itself in practical ways in the form of frontier wars within the South African colonialist context, as will be argued in details in Chapter Three of this thesis. However, an array of arguments have also brought the study of this subject towards logical conclusions that allude to the fact that there are problematic, enforced elements of social inequality that are inscribed in a number of cultural ways and presented as part of the monocular perspectival ways of looking at the world.

The engagement with the politics of seeing, especially from the European male subject's point of view also led the discourse to dimensions such as the implications of systems that include imperialist colonialism. This chapter has attempted to show what such systems have meant for the practice of not only photography, but also for its cultural predecessors. In order to strip landscape of its apparent innocence, this chapter also interrogated some definitive misconceptions especially when it comes to its photographic

representation as a mechanised way of seeing. The practice of photography, not only abroad and in the past, but also locally and during recent years, has been brought under scrutiny here with a view to dealing with age-old assumptions about problematic concepts such as reality, time, space, and the everyday. In essence, thorough examination of such concepts yields, quite often, a number of ideas touched on in the main text that have, up to now, not been resolved. Landscape, according to this chapter, with all attempts at theory attached to it, is not as innocent as it may be presented and, contrary to Cosgrove's statement that I have used as part of this chapter's topic, can no longer adhere to archaic, conventional ways of seeing.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Hegemonic structuring of Apartheid South Africa: Landscape photographs by David Goldblatt<sup>405</sup>

*"My interest as a photographer is exploring and probing the world in which I live, which is South Africa, more specifically the social world of South Africa..."<sup>406</sup>*

#### *Introduction*

One of the best possible ways of stripping landscape of its apparent innocence with a view to showing that it does not merely adhere to archaic, conventional ways of seeing is to interrogate aspects of social history as inscribed in space. This chapter is concerned with the manner in which David Goldblatt's work explores and documents the social history of South Africa in terms of its ideological and material structuring by the colonial and Apartheid powers.<sup>407</sup> The hierarchical arrangement of spatial organisation on the basis of race, aided by racially biased legislation and its enforcement, entailed a degree of ideological structuring of the South African landscape. This was specifically meant to privilege the politically dominant racial group psychologically and economically at the expense of the politically dominated African majority. However, as this chapter will show, this practice was also reinforced and justified by Afrikaner Calvinist theological ideology through which certain biblical narratives and teachings were twisted to justify the Apartheid agenda. This ideology was also used to sacralise Afrikaner nationalism and this is what, in essence, Goldblatt has effectively desacralised with his camera.

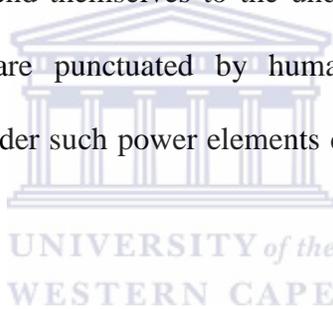
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<sup>405</sup> David Goldblatt's awareness of the difference, and relatedness, of the two terms 'land' and 'landscape' is clear and aspects of his photographic career explore the latter, the cultural construct, rather than the presumed 'natural'. Literally, Goldblatt sees what humans do with the land, as referred to in this chapter, as what signifies the construction of landscape. His concern in the South African context is with the history of white domination and what it has, by implication, done to make sense of the social make-up of the segregated society of South Africa.

<sup>406</sup> See transcript of the interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt, 15 May 2006, Cape Town.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid.

With a view to probing socio-political spatial organisational strategies that were employed in inscribing and perpetuating Afrikaner racial hegemony, this particular chapter will dwell mainly, and not exclusively, on black-and-white images that were produced before 1994, most of which are published in Goldblatt's photographic books such as *The Transported of KwaNdebele* (1989), *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then* (1998) and *Some Afrikaners Revisited* (2007). A selection of photographic images analysed hereunder show power imbalances at a number of levels including economic, social and political. Populated landscapes, with figures representing both black and white people, tend to conveniently lend themselves to the understanding of such elements of inequality. Landscapes that are punctuated by human-made structures have been presented in ways that also render such power elements detectable, albeit often in subtle ways.



An element of the everyday that runs through the chapter deals with, among others, how Goldblatt is able to convince the public that the mundane is part of a broader social life in South Africa, thus bringing some “uneventful and overlooked aspects of lived experience into visibility.”<sup>408</sup> However, I argue here that what Goldblatt frames and reduces to the level of the mundane includes Afrikaner nationalism itself. Being essentially an “*ideology of the modern state*,”<sup>409</sup> nationalism in general does not really lend itself to being sacred, and Afrikaner nationalism has been probed by Goldblatt's

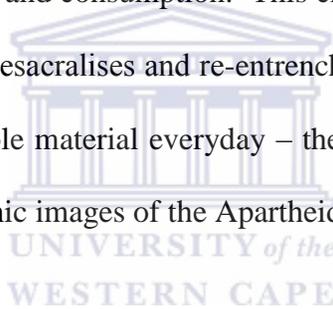
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<sup>408</sup> Johnstone, S. (ed.), *The Everyday*, London: Whitechapel and Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008, p.12.

<sup>409</sup> Scruton, R., ‘The First Person Plural’ in Beiner, R. (ed.), *Theorizing Nationalism*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, p.280.

camera to such an extent that the ideological foundations that underpinned it have been desacralised, as will be argued in this chapter.

This element of the everyday plays itself out in Goldblatt's tendency to show that both everydayness and secularity are very much a part of each other. Buildings such as municipal halls and Christian churches erected by whites evoke a sense of a sacralised landscape as opposed to the secular everyday, but the mystified becomes demystified when the camera – a technological product of the nineteenth-century industrial revolution<sup>410</sup> – brings the sacred squarely within the materialist, commercial world of photographic imagery, printing and consumption. This chapter will also attempt to show how Goldblatt's photography desacralises and re-entrenches such landscape aspects, as it were, within the visible, tangible material everyday – the secular - by looking mainly at the black-and-white photographic images of the Apartheid period.



One other phenomenon of black life in South Africa, which might well have been perceived as falling under the category of the everyday, was the economic consequence of the drawing up of frontiers to separate the so-called unlike (different) peoples.<sup>411</sup> The Apartheid government began implementing this programme in the early 1960s,<sup>412</sup> assigning various black linguistic groups to respective so-called homelands, and one of them was KwaNdebele. Goldblatt has documented the circumstances of worker-commuters who had to reach their workplaces in and around Pretoria from their distant

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<sup>410</sup> Cosgrove, D. E., *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984, p.257.

<sup>411</sup> Van Niekerk, P., 'The Bus Stop Republic' in Goldblatt, D., *The Transported of KwaNdebele*, Hong Kong: Aperture Foundation Inc., 1989, p.66.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid.

homes because they were not allowed to live in urban South Africa. Goldblatt examines conditions and circumstances under which this commuting took place in his *The Transported of KwaNdebele*, published in 1989. Furthermore, Goldblatt also engages with the relationship between the re-ordering of space: forced removals, resettlement and the rigid ordering of cheap labour that sustains the country's racialised economy. In this photographic essay, Goldblatt interrogates the nuances of the subjection of the body for economic gain, among other things. Certain images on the bus border on something akin to intimacy between the photographer and the photographed due to situational details that Goldblatt manages to document.

Here I begin with an overview of the bodies of work for which David Goldblatt is recognised as one of South Africa's most established photographers. I will then engage in more focused analysis of particular photographs from the Apartheid era, which are emblematic of his concerns with land. This chapter serves as a prelude to an analysis of Goldblatt's views of contemporary, post-Apartheid socio-political realities.

David Goldblatt, one of the most prolific photographers of South Africa, has, for more than fifty years now, produced work that reflects his deep inquiry into the social history of the country. His early body of work, which covers mostly the period from the formal institutionalisation of Apartheid in 1948 up to the early 1960s, looks at social themes ranging across issues such as the consequences of evictions of blacks (such as squatting), access to and use of separate amenities on the basis of race, migrant labour, and rural poverty especially among the black population. Since the early 1960s, Goldblatt photographed mostly populated scenes as they often became an integral component of his

subject-matter through which he aimed to explore social themes that he witnessed and investigated.

From the early 1960s up to the late 1970s Goldblatt also explored what he called *Johannesburg Structures*,<sup>413</sup> showing mostly suburban residential houses, churches, shops and synagogues. Where township houses are shown, they contrast sharply with other structures belonging to affluent sections of Johannesburg citizenry. Between 1979 and 1980 Goldblatt took photographs that deal with various aspects of social, religious, economic and political life of mainly Afrikaners resident in Boksburg, which resulted in the publication *In Boksburg* in 1982. Goldblatt approached this “small-town, middle-class, white community”<sup>414</sup> ... “with a subtly condemning gaze that scratches beneath the veneer of whites’ everyday lifestyle to reveal their complicity with the injustices of apartheid.”<sup>415</sup> Another black-and-white photographic essay appeared in 1998, entitled *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*. Most of the images fall under the Apartheid period (before 1994) but some social issues have been revisited in colour in *Intersections*, published in 2005. In *Some Afrikaners Revisited*, published in 2006, Goldblatt reviews a number of the issues he initially dealt with in *Some Afrikaners Photographed*. This point has a temporal significance in that Goldblatt recalls that he compiled an extended photographic essay which he first called ‘The Afrikaners’ (published in 1975 under the title *Some Afrikaners Photographed*) in the late 1960s.<sup>416</sup> About forty years later he

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<sup>413</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Thirty-five years of photographs, April 1983 to January 1984*, Exhibition catalogue. South African National Gallery, Cape Town, pp.20 and 21.

<sup>414</sup> See South African History Online, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/thesis/photography-liberation/chapter-three.htm>. Accessed 23/04/09.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> Goldblatt, D., ‘Some Afrikaners Photographed: Some Afrikaners Revisited: *Notes on how they came to be*’, 2006, in <http://www.umuzi-randomhouse.co.za/afrikaners-extract.pdf>. Accessed 29/07/09.

revisited Gamkaskloof, “also known as Die Hel”,<sup>417</sup> an area where he had photographed an Afrikaner community, and found Annetjie Mostert-Joubert, the only community member who still lived there.<sup>418</sup> This point about social dynamism, due to either death of elders and/or urbanisation of a younger generation, is pertinent in terms of thinking about temporal progression and attendant spatial changes. However, I propose another temporal dimension here – the possible correlation between this temporal progression and spatial changes and how this is experienced, inscribed or embodied in human bodies.

Almost throughout the whole decade of the 1960s, Goldblatt worked on what he later themed as *Some Afrikaners Photographed*, exploring various aspects of the lives of Afrikaans-speaking whites of South Africa. This included their economic aspirations,<sup>419</sup> their recreational activities, their humane side in spite of cruelty against the racial and cultural ‘Other’, their relationship with their black farm workers, and their forms of religious rhetoric. During the same decade, Goldblatt, in collaboration with Nadine Gordimer, also worked on *On the Mines*, revealing working and environmental conditions and power relations embedded in the labour ranking systems. *Johannesburg Portraits*<sup>420</sup> explores South Africans of greater Johannesburg (including Soweto) and this theme covers the early 1970s. It also interrogates issues that include racial inequality in the areas of access to land, issues of population registration along racial lines, very subtle gender relations, daily economic struggles and impoverishment. It was also during this

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<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

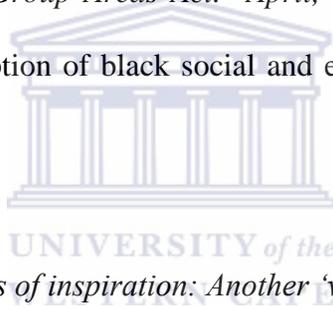
<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

<sup>419</sup> *Railway shunter who dreamed of a garden watered by his dam. Koksoord, Randfontein. 1962* in David Goldblatt: *Thirty-Five Years of Photographs, April 1983 to January 1984*. Exhibition catalogue. South African National Gallery, Cape Town, 1984, p.7.

<sup>420</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Thirty-Five Years of Photographs, April 1983 to January 1984*, Exhibition catalogue. South African National Gallery, Cape Town, p.12.

period that Goldblatt produced a series of images from the Transkei, a combination of landscapes and human figures in cultural and everyday contexts.<sup>421</sup>

Emphasising Goldblatt's intimacy with his subjects is the body of work from his 1975 publication entitled *Particulars*, where details of specific body parts dominate the photographic frames in a compelling manner. From 1976 up to 1982, he produced a series of images entitled *Fietas (Pageview/Vrededorp)*<sup>422</sup> that dealt with, among other things, the circumstances around forced removals and their effects as a result of the Group Areas Act which sought to settle the population along racial lines. *The Docrats' shop after closure under the Group Areas Act. April, 1977* (Fig. 3.1), is one of such images and looks at the disruption of black social and economic life as a result of this legislation.<sup>423</sup>



*David Goldblatt's early sources of inspiration: Another 'whiteness'<sup>424</sup> and social injustices*

The landscape in which Goldblatt was born, many years before the ushering in of democracy, was marked by overt signs of racial segregation, economic inequality and

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<sup>421</sup> Beiner, R., 'Introduction: Nationalism's Challenge to Political Philosophy' in Beiner, R. (ed.), *Theorizing Nationalism*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, p.16. There are photographs including those of circumcision initiates in Pondoland (part of the former Transkei) and those that show the intolerable levels of poverty such as *Peasant woman at home. Coffee Bay. 1975*.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>423</sup> Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.88.

<sup>424</sup> Here I am thinking specifically about white consciousness that stems from dimensions of alterity that are apparent in white society globally and locally. This study touches on global 'othernesses' within the white society when it makes references to atrocious events such as the Holocaust. It also makes reference to the social position of the South African Jews – how they were hated and regarded with suspicion. I try to connect all these strands to what I see as social injustices which figures such as Eli Weinberg and David Goldblatt witnessed and, at time, endured. Pro-Nazi stance of many Afrikaans-speaking whites after the World War II is one of the factors that reinforced the already existing dimensions of 'otherness' within the white community.

many other aspects of social injustice that were based on race. Here I wish to highlight one of the aesthetic phenomena that, I contend, sowed the intellectual seed that I contend, sowed the intellectual seed that germinated and culminated in the photographer the world has come to know as David Goldblatt. Recalling the lingering impression made by abandoned gold mine dumps that punctuated his Randfontein neighbourhood, Goldblatt has this to say: “I had been brought up in a gold-mining town and these were dying. And I thought it was important to look at them as a phenomenon, if you like”.<sup>425</sup> He further describes his childhood experience of these dumps:

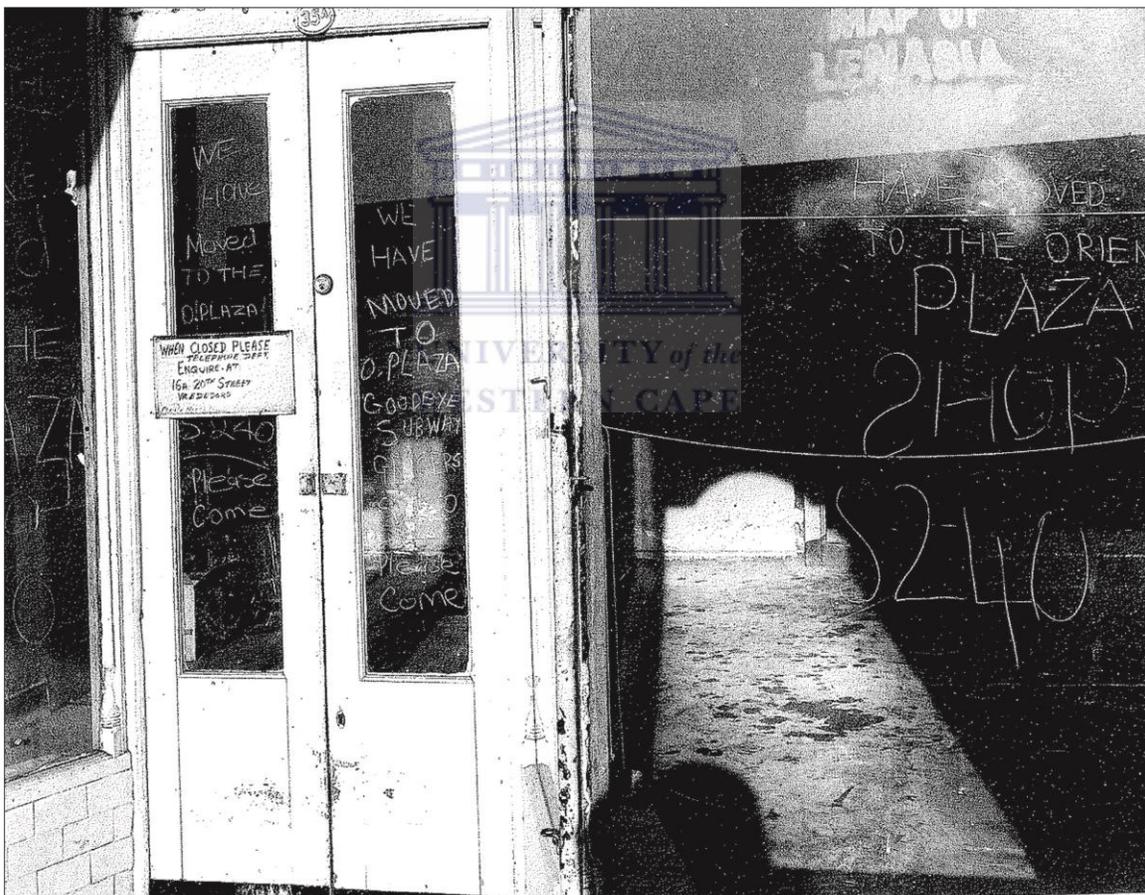
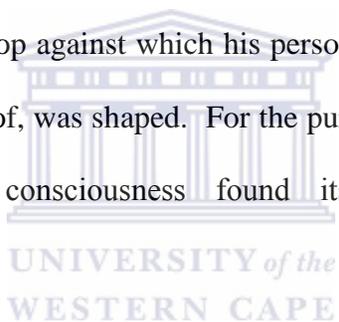


Fig. 3.1 David Goldblatt, *The Docrats' shop after closure under the Group Areas Act. April, 1977.*

<sup>425</sup> See transcript of the interview by Prof. P. Hayes and Farzanah Badsha with David Goldblatt, 28:08:2002, Cape Town.

And one of my earliest boyhood recollections was being on the backseat of my father's car while we drove from Randfontein perhaps to go to the theatre or to visit relatives. And as we drove along the Witwatersrand, I would see on these dumps, particularly in the evening or at night, when we came back, lights, like streetlights on top of the dumps. And there were men, little dots, who lived on the dumps. Their job was to tip the coco pans, those little trucks on a continuous rope, that were hauled up with the tailings... from the mining process. And they had to tip these things onto dump, tip out the soil, and it was an enormously physical and difficult job. In the winter, it was bitterly cold. And when the wind blew in August, like this time of year, it must have been absolute hell, those dumps. But they were there all the time, never, ever stopped, 365 days a year. So that was a very vivid recollection of mine from my boyhood. And indeed one of the things that I tried to photograph in that year after matric, when I tried to start becoming a magazine photographer, I got permission from the local mining company to go up onto the dump, to photograph the men at work. And I did.<sup>426</sup>

A brief look at selected circumstances around Goldblatt's time and place of birth may provide insight into the backdrop against which his personal consciousness of social and economic justice, or lack thereof, was shaped. For the purpose of this chapter, I also aim at interrogating how this consciousness found its expression in Goldblatt's photography.<sup>427</sup>



Born in Randfontein, Johannesburg, in 1930 into a white Jewish family of Lithuanian origin, David Goldblatt's sharp consciousness of justice was also nurtured by his family values that were predominantly marked by liberalism and the rejection of any nationalism and racism.<sup>428</sup> He alludes to his "spiritual, emotional make-up" as emanating from his social awareness.<sup>429</sup> Anti-Semitism, which Goldblatt became aware of as he grew up in

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<sup>426</sup> Ibid.

<sup>427</sup> The phenomenon of mine dumps seems to have stuck in the back of Goldblatt's mind as this theme keeps on raising its head in his career. This chapter and Chapter Four raise important points and issues around asbestos mine dumps Goldblatt photographed in colour after ushering in the democratic dispensation in South Africa. As a photographer who is sensitive to state spending patterns, due to his Bachelor of Commerce degree background, Goldblatt critiques social, environmental and economic implications of abandoned mine dumps.

<sup>428</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Some Afrikaners Revisited*, Roggebaai: Umuzi, 2007, p.11.

<sup>429</sup> See transcript of an interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt dated 16/05/2006, Cape Town.

Randfontein, is one of the aspects of Jewish history which shaped his own sense of social injustice.<sup>430</sup> He further clarifies the extent of his identification with the plight of the suffering masses, stressing the fact that merely identifying with, rather than doing something about, the plight of the oppressed black people was simply not sufficient for him.<sup>431</sup>

Goldblatt's parents, Eli and Olga, did not necessarily teach him these values as a set of the foregoing, I would argue that Goldblatt's Jewishness is a significant factor in trying to understand his awareness of social injustices surrounding him since his childhood.<sup>432</sup> By the time of Goldblatt's birth, segregationist laws such as the 1913 Native Land Act No 27, which reduced the blacks to a state of virtual landlessness, had already been passed in the parliament of the Union of South Africa. Blacks, constituting more than 80% of the total population then,<sup>433</sup> had been allocated only 12% of the land of the Union and the rest, except for land used for recreational and tourist activities such as game reserves or held by the state for any public use,<sup>434</sup> was available to the white minority. In 1936, the Native Trust and Land Act was passed and it formalised, among other things, the

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<sup>430</sup> See Goldblatt, D., 'Some Afrikaners Photographed: Some Afrikaners Revisited: *Notes on how they came to be*', Johannesburg, 2006, in <http://www.umuzi-randomhouse.co.za/afrikaners-extract.pdf> Accessed 09/03/09.

<sup>431</sup> See transcript of an interview by the candidate with Goldblatt dated 17/11/2008, Cape Town. This rejection of white patronising attitude is not to be taken on face value, in light of the caution sounded by discussants and audiences who have noticed what I say about Goldblatt's apparent liberal stance. However, no evidence has been established to suggest that Goldblatt's position may be tainted with an element of liberal patronising towards black people. Instead, he is known to be constantly contributing towards the development of other younger photographers most of whom were denied opportunities of accessing photographic skills in the Apartheid era. The Market Photo Workshop that he established in Newtown is a tangible testimony to this point.

<sup>432</sup> David Goldblatt also mentions his Jewishness as a factor in his sensitivity to any form of social injustice in transcript of the recorded conversation between him and Max du Preez, Michael Stevenson Gallery, Cape Town, 15 March 2007.

<sup>433</sup> See South African History Online, [www.sahistory.org.za/pages/chronology/thisday/1913-06-19.htm](http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/chronology/thisday/1913-06-19.htm). Accessed 05/08/10. Also see Ndiokwere, N. I., *Prophecy and Revolution*, London: SPCK, 1981, p.18.

<sup>434</sup> Land such as the Ingonyama Trust and other estates were reserved for special uses or for specific public projects.

separation of white and black rural areas and imposed systems of control of livestock, the division of arable and grazing land. This was the aspect of the policy of segregation as “confirmed and sealed” by the former premier of the British Cape Colony, Cecil Rhodes, who once declared:

My idea is that the natives should be kept in these native reserves and not mixed with the white men at all.... I prefer to call a spade a spade.... We are going to be lords of this people and keep them in subject position.... They should not have the franchise because we don't want them on an equality with us....<sup>435</sup>

Other forms of racially informed material dispossession of the black population and enforced inequality between blacks and whites in general, as well as intra-racial hatred in the form of anti-Semitism<sup>436</sup> that Goldblatt became conscious of, were rooted, in my opinion, in the perception of blacks as both childish and sub-human.

Before Goldblatt finished school in 1948 he had started using the camera, trying to enter the profession of magazine photography which was almost unknown in South Africa at the time.<sup>437</sup> He fully dedicated his life to photography on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1963, after the death of his father in 1962.<sup>438</sup> It is perhaps ironic that in his long career Goldblatt has indeed pointed to the ‘terrible things going on in South Africa’, not so

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<sup>435</sup> Ndiokwere, N. I., *Prophecy and Revolution*, London: SPCK, 1981, pp.17-18. In an interview by the candidate, dated 09/04/08, Rondebosch, Prof. Hans Engdahl articulates the point around the Afrikaners' position of 'lordship' over the blacks. He makes reference to racist ideas based on a distorted interpretation of particular biblical verses and clearly articulates how theological positions related to this supremacist notion of one race over the other.

<sup>436</sup> Shimoni, G., *Community and Conscience: The Jews in Apartheid South Africa*, Hanover & London: University Press of New England, 2003, pp. 11-16.

<sup>437</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Thirty Five Years of Photographs, April 1983 to January 1984*. Exhibition Catalogue, p.24. Organised by the South African National Gallery and exhibited in various venues in South Africa. See also transcript of the interview by Prof. P. Hayes and Farzanah Badsha, 28:08:2002, Cape Town.

<sup>438</sup> See transcript of the interview by Prof. P. Hayes and Farzanah Badsha, 28:08:2002, Cape Town. See also Goldblatt, D., 'The Structure of Things Here' in Bunn, D. & J. Taylor (eds.), *From South Africa: New Writing, Photographs, and Art*, Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987, p.211.

much through events as through long processes, straddling both Apartheid and post-Apartheid epochs where economic injustices continue for the majority of citizens.

Social documentary photography emerged in South Africa by the 1940s and has been practically engaged with in various cultural contexts over time by photographers such as Eli Weinberg, Omar Badsha, Ernest Cole, Peter Magubane, Alf Khumalo, Willie de Klerk, Paul Weinberg, Gideon Mendel, Gill de Vlieg and many others.<sup>439</sup> Close scrutiny of most images produced by these photographers shows the extent to which they differ from Goldblatt in their exploration and exposure of the social effects emanating from the systematic implementation or enforcement of racist, Apartheid legislation especially during the 1970s and 1980s. Although some of them also displayed much subtlety in various ways, these photographers often frame dramatic, sensational scenes of gross state brutality in the process of enforcing and maintaining forms of racial inequality in all spheres of life<sup>440</sup> while, on the other hand, Goldblatt often raises issues in a very subtle, ironical way.<sup>441</sup> As stated above, instead of framing the politically motivated *events* of bloody conflicts, Goldblatt raises underlying *effects* of, among other things, labour relations,<sup>442</sup> forced removals suffered by indigenous and other non-white peoples<sup>443</sup> and

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<sup>439</sup> Gaule, S., 'Photographs of Walker Evans and David Goldblatt: Seeing through different prisms' in *De Arte No. 51-56*, 1995-1997, p.19.

<sup>440</sup> Dubow, N., 'Constructs: Reflections on a Thinking Eye' in Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: Structures of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.22.

<sup>441</sup> Goldblatt, D., *The transported of KwaNdebele*, Hong Kong: Aperture Foundation Inc., 1989, p.75. Goldblatt himself highlights this point in an interview with Prof. P. Hayes and Farzanah Badsha on 28.08.2002, p.3.

<sup>442</sup> Goldblatt, D. and Gordimer, N., *On the Mines*, Cape Town: C. Struik, 1973, no pagination.

<sup>443</sup> Bleach, G., 'Between the Fine Print and a Hard Place – Goldblatt's South African Artifacts', *NKA Journal of Contemporary African Art*, Number 9, 1998, p.54.

gross economic inequalities between black and white communities.<sup>444</sup> Clarifying his methodological approach to his subject matter, Goldblatt says:

But secondly I realised that events were for me actually not terribly interesting. I was much more interested in the underlying situation that brought about the events. In the values, and in the thinking and the sentiments that could lead to such events. And trying to probe those things became my concern. And that led to an approach to photography that I followed pretty well then, and I have done ever since.<sup>445</sup>

Goldblatt's long photographic career has indeed provided visual constructions of particular aspects of South Africa's history in a highly sustained and comprehensive manner. Pertinent here is to contextualise Goldblatt's view of the role of the landscape component within his corpus of work. He once stated: "When I was photographing these *Structures*, I was again faced with the possibility of photographing landscape because the landscape itself is in many ways a structure that embodies values. The land has shaped us and we have shaped the land".<sup>446</sup> Asked in 2003 why he was attracted to land and landscapes - what, in essence, landscapes did for him and how he could work with them, this is how Goldblatt carefully summarised his rationale:

I'm very moved by the South African landscape very often. It somehow gets me in a way that other places don't. Recently I was in Munich... Very beautiful country...and I kept thinking to myself I just wish I was in the Karoo, or in the Western Transvaal, or what used to be Western Transvaal. ...and I'm not particularly interested in photographing it as landscape...in the classical sense of the term, and yet at the same time I am interested in trying to put on film or into photographs some sense of the way it moves me, or attracts me. So it's still a rather fuzzy area for me.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> I personally do not believe that poverty is necessarily racially based, but the Apartheid South African economic system favoured whites; this was achieved through government legislation. However, numerous historical accounts have shown that there was a sector of the South African society that was known as 'poor whites', from which stemmed the Apartheid 'affirmative action'.

<sup>445</sup> See transcript of the interview by Prof. P. Hayes and Farzanah Badsha with David Goldblatt, 28:08:2002, Cape Town.

<sup>446</sup> Bester, R., 'One book at a time' in Parr, M., *David Goldblatt – Photographs – Contrasto*, Arles: Rencontres internationales de la Photographie, 2006, p.19. See also Anne Whiston Spirn's articulation of this point in DeLue, R. Z. and J. Elkins (eds.), *Landscape Theory*, New York and London: Routledge, 2008, p.148.

<sup>447</sup> See transcript of an interview by Prof. P. Hayes with David Goldblatt, 27/07/03, Cape Town.

As ‘fuzzy’ as Goldblatt’s interest in landscape photography might have been at the time, there seems to have been an almost subconscious addiction to the exploration of politicised spaces of South Africa possibly emanating from some fiction writers of South Africa such as Nadine Gordimer (with whom he collaborated on the production of his books, *On the Mines* and *Lifetimes: Under Apartheid*<sup>448</sup>), Herman Charles Bosman, Athol Fugard, Barney Simon, John Coetzee and Lionel Abrahams.<sup>449</sup> Gordimer’s early descriptions of the Witwatersrand and Herman Charles Bosman’s stories of the Marico Bushveld had a profound influence on Goldblatt.<sup>450</sup> In 1964, Goldblatt visited most of the places featured in Bosman’s short stories and found an amazing correlation of what was written and what he saw.<sup>451</sup> But as he proceeded with other photographic trips that required him to drive for long distances and spend time away from home, he traversed the country in his Volkswagen camper between 1982 and 1993.<sup>452</sup> Actually, Bosman’s extraordinary economy of means in particular is what he aspired to reproduce.<sup>453</sup> After reading his short stories, marked with humour, irony and tragedy, Goldblatt then tarcked down what he had read from Bosman’s work, even aiming at going beyond it. He articulates his experience of Bosman’s work, stating: “As soon as I read his pieces, his short stories...I knew that here was somebody whose way of seeing and entering into the

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<sup>448</sup> Konsthall, M. ‘David Goldblatt: *Intersections Intersected*’ in <http://www.e-flux.com/shows/view/6375>. Accessed 09/10/07. Almost like *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then, Lifetimes under Apartheid*, published in 1986, is also about structures that reflect the values and beliefs of those who built them. These structures were the subject matter of Goldblatt’s images and at the same time they were the decisive condition of his image-making.

<sup>449</sup> See transcript of an interview between the candidate with David Goldblatt, dated 22 January 2008, Cape Town.

<sup>450</sup> See David Goldblatt’s e-mail correspondence dated 13 January 2009.

<sup>451</sup> David Goldblatt interviewed by Max du Preez in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Adbb4DkS9Uo> Accessed 08/03/16.

<sup>452</sup> O’Toole, S., ‘On the Road with David Goldblatt’ in <http://trafficmagazine.co.za/on-the-road-with-david-goldblatt/> Accessed 08/03/16.

<sup>453</sup> ‘David Goldblatt and Max du Preez Revisit “Some Afrikaners”’ in <http://penguin.booksalive.co.za/blog/2007/03/19/david-goldblatt-and-max-du-preez-revisit-some-afrikaners/> Accessed 08/03/16.

South African reality was something that I could aspire...that I aspired to in my own terms, in a photographic way...<sup>454</sup>

In fact Goldblatt's photographic images in *Lifetimes: Under Apartheid*, which included those of Soweto and the then Transkei's Coloured residents and gold miners, were used as the visual components in this anthology of excerpts of Gordimer's novels<sup>455</sup> such as *The Lying Days*, 1953; *The Conservationist*, 1974; *Something Out There*, 1984; *July's People*, 1981; *A world of Strangers*, 1958; *The Late Bourgeois World*, 1966; *The Soft Voice of the Serpent*, 1952; *A Soldier's Embrace*, 1980; and *Burger's Daughter*, 1979<sup>456</sup> and a selection of short stories.

Goldblatt's nostalgic feeling about the Karoo while he was in Europe, as quoted above, echoes Harmsen's assertion that the "Karoo 'has a quite inexplicable power to make artists produce their most moving work' (whereas the Natal coast has inspired very little)".<sup>457</sup> However, this point needs to be engaged with more deeply; it is not sufficient to merely scratch its surface. This suggestion stems from the fact that although Goldblatt witnessed and was often annoyed by the harsh economic injustices that still mark life in a post-Apartheid South Africa, his sensibilities of the landscape are very likely to be unwittingly informed by white<sup>458</sup> (not necessarily colonialist) cultural/aesthetic

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<sup>454</sup> David Goldblatt interviewed by Max du Preez in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Adbb4DkS9Uo> Accessed 08/03/16.

<sup>455</sup> Krantz, D. L., Politics and Photography in Apartheid South Africa, from [http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/artsmediaculture/protest\\_art/pdf/Krantz\\_revised.pdf](http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/artsmediaculture/protest_art/pdf/Krantz_revised.pdf). Accessed 12/03/08.

<sup>456</sup> Gordimer, N. and D. Goldblatt, *Lifetimes: Under Apartheid*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986, pp.1-84.

<sup>457</sup> Harmsen cited in Wagner, K., *Rereading Nadine Gordimer*, Johannesburg: Maskew Miller Longman, 1994, pp.256-257.

<sup>458</sup> Here I consciously make a distinction between 'white' and 'Eurocentric' mainly because of Goldblatt's sense of emotional attachment and his implied conscious effort to view life from a 'local' perspective.

orientations. One may argue, on the basis of this point, that there is an element of cultural distance, as opposed to that of proximity, in his perception and visual representation of landscape.<sup>459</sup>

It is precisely, if one may make another assertion, this cultural distance which seems to have shaped, and continues to shape, Goldblatt's attitude towards landscape. This is a passionate attitude which is fired up by feelings of resentment towards the system of government which, while dehumanising one sector of society, has dealt major damage to the image of whites in the majority of black people's minds, and should have done so in their own minds.<sup>460</sup> Goldblatt's feelings of resentment were not based on mere liberal rhetoric. He succinctly rationalises his oppositional stance toward the system of racial segregation, which is, in many ways, not just sympathy, and not dispassionate:

It wasn't for me...to say: 'Ag shame, look at those poor black people...look how they're suffering'. That's ...that was a standard white response to the situation... My concern was the concern that arose out of my anger at what they were doing. It seemed to me to be completely counter-productive. We were going to build up a huge resentment and hatred among black people...for whites. We were debasing ourselves; our own humanity was being debased. So, it went much deeper than simply identifying with the suffering of the people who were oppressed. It was concerned with the system that we were enforcing.<sup>461</sup>

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Here 'local' is used due to a problematic ambivalence that marks white positionality in South Africa: Are whites Africans or Europeans? This is a contested and unresolved problematic which, in my view, has been further complicated by an identity so prevalent in both Apartheid and post-Apartheid South Africa. A huge number of Apartheid signs that were used to control and restrict population movements and use of public amenities were marked, for example, 'Europeans only'. But 'European' had no Afrikaans counterpart; it was translated as 'Whites only'.

<sup>459</sup> I regard that possible cultural distance as a possible source of desire for Goldblatt to photograph landscape. He was brought up in an urban environment with mainly the mine dumps serving as compelling phenomenal sources for his inspiration.

<sup>460</sup> This particular reference to such a feeling of resentment towards the 'past' Apartheid system is based on an interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt on 17 November, 2008, Cape Town. See also Wagner, K., *Rereading Nadine Gordimer*, Johannesburg: Maskew Miller Longman and Witwatersrand University Press, 1994, pp. 168 and 256-257.

<sup>461</sup> See interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt on 17 November, 2008, Cape Town.

It is pertinent to note that Goldblatt's sense of identification with the oppressed is, however, marked by complexity which needs to be interrogated. Although his identification with the oppressed is not aimed at glossing over the reality of his belonging to a white, privileged sector of South Africa's segregated society, it, nevertheless, transcends the domains of both the oppressor and the oppressed.<sup>462</sup>

However, the 'fuzzy' area of Goldblatt's photographic interest alluded to above has in recent years<sup>463</sup> become more fully thought-out and finely articulated as he states:

I try to be interested in everything that I see around me; I'm interested in the world in which I live, South Africa. And, I can't possibly be actively interested in everything that I see, in something that interests me more and the last few years in particular, I've become interested in, for the lack of a better word, landscape. By the landscape I mean the way in which we have shaped the places we live in – the land that we live on, the land that we farm, the land that we turn into townships, the land that we turn into suburban homes. I'm interested in this phenomenon. Just as, over the years, I've become interested in various aspects of this...of South African society, I have become, in the last few years, particularly interested in this aspect.<sup>464</sup>

For Goldblatt, the term 'landscape' seems to be a negative concept, something that is a bit undesirable. Following his need to *order* his photographic compositions with a view to achieving a sense of coherence, Goldblatt tries to *see* the 'land', not 'landscape', because he feels that the 'land' just exists<sup>465</sup> whereas 'landscape' is a construct. This is

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<sup>462</sup> This point is based on David Goldblatt's resentment of how the system of Apartheid sought to portray whites in general, including onlookers and dissenters, as evil people in the eyes of the majority of blacks. This is more of a feeling of remorse other than identification with the cause of social segregation on the part of Goldblatt.

<sup>463</sup> David Goldblatt is not sure of the date, according to an e-mail correspondence dated 13 January 2009. It is quite likely that he never consciously set out to formulate the concept of 'landscape', but, as time went on, he might have become more conscious of space as an entity on which social life is inscribed.

<sup>464</sup> See interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt on 22 January, 2008, Cape Town.

<sup>465</sup> When David Goldblatt refers to the land as an entity that 'just exists', as compared to 'landscape', which is a construct, he definitely echoes definitions presented in the first chapter of this thesis, where 'land' and 'landscape' are defined as existing physical spaces and a social construct, respectively.

how he has articulated his thinking around his conception of ‘landscape’ as a negative concept:

...I can only say that in the past year or so I have been trying to see the land rather than the landscape. The latter is a construct of the ordering mind. But the land simply exists. Can one photograph the simple existence of the land without seeking or imposing an order which will make it visually ‘interesting’ or ‘composed’ and yet make coherent photographs? I’m not sure. But I’m trying. ...The ‘negativity’ is the almost inbuilt need in our seeking (sic) to find order or to impose it.<sup>466</sup>

What Goldblatt has done here is to clarify and expand the scope within which the notion of landscape as a mental construct is to be understood. Landscape can also be seen as a cultural construct, having been visually *reorganised*, *reordered* or *composed* in a coherent manner on a two-dimensional photographic support. This, in a way, is Goldblatt’s side that seeks to find the aesthetic aspect within the activity of *seeing* and depicting what ought to be the land. The very act or attempt to *compose* for photographic purposes is yet another manner of culturally<sup>467</sup> constructing landscape. The construction of landscape cannot, on the basis of Goldblatt’s desire to isolate ‘landscape’, as it were, be confined merely to the invention of politicised spaces that are owned, occupied or fenced up, where populations are segregated along the lines of race, class or gender. Instead, a cultural act of depicting space, symbolically ‘owning’ or ‘possessing’ it in the form of an illusory three-dimensional composition on a literally two-dimensional surface, is yet another way of constructing landscape.<sup>468</sup> It is also very pertinent to note here that

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<sup>466</sup> E-mail correspondence from David Goldblatt dated 13 January 2009. The negative, I argue, stems from the ordering act being analogous to colonialist photographic practice discussed in the first chapter of this thesis.

<sup>467</sup> I extend this point in Chapter Four where I argue that Goldblatt’s photographic approach, including the consumption of his work by galleries and museums, now positions him more as an ‘artist’ than just a photographer.

<sup>468</sup> This point is particularly reminiscent of the cultural predecessor of photography, painting and graphic arts. These art forms depended very much on the illusion of depth in a picture on any flat surface, support or ground. David Goldblatt might not necessarily be thinking along the lines of traditional picture making techniques before the advent of photography, but this is what his sentiments are reminiscent of.

land is Goldblatt's social context and background against which he *sees* and inscribes the social history of South Africa.

This construction of space, as opposed to pictorial space, is a process that has occurred over time, spanning the colonial, Apartheid and post-Apartheid eras of the South African history. Landscape construction, in this sense, can be seen as double construction – social and cultural construction. At this point one is drawn to think about instances where humans transform land into usable landscape as in the case of the construction of worship structures and public memorials, to mention just a few. But some structures reflect subtle signs of socio-political power contestations between the minority white elite and the majority black masses who are<sup>469</sup> on the receiving end of all sorts of inequalities. Goldblatt's photographs expose such injustices and therefore reflect his identification with the dominated, marginalised sector of the Apartheid South African society. *Shaping the places we live in* is, for Goldblatt, not a one-sided activity; it is, rather, marked by multilateral, sometime conflicting, activities of perpetuation, resistance and complicity. On this point Goldblatt argues that although the system of Apartheid was so unjust and inhumane, there was always an element of complicity with the state on the part of an overwhelming number of South Africans who lived their daily lives and struggled to survive within the intolerable socio-political context.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> This point is made in the present tense because the notion of freedom within the South African political context will be problematised in more detail in the conclusion of this thesis.

<sup>470</sup> See an interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt on 15 May, 2006, Cape Town. Goldblatt argues that complying with the Apartheid laws, thereby striving to live a normal life in an abnormal situation, was, in itself, another form of complicity.

### *Theological ideology*

Some prefatory remarks are necessary in order to highlight the theological underpinnings of apartheid that did not escape the photographer's attention, especially regarding Afrikaner nationalism and 'chosenness'. Goldblatt seems to politicise the sacred structures that are associated with the activities of worship and religiosity in general. This is a profound tendency given the fact that religious ideology has had a lasting impact on the socio-political sphere of life in South Africa, with Calvinism in particular being used as a theological foundation of racial segregation and Afrikaner nationalism in general.<sup>471</sup> It is therefore understandable that Goldblatt should see and engage with the secular in such subjects because the Afrikaner version of Christian theology was in no way confined to the spiritual realm of society; it thoroughly conflated the religious and the social, elevating the Afrikaner to a level of a chosen people. The status of being chosen, in the case of the Afrikaner, also meant that the land had to be subjected to the control of the Afrikaner, very much to the detriment of the black African people, and this is analogous to the biblical narrative on the conquest of the occupants of the 'Promised Land' (the Land of Canaan) by the ancient people of Israel.

The notion of the Afrikaners as a chosen nation and that of the hinterland as the 'Promised Land' are inextricably related to the idea of the formation of a new Afrikaner Nation, having escaped what was seen as the embodiment of oppression – British

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<sup>471</sup> Tshepo Lephakga expands on the distortion of Calvinism as a basis for the justification of the Apartheid system in 'The history of theologised politics of South Africa, the 1913 Land Act and its impact on the flight from the black self' in *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, Vol. 39 n.2 Pretoria Feb. 2013 in [http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1017-04992013000200021](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1017-04992013000200021) Accessed 08/03/16.

colonialism. However, it is imperative to note here that most Christian, newly self-fashioned nations adopted the image of a chosen people occupying a 'Promised Land'.<sup>472</sup> Among such European nations, O'Brien enumerates England, France, Germany, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States of America.<sup>473</sup> Both Jewish people and most of the predominantly Islamic nations such as Egypt, Iran and Iraq also share the same claim that, ironically, becomes meaningful only if others are not chosen.<sup>474</sup> In the case of Apartheid South Africa this constructed notion of a chosen nation privileged the white race, particularly the Afrikaner nation, which is a minority group, and consigned the overwhelming majority to low class citizenship, and this is what, I argue, David Goldblatt's camera probes and explores in indirect and subtle ways.<sup>475</sup>



### *On structures and values*

Most of the members of this privileged white race had structures and values that Goldblatt used as his window to gain insight into their national aspirations. This section deals with the manner in which Goldblatt juxtaposes physical structures and beliefs or social values. As a way of scaling down and further refining some of the points provided above, with a view to touching on the landscape aspect of this chapter, it is pertinent to

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<sup>472</sup> Tamir, Y., 'Theoretical Difficulties in the Study of Nationalism' in Beiner, R. (ed.), *Theorizing Nationalism*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, pp.71-72.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid. p.72.

<sup>474</sup> Tamir, Y., 'Theoretical Difficulties in the Study of Nationalism' in Beiner, R. (ed.), *Theorizing Nationalism*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, pp.71-72.

<sup>475</sup> Beiner, R., 'Introduction: Nationalism's Challenge to Political Philosophy' in Beiner, R. (ed.), *Theorizing Nationalism*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, p.9. Here Beiner mentions those who are seen as belonging to the nation, in the case of Christian and Islamic nations mentioned in this paragraph, as comprising the majority and being so privileged that they may easily consign the minority cultural groups into second-class citizenship. It may be interesting to highlight the contrast that is obvious between the case of these nations and the South African situation, which David Goldblatt's camera is probing, where the African majority was, ironically, consigned into lowest class citizenship.

reiterate here that some of Goldblatt's photographs are "about buildings and structures in the South African landscape".<sup>476</sup> They are, "in part, about actual structures – bricks, mortar, mud, and corrugated iron".<sup>477</sup> However, Goldblatt's work is also about the photographic framing of these "physical structures in terms of photographic constructs which...reveal the many ways in which ideology has shaped our landscape".<sup>478</sup> It is arguable here that the ideological structuring of the South African landscape has always manifested itself in one overriding historiographical narrative: the land and instances of its contestations by the dominator and the dominated – the enfranchised and the disenfranchised. Linked to this point is the fact that Goldblatt also highlights beliefs or values attached to these structures.<sup>479</sup>

Such structures, as framed by Goldblatt, are physical manifestations of the extent to which landscape is really a contested human domain in South Africa.<sup>480</sup> Politicised construction and contestation of space are manifested in such structures, which also reflect the determination of the dominator to monopolise power in various forms while the dominated is resilient and resistant to such a monopoly. Images that deal with such nuances of power relations cover areas such as heritage monuments and memorials,

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<sup>476</sup> Dubow, N. in Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, back cover.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.

<sup>479</sup> The idea of focusing on 'structures' in addition to 'landscape' is specifically meant to help us further understand elements of power relations in that the structures could be seen as both visual and functional tools through which hegemonic control can be made possible. Legislation is an intangible and invisible tool of power and hegemony, but such structures directly 'interact' with society.

<sup>480</sup> This point may seem to ignore the fact that South Africa is now a democratic society, but photographic images by both David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng allude to the 'ghosts' of the Apartheid past which keep on raising their heads, haunting this society in the forms of poverty, unemployment, economic marginalisation and many other aspects of post-Apartheid's harsh realities. Goldblatt's black-and-white and colour photographs testify to this point. When, in a celebratory mood, he switched over to the use of colour, after 1994, some aspects of the evil past continued to mark most of his images.

buildings that serve as spaces of worship<sup>481</sup> across the religious spectrum dominant in South Africa, and Bantustan buildings and monuments that signified tribal nationalist values, most of which were in conflict with the agenda of the liberation movement. As I have alluded to above, there were diverse approaches to dealing with the Apartheid system with some professing to ‘combat’ it from within, as in the cases of Bantustan leaders such as iNkosi Mangosuthu Buthelezi of the then KwaZulu homeland.

*Race, labour and spatial organisation: a critical reading of selected landscape images*

Almost one year before the dawn of democracy in South Africa, Goldblatt photographed a piece of landscape that, in a way echoes some of his concerns with socio-political issues of colonial/Apartheid South Africa, *Iron-age corbelled hut* (Fig. 3.2).<sup>482</sup> It is a structure of historical and archeological significance. Framed in this photograph is the image that represents an open veld, with an ancient structure of human abode in the foreground and a fence that runs across the pictorial format. Depicted here is a politicised space in that it has a long history of human occupation, then by zoning of the land for human ownership and use. Goldblatt’s direct reference to his concern with the issue of land zoning, fencing and subsequent ownership which also excludes others, is, though in a complex, subtle way, dealt with in this image. The fencing that appears on the landscape is significant because it points to the issue of legitimised exclusion.

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<sup>481</sup> It is pertinent to point out here that Goldblatt, in his documentation of such religious buildings, seems to have paid too much attention to dominant religions, in addition to Hinduism, that are generally known as ‘religions of the Book’ (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), all of which are basically foreign to South Africa. He hardly pointed his camera towards structures that represent some of the African Initiated Churches (AICs) movement including the Nazareth Baptist Church, Zion Catholic Church (ZCC) and Bantu Methodist Church. It is highly arguable that the omission of this aspect of such structures compromises Goldblatt’s good intentions of dealing with this particular aspect of ideological conflict in the realm of religious values of both the dominator and the dominated.

<sup>482</sup> Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.35.

Goldblatt appears to be alluding to present and visible signs of the questions around land division and ownership, questions that he takes as far back as 1652 and those periods from when white settlers moved into the interior. Most of the fencing was introduced into South African landscapes after the passing of the Fencing Act No 17 of 1912 in parliament.<sup>483</sup> The *Lie of the Land* landscape exhibition, held in the Old Town House, Cape Town, curated by Prof. Michael Godby, explores various issues including the aestheticisation of land partition through such fencing. In the *Interventions* section of the exhibition Sir John Barrow is quoted as saying the following about the aesthetic significance of fencing in his *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa, 1801*: “There is a general appearance of nakedness in the country...which...if divided by fences, would become sufficiently beautiful, as nature in drawing the outline has played her part.”<sup>484</sup>

Time is not fixed; it is ‘mobile’ or dynamic. A lengthy temporal gap between the ancient structure and the act of demarcating the land either for ownership or farming purposes is defied, as it were, by Goldblatt in this photograph. There is no visual evidence to exclusive land ownership around the Iron-age period in the image, and the structure in question has ‘endured’ the passing of time up to the colonial, particularly the Apartheid, era.

The perceived permanence of the corbelled hut and the evidence of the relative

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<sup>483</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich; Berlin; London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.110.

<sup>484</sup> Godby, M., *The Lie of the Land: Representations of the South African Landscape*, The Iziko Michaelis Collection, Old House, Cape Town, June – September 2010 and Sanlam Art Gallery, Bellville, October 2010 – January 2011, p.90. An artist Stephen Inggs (born 1955) had a photographic piece called *Fence*, 2005 (from the *Solitude* series) (hand-painted gelatine silver emulsion print). The composition of the picture divides it into two parts: the left part with uncared-for grassy space and the right part with cared-for, park-like grassy space. ‘Blocking’ the fence that runs through the middle of the picture is a background hill.



Fig. 3.2 David Goldblatt, *Iron-age corbelled hut*, Sedan, near Lindley, Orange Free State. 1993.

introduction of land ownership legislature are all included in one frame, thus freezing, as it were, the possible multiple temporalities in the face of space organisation that reflects a change in the history of the place and social relationships associated with its ownership. The photograph raises further questions pertaining to colonialist claims in southern Africa, such as the myth of the empty land. Processes of human interference with the land have, ironically, left the stone structure intact, thus negating the claim of this myth as well as a justification of dispossession of others for the benefit of the powerful minority.

David Goldblatt's research notes around the site allude to the fact that, contrary to

colonialist stereotypical claims about the Bantu-speaking people, there hardly were social frictions between the ancestors of the Sotho and the San peoples during their first encounter between 1 750 and 2 000 years ago (1998).<sup>485</sup> Around the time of *Mfecane*, a series of inter-African conflicts that are believed to have caused widespread devastation in the area that had been occupied by Africans, and the Great Trek of the Afrikaner Trekkers who emigrated from the Cape, are forces that displaced most former inhabitants of the area near the contemporary small town of Lindley, Free State province.<sup>486</sup>

Across the fence, that is, further up the pictorial format, the space looks empty, less congested and inviting. It remains unclear if the space from the foreground up to the fence has been wittingly or unwittingly left 'free' from colonial encroachment or if it has been assigned a different status, that of a part of a 'preserved' Africa that supposedly remains 'untouched' or 'unchanged' by the effects of Western culture albeit in the form of land ownership for the sake of the advancing modern capitalist economy.

*Iron-age corbelled hut* does far more than what has been mentioned so far regarding the visual content framed in the photograph. It expresses the photographer's interest in focusing on the known, the mundane - the everyday which Goldblatt terms the 'overlooked' or 'unseen'.<sup>487</sup> The year 1993 was one of the most remarkable landmarks in the history of anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa: Chris Hani, the then Secretary-General of the South African Communist Party, was assassinated on the 10th April that

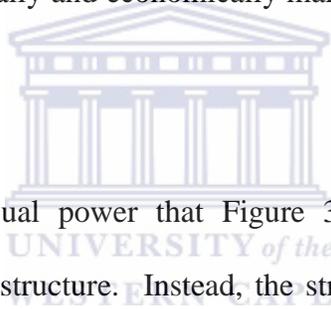
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<sup>485</sup> Ibid.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

<sup>487</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London & New York: Prestel, 2005, p.97.

year.<sup>488</sup> Even though this particular incident almost plunged the country into a state of civil war, due to popular anger and disillusionment, Goldblatt's lens neglected the furore, focusing, instead, on seemingly mundane structures that, in their punctuation of the landscape, were pregnant with multilayered meanings within the context of South Africa's socio-political conditions that emanated from episodes of the unjust past. In the midst of all the turmoil that marked the attendant consequences of the political upheaval of the day, Goldblatt photographically tackled the question of the role of ideology and belief systems in the construction of the South African landscape. His understanding of the socio-political implications, together with embedded notions of power imbalances between the state and its culturally and economically marginalised subjects, is implied in most of his photographs.



Intellectual potency and visual power that Figure 3.2 carries do not rely on an aggrandisement of the framed structure. Instead, the structure alludes to a much more remote humanity-environment relationship, which is marked, among other things, by the environmentally-friendly use of found, instead of synthetic, building materials. Goldblatt, in one of his post-Apartheid colour photographic essays entitled *Intersections*,<sup>489</sup> confronts this issue head-on where he deals with the lasting negative impact of asbestos mining activities in *Blue asbestos fibres, Owendale Mine, Northern Cape. 26 October*

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<sup>488</sup> Zagacki, K. S., 'Rhetoric, Dialogue, and Performance in Nelson Mandela's "Televised Address on the Assassination of Chris Hani"' in *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6.4 (2003) 709-735, p.709. See also Marinovich, G. and J. Silva, *The Bang-Bang Club*, London: William Heinemann, 2000, pp.50 and 124.

<sup>489</sup> Colour photographs by David Goldblatt will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter, which is dedicated to post-Apartheid period of the South African history. A few examples of colour photographs have been included in this chapter due to their close proximity or apparent thematic association with some black-and-white images. This particular colour photograph was inspired by David Goldblatt's loss when his friend died of a cancer that is caused by inhaling this mineral, according to an interview with him, dated 17/11/08, Cape Town.

2002 (Fig. 3.3).<sup>490</sup> As a matter of fact, asbestos has also been used for roofing in South African architecture for a long time, although its fatal health hazards, such as asbestosis or mesothelioma,<sup>491</sup> were probably well known to the mine owners in general. Although the mine was closed in 1984, this is what asbestos waste looked like in 2002. It was only during the post-Apartheid period that the health and human rights implications of such environmental pollution and the neglect suffered by former, retired employees of this hazardous mining industry were actively raised.

If one were to ‘read’ this particular photograph from the perspective of what values the capitalist system of economy espouses and perpetuates, one could possibly conclude that the quest for accumulation on the part of the capitalists reflects almost no regard, if any, for human life. It stretches manpower, or work force, to the limit, even to the point of viewing the individual worker as dispensable in the labour market establishment. This is one of the main socio-economic features of the lasting impact of the postcolonial/post-Apartheid economic injustice that is still thoroughly entrenched in the fabric of the post-Apartheid society.

While Goldblatt rejects the idea of pointing his camera towards ‘newsworthy’, anxiety-stirring events, he investigates the roots of most of society’s woes that often go unnoticed within photographic culture. Here he points his camera toward a scene that implies the reduction of the economically dominated into a mass of cheap labour, to which meaningful employment benefits are hardly accorded. It is interesting that Goldblatt

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<sup>490</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London & New York: Prestel, 2005, p.49. I will analyse the use of colour in more detail in this image in the next chapter.

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*, p.122.

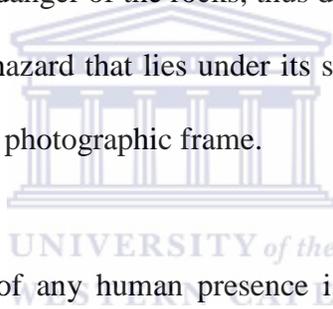


Fig. 3.3 David Goldblatt, *Blue asbestos fibres, Owendale Mine, Northern Cape*. 26 October 2002.

wittingly employs such seemingly innocent spaces to deal with such profound socio-economic issues, exploring, if one may argue, the extent of economic violence suffered by the dominated.

In Goldblatt's exploration of the visible signs of economic violence, what is remarkable

in many of his photographs from both Apartheid and post-Apartheid periods (including the one under analysis), is the ability to employ sharp photographic vision of what can say volumes, though in a seemingly mundane manner, about the beliefs and values of the South African society. In his quest to deal with such sensitive issues, he takes the route of examining the visual nuances of the secular in the concept of the everyday which owes its secularity to the undeniable disconnectedness from the miraculous, the magical and the sacred.<sup>492</sup> It is interesting to note that the image is marked by its aesthetic appeal that is reflected in the harmonious mingling of blue-grey and brownish colours of the mineral waste and the now-neutralised danger of the rocks, thus downplaying the message around the realities of environmental hazard that lies under its surface but which are not, at the same time, included within this photographic frame.

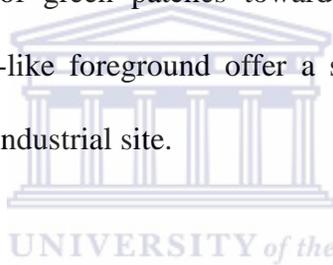


The denuding of this space of any human presence is here compensated for by the eloquently pronounced effects of human action on the environment. The main reason for this denuding is the closure of the mine, but this also evokes a sense of eerie imaginings about the fatal potential of such harmful, abandoned sites linked to the awareness of human lives claimed by asbestosis. The potential for the annihilation of the human population, especially the working class, is subtly suggested here. The interplay between the concepts of time and space manifests itself in the framing of the distant, hazy horizon that signifies the photographic moment in which more, almost infinite, time is admitted into the frame.

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<sup>492</sup> Felski, R., 'The Invention of Everyday Life' in *New Formations*, No 39, Winter 1999-2000, p.16.

The spatial and temporal components of the image suggest, among other things, a sense of continuity or perpetuity. What is in a state of continuity? The melting, distant horizon, preceded by suggested, barely discernible, elements of pictorial composition, is reminiscent of the element of time as what can arguably be seen as parallel to the rate at which amnesia perpetually gets ‘framed’ within the parameters of social consciousness. Amnesia continues to invade memory of a ‘once-segregated’ society, leading to a gradual, unwitting embrace of some of the socio-economic evils of the past as inevitable, naturalised normality. This is the everyday that repeatedly creeps in, almost unaccompanied by any dramatic historic event, within the context of post-Apartheid South Africa. Scanty areas of green patches towards the background, beyond the sparsely vegetated, wilderness-like foreground offer a sense of emotional relief away from the decay of the deserted industrial site.



The everyday concept in the perspective of this photograph is, in its modern, industrial setting, seen here within the context of a continuous quest for human progress in the field of industry, leaving indelible marks on the fabric of the economically vulnerable society that sustains, at operational levels, such progress, as well as on the physical space itself. Due to the factors of repetition, there are numerous elements of past everyday life that often go unnoticed as they insignificantly become interwoven into daily social practice in the present. Once they lose their ‘newness’ at a point of their admission to a cycle of everyday repetition, they get lost in the whole grand scheme of everyday suffering, injustice and many other troubled living realities where abnormality has successfully disguised itself as a postcolonial normality.

The remnant of a colonial abnormality, which has since ceased to be seen as such, is framed in Goldblatt's photograph that recalls a physical boundary between the colonisers and the colonised. Framed in this photograph is Goldblatt's *Remnant of a hedge planted in 1660 to keep the indigenous Khoikhoi out of the first European settlement in South Africa* (Fig. 3.4).<sup>493</sup> Seven years after the arrival of the Dutch East India Company settlers under the leadership of Jan van Riebeeck, conflict erupted when the Khoikhoi attacked farms owned by Dutch settlers, destroyed their crops, and seized 'their' livestock.<sup>494</sup>

This photograph, taken at Kirstenbosch, Cape Town, on 16 May 1993, is an example of landscape inscription in the colonialist endeavour towards exclusive occupation and ownership. The intrinsic attitude of the Dutch, coupled with their determination to re-organise and dominate space they have assigned to their 'care', is here reflected by this remnant of a hedge, meant to divide those who were regarded as insiders from the outsiders. Ironically, the actual outsiders, the Dutch who came to Africa, identified a territory that they claimed as theirs and proceeded to designate zones within it. This signified a historical moment of the invention of a microcosmic Europe within Africa, and an early form of racial hierarchy through space to correspond with the engineering of economic status.

This photograph (as well as the above with its fence) points to the notion of insiders and

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<sup>493</sup> Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press p.46.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*, p.186.



Fig. 3.4 David Goldblatt, *Remnant of a hedge planted in 1660 to keep the indigenous Khoikhoi out of the first European settlement in South Africa*. 1993.

outsiders, and is a visual reference to power relationships between more technologically-advanced newcomers, and the relatively powerless indigenes. It is pertinent to note here that this act of exclusion does not even consider another indigenous group, the San, and that is most probably because only the Khoikhoi, between the two Khoisan groups, were pastoralists and were, therefore, regarded by the Dutch as a rival farming group in this area. Furthermore, as in other mercantile relationships in Africa during this period, Khoikhoi groups were also affected by unequal exchange rates between goods that they bartered with Europeans. What happened between the Dutch and the Khoikhoi at the time can be seen as a microcosm in a larger world of expanding mercantile and colonial interests, where exploitation of the local wealth, including live-stock, was

euphemistically termed ‘trade’ while instances of reclamation of the same was then termed ‘theft’. The usage of these terms is often informed by who dominates and who is dominated in a given context, language itself being seen, in this and other related cases, as another means of asserting power. Given their itinerant lifestyle, the Khoikhoi had no fixed boundaries and could therefore wander relatively freely in search of fresh grazing lands. This wild almond hedge, which was a part of a cordon of block houses and barriers, was planted on Van Riebeeck’s orders with a view to preventing people and livestock from passing through to the Dutch-controlled territory. The nine-kilometre-long hedge ended at the foot of the mountain in what is presently called the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, where this fragment still grows.<sup>495</sup> This photograph raises issues around what contemporary, post-colonial Africans and former colonial masters term as ‘free trade’, the ‘open market system’ and ‘investment’. *Remnant of a hedge*, however, is Goldblatt’s sideways glance at these issues<sup>496</sup> and, although the photographic frame does not include the historical context in which the hedge was planted due to mechanical limitations of the camera, the caption clearly points to it.

This textual reinforcement of the visual meaning also refers to insider knowledge of what the hedge means, thus raising questions around the extent to which photographic images have the potential to function independently of text. It is precisely this apparent reciprocal relationship between image and text that brings about unresolved questions about the notion of documentary photography, with which Goldblatt is sometimes

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<sup>495</sup> Ibid.

<sup>496</sup> Parr, M., *David Goldblatt – Photographs - Contrasto*, Winterhur, Fotomuseum; Milano, Forma, Centro Internazionale di Fotografia, 2006, p.5.

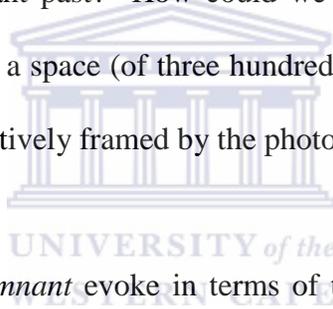
(against his approval) associated, especially when it comes to its definition as a genre against other genres that are perceived to be different from it.

One of the compositional strategies employed by Goldblatt towards the successful, aesthetically engaging, framing of this subject matter is the acute-, instead of ninety-degrees, angle at which he approached the hedge. This allowed him to depict the subject matter together with all other aesthetically significant pictorial features such as the recession from the picture plane of the almond hedge into illusory three-dimensional space, thus leading the eye along the convergent lines of linear perspective, marked by the hedge and the paved concrete footpath, which meet at a point just outside the photographic frame. This compositional approach has allowed the photographer to lead the viewer's eye deep into space where there is more visual detail such as the foot of the mountain and thin, scattered mist. Looking at landscape as a cultural and social construct becomes more relevant in this particular case given the manner in which the scene in question was artificially landscaped in order to meet the then requirements of the Dutch.

The photographer has also succeeded in depicting the gradual suggestion, rather than detailed articulation, of the texture of the foliage that constitutes the hedge as it runs into space. The texture has been achieved through the emphasis on sharp definition of elements across the format, especially on the left side of the deviant path probably leading into the garden. The organic nature of the hedge, probably caused by centuries of relative neglect, provides the eye with more dramatic engagement in which light and dark tonal gradations intermingle with this textural variation to further transform the physical

two-dimensional surface, the page, into an illusory three-dimensional space that is rich, as it were, with traces of old historical encounters between the Dutch and the Khoikhoi.

These visual features lead the eye to move freely into (not just across) space, thus admitting more time to enter the pictorial space, as it were. On the basis of the interpretation provided here, with all the contrasting yet complementary elements of distance and proximity, one may be challenged by a possible self-imposed question: If time were as physical as space, how far would 1660 be from 1993 and on which end of the picture frame or plane would the photographer be standing in order to lead us, symbolically, into such a distant past? How could we survive all the brutal and fatal historical events that punctuate a space (of three hundred and thirty three years) between these two temporal poles figuratively framed by the photographer?



What thoughts could this *remnant* evoke in terms of the remnants of the supposedly past colonial/Apartheid life in South Africa? Or, does the 'past' really reside in the past and not in the present? Taken on the eve of the new South African political dispensation, this image raises questions around the significance of historical events or changes in the socio-political life of newly-founded nations, as opposed to segregated societies without so-called common national aspirations. Why do remnants of social demarcations persist or prevail over the passage of time and what is the effect of photographing such remnants? What does it take to uproot and eliminate them from the life of any postcolonial society that strives for a better future? Does that future necessarily defy its present and past? These are questions that may flow interchangeably within a viewer's mind here, but it might be more pertinent to interrogate the effects of photographing such

remnants, and ‘fixing’ or confining them, in symbolic terms, to visual permanency, as it were. Again, this is yet another aspect of double construction of landscape, in this context an ideological one that deals with the subtle photographic politicisation of a space that is marked by the restriction of patterns of human movement.

Looking at the public memory around the notion of movement in space, *Monument commemorating the Ossewa-trek of 1938, which celebrated the centenary of the Great Trek* (Fig. 3.5)<sup>497</sup> is a heritage structure that represents the history of movement and values of Afrikaner nationalism. More than anything, this centenary was celebrated by both Afrikaans- and English-speaking whites “as a unifying symbol of South African nationalism.”<sup>498</sup> It is important to stress at this point that Goldblatt preferred to make this image because it is a visual representation of a historical event; it is not the event – the celebration itself. Given the technical limitations of the camera, which presents ‘frozen’ images instead of actual narratives, the divisions that were destined to mark the Afrikaner left- and right-wing divisions, leading to competing claims to the use of this ‘national’ symbol<sup>499</sup> could not be forecast. The monument represents an outdated unity of a ‘nation’.<sup>500</sup> A second way of reading is through the diagonal lines of perspective, along the stand of the cannon, along the cannon itself, along the bushy and highly textured

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<sup>497</sup> Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.40. See also Godby, M., ‘Dismantling the Symbolic Structure of Afrikaner Nationalism: Gideon Mendel’s ‘Beloofde Land’ in *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, Number 11/12, Fall/Winter 2009, pp.72-79.

<sup>498</sup> Godby, M., ‘Dismantling the Symbolic Structure of Afrikaner Nationalism: Gideon Mendel’s ‘Beloofde Land’; in *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, Number 11/12, Fall/Winter 2009, pp.72-79.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

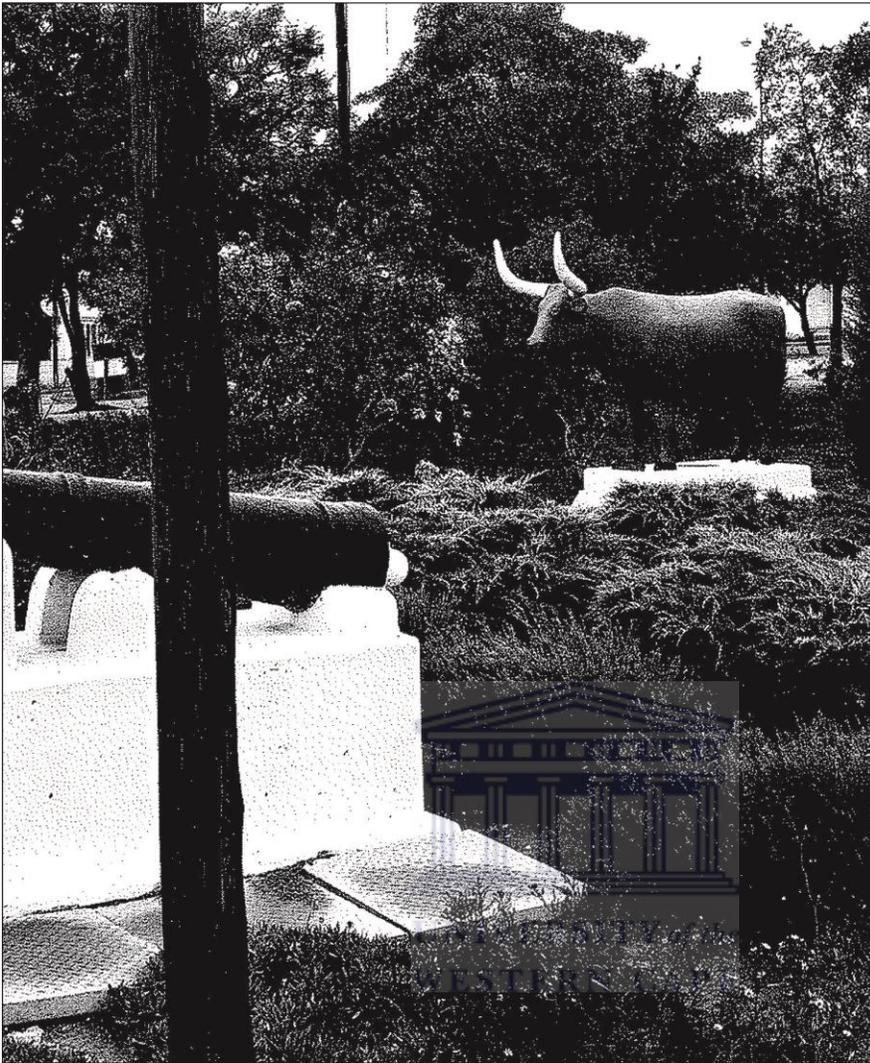
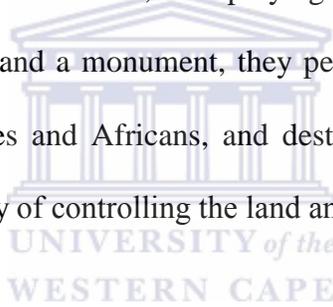


Fig. 3.5 David Goldblatt, *Monument commemorating the Ossewa-trek of 1938, which celebrated the centenary of the Great Trek*. 1993.

herbs just behind the canon, along the ox and its stand, and along the road on the left corner, between the garden and the town. It is this rich combination of the lines of perspective, forms, contrasting textural variations, especially those emanating from, on the one hand, the synthetic smoothness of the ox on its stand and the cannon also on its stand and those resulting from, on the other hand, the organically textured flora. As early as the first half of the nineteenth century, when the Boers trekked from the Cape Colony into the interior of South Africa, there emerged an Afrikaner nationalist sentiment

founded on Calvinist doctrine of, *inter alia*, predestination.<sup>501</sup> After escaping what they perceived as the undesirable values of the Enlightenment that came with British colonialism in the Cape Colony, which sought to equate them with Africans and slaves in the eyes of the law and also liberate the slaves from the yoke imposed by their masters, the Boers wandered among the Africans in search of land.<sup>502</sup>

Integral to the centenary celebration was the commemoration of bloody conflicts with the Zulu armies of King Dingane. These had ensued in the wake of penetration by the Afrikaners, culminating in the historic battle of Blood River of 16 December 1838.<sup>503</sup> When they defeated the Zulu armed forces, after praying and making a vow to build their god a commemorative church and a monument, they perceived themselves as a chosen nation, superior to other whites and Africans, and destined to rule over Africans and burdened with the responsibility of controlling the land and ‘civilising’ the ‘heathens’.



Evoking a sense of Afrikaner ‘supremacy’ above blacks is Goldblatt’s *H. F. Verwoerd Building, headquarters of the Provincial Administration, inaugurated on 17 October 1969* (Fig. 3.6).<sup>504</sup> The sculptor, Gerard de Leeuw, aimed at portraying Dr Verwoerd, the

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<sup>501</sup> Engdahl, H.S.A, *Theology in Conflict – Readings in Afrikaner Theology*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2006, pp.80-82.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, p.183.

<sup>503</sup> See Social Integration and Cohesion Research Programme of the Human Sciences Research Council, *Every Step Of The Way: The journey to freedom in South Africa*, Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2004, p.96.

<sup>504</sup> Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.166.



Fig. 3.6 David Goldblatt, *H. F. Verwoerd Building*, headquarters of the Provincial Administration, inaugurated on 17 October 1969.

‘architect of Apartheid’,<sup>505</sup> as an embodiment of Afrikaner greatness and employed particular gestures in portraying him as a great leader.<sup>506</sup> This statue, generally perceived as a direct symbol of self-aggrandisement on the part of the Afrikaner *volk*, is one of the Apartheid monuments that were removed from public spaces after the introduction of democracy in 1994.<sup>507</sup> This is yet another instance of symbolic power contestations between two conflicting ideological forces that compete for political legitimacy in one space.

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<sup>505</sup> Van Niekerk, P., ‘The Bus Stop Republic’ in Goldblatt, D., *The Transported of KwaNdebele*, Hong Kong: Aperture Foundation Inc., 1989, p.64.

<sup>506</sup> Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 249.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid.*

What looks significant about the photograph in question is that the statue is facing the building, thus facing away from the viewer of the photograph. This may evoke some associations around the seemingly perpetual introspective attitude of some Afrikaners – their supposedly collective national identity consciousness that was based on their being a special, superior people.<sup>508</sup> This point is based on the fact that the administrative personnel then would not just see the statue commanding, as it were, Verwoerd's imposing statesmanship and emotional strength, but his symbolic presence would probably be felt and become part of the everyday visual experience. However, the very act of photographing the statue and making it somewhat accessible to a broader public, in a two-dimensional format, alludes to a notion of double-representation of Verwoerd, albeit for different purposes and in disparate contexts. This is yet another aspect of Goldblatt's work for which he is recognised – the visual 'versioning'<sup>509</sup> of what was originally represented for a particular ideological purpose and for a particular group that constituted an audience then. This versioning<sup>510</sup> seems to run parallel with a museological practice of decontextualising and recontextualising some cultural heritage artefacts, thus problematising a notion of the authentic in terms of purpose and effect of representation to audiences for which it was meant then, as opposed to contemporary South African audiences.

The act of representation also manifested itself when it was used for propagandistic

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<sup>508</sup> Prof. Extraordinaire Hans Engdahl stresses, in an interview with him on 09/04/08, Rondebosch, that not all Afrikaners subscribed to ideological values that supported Apartheid and subsequent marginalisation of blacks.

<sup>509</sup> Hoffmann, A. (ed.), *What We See*, Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2009, p.86.

Here I am building on Dr. Annette Hoffmann's use of the concept of *versioning*.

<sup>510</sup> By 'versioning', in this context, I mean presenting a visually represented subject matter in a different way, rendering it more visually accessible to a broader audience.

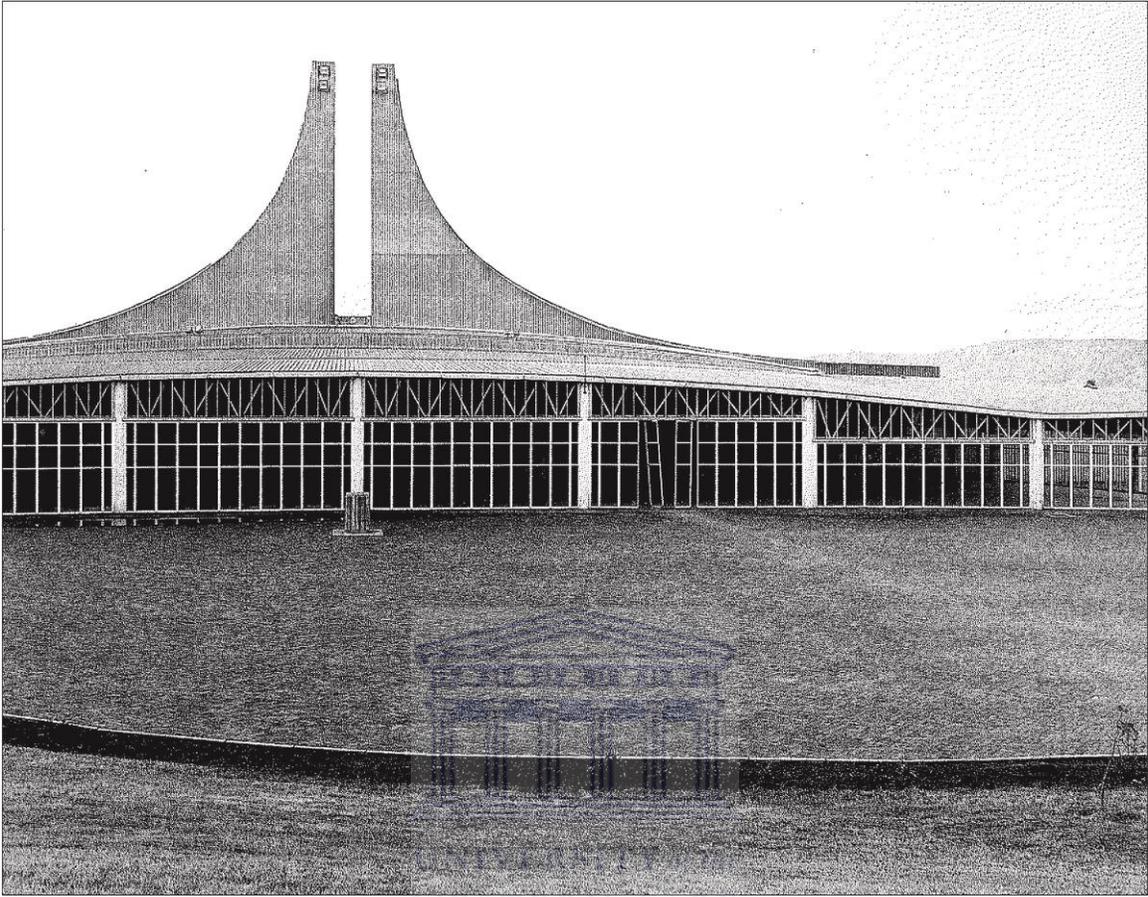


Fig. 3.7 David Goldblatt, *Ciskei National Monument. Ntaba kaNdoda, Ciskei. 10 July 1990.*

purposes within the ‘self-governing’ homelands of Apartheid South Africa. The passion for the struggle against Apartheid on the part of activists had given rise to the organisation of increasing support over time for diverse organisations such as the ANC, PAC and AZAPO. The Apartheid state’s strategy of trying to dilute this passion was reflected in the creation, in the 1960s, of, firstly, Bantu homelands and, secondly, the so-called independent states such as the Transkei, Venda, Bophuthatswana and the Ciskei.<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>511</sup> Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.252. Other homelands such as KwaZulu, KwaNdebele and Lebowa did not accept ‘independence’; they remained ‘self-governing states’.

All monuments erected in the name of such a bogus independence attempted to elevate the ‘nationalist’ statuses of these states and should therefore be seen as the extension of the National Party’s perpetuation of falsifying discourses of freedom, Bantustan independence and feasibility of the Apartheid system. On the eve of the demise of Apartheid, Goldblatt documented two examples of what should be really called tribal nationalist monuments or memorials. *Ciskei National Monument. Ntaba kaNdoda, Ciskei. 10 July 1990* (Fig. 3.7)<sup>512</sup> is one such structure that supported or conformed to this Apartheid agenda, using as justification the repatriation of the bones of a Xhosa chief, Maqoma, from Robben Island, where he had died in 1873 as an exiled political prisoner. Chief Lennox Sebe, who had declared himself President-for-Life, sought to use this structure as a rallying point for his ‘independent’ Xhosa subjects, inviting them to attend national conventions at this national shrine. Such a creation of the tribal nationalist pride was also aimed at averting people’s alignment with the liberation movement/s that sought to unsettle white power across the country and replace it with a democratic national order. *The KwaZulu Legislative Assembly Building with a memorial to Shaka. Ulundi, KwaZulu. 21 July 1989* (Fig. 3.8)<sup>513</sup> is another tribal national legislative house and monument sanctioned by the then KwaZulu Government under iNkosi Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Having rejected the TBVC-style<sup>514</sup> of ‘independence’, Buthelezi sought to undermine the Apartheid system from within, with the blessing and support of the exiled ANC. He, however, lost that support and became bitterly opposed to the two main struggle tactics of the ANC: the armed struggle and the imposition of economic sanctions upon South Africa, thus causing a bloody rift between his own organisation Inkatha and

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<sup>512</sup> Ibid., p.172.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid., p.173

<sup>514</sup> These ‘states’ were the Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei.



Fig. 3.8 David Goldblatt, *The KwaZulu Legislative Assembly Building with a memorial to Shaka. Ulundi, KwaZulu. 21 July 1989.*

the ANC. One may argue here that the promotion of such tribal nationalism through the erection of structures and memorials were attempts to reignite the nineteenth-century ‘Zulu’ nationalist pride and thus normalise Buthelezi’s “uncomfortable position between

apartheid and liberation...”<sup>515</sup> Operating in such a fuzzy political space mitigated against the very ideals and noble values he tried to uphold.

The above two examples of monuments to tribal nationalism reflect the extent to which, in the context of the struggle against Apartheid, other inter-black power struggles ensued on the basis of ideological differences. In addition to these examples reflecting power struggles in such a complex political arena, there also was, quite arguably, competition over support from the masses whose loyalty could possibly ensure the state’s consolidation and funding of its Bantustan and ‘independent states’ system. To a greater degree, this also shows some elements of complicity with the unwanted political system and the complication or blurring of lines that separated the oppressor and the oppressed. So, Goldblatt’s depiction of the South African structures *then* is by no means confined to the agendas of the dominator and the dominated; rather, it transcends the lines between the political players, including the powerful dominator, the powerless dominated and the apparent or actual ‘collaborator’. The presence and impact of the of the ‘collaborator’, as briefly discussed above, does not only raise questions around ethical positions of these three main components, but it also further complicates the position from which a committed photographer such as Goldblatt was supposed to operate at the time.

Further complicating the lines between the dominator and the dominated, in terms of the artificial nationalisation of black ethnic groups through the Bantustan system, was the fact that, as Bantu Stephen Biko argues, the black world was beginning to be completely

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<sup>515</sup> Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.254.

fragmented and that people were beginning to talk sectional politics. Here the political strategy of the dominator re-organising space had such far-reaching consequences within the project of the construction of a racial hierarchy and the marginalisation of the indigenous majority. Biko articulates the implications of this fragmentation as having created or aggravated an identity crisis which undermined the kinds of solidarity needed against a common challenge:

After the kind of noises made by Buthelezi, the Labour Party and of late Matanzima, who can argue that black opinion is being stifled in South Africa? Moreover any visitor is made to see that these people are fighting for more concessions in their own area (13 percent of the land). They accept that the rest of South Africa is for whites. Also none of them sees himself fighting the battle for all black people. Xhosas want their Transkei, the Zulus their Zululand, etc.<sup>516</sup>

Such tribal nationalistic tendencies and their cultural expression, as briefly outlined above, can be seen as tributaries of a bigger 'nationalism' - that of the Afrikaner ruling *volk*, whose ideological bases included religion. Such Afrikaner nationalistic ideological bases, which also led to the justification of a gradual development of an institutionalised system of racial segregation, Apartheid, found their expression in, among others, the Dutch Reformed Church architecture. Goldblatt's *Dutch Reformed Church, inaugurated on 31 July 1966* (Fig. 3.9),<sup>517</sup> designed in 1962 by A. P. S. Conradie,<sup>518</sup> is set in contrast with an apparently harsh environment marked by a rocky, hilly backdrop. This arid, sublime environment, which evokes associations about the wilderness, is virtually compensated for by the church building in the middle ground that evokes a sense of stability, peace, harmony and order. This reminded Conradie of King David's extract of

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<sup>516</sup> Beningfield, J., *The Frightened Land*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p.138.

<sup>517</sup> Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.141.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*, p.234.

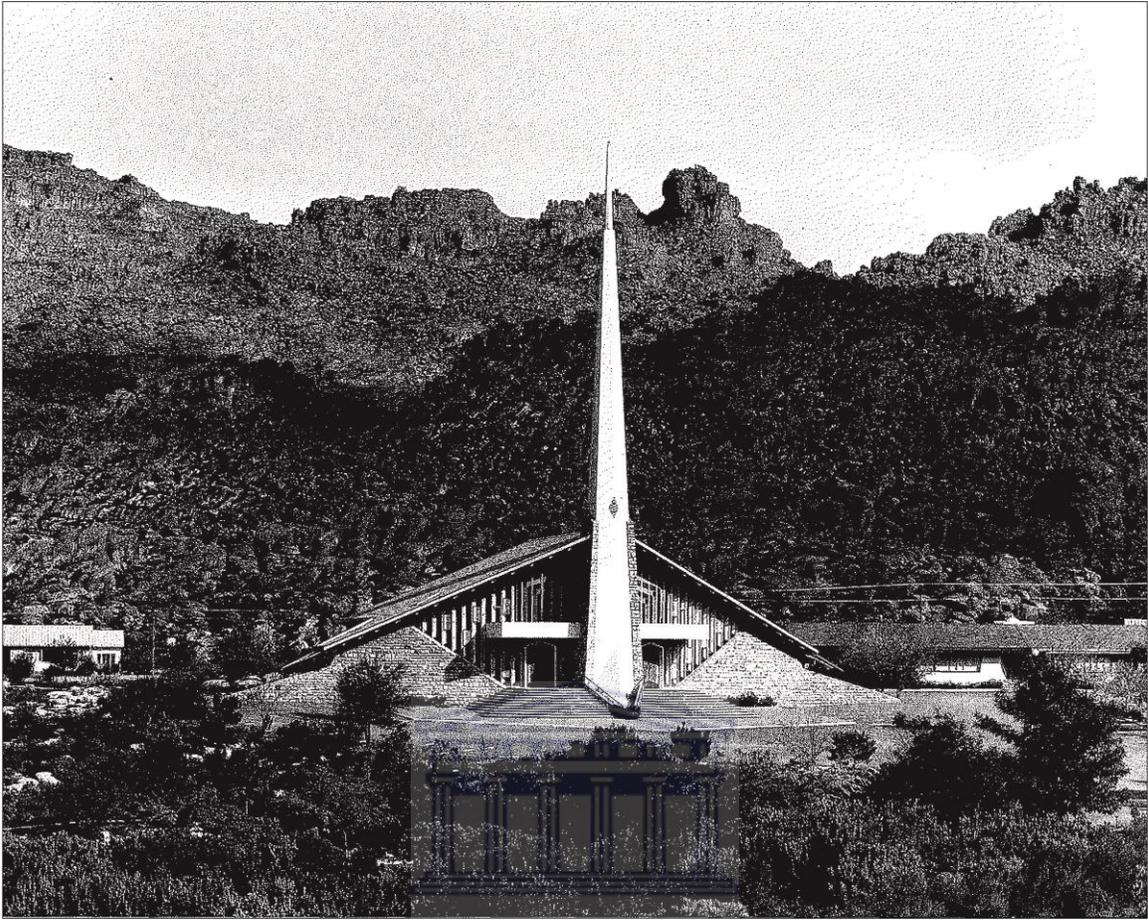


Fig. 3.9 David Goldblatt, *Dutch Reformed Church*, inaugurated on 31 July 1966.

one of his Psalms: “I lift up my eyes to the mountains ...’ or those of Father Abraham: ‘On the mountain of the Lord provision will be made’”.<sup>519</sup> The picturesque harmony and order seem to evoke, in this context, a certain kind of piety if one looks at a vertical, pointed church tower that leads the eye upward, presumably to God’s *mountains*.

Such Dutch Reformed architectural features seem to reinforce the idea of Reformed monotheism through which all humanity should pay allegiance to God; there is no cross on the pinnacle of the tower and thus the first Commandment has not been violated. This

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<sup>519</sup> Ibid., p.235.

is, for this protestant church, one of the distinguishing factors from the Roman Catholic, and other protestant, traditions of including icons in their worship modes. This geometric tower ‘reaches’ up to heaven, in direct contrast with the horizontal, and therefore earthbound, organic elements of the landscape around the church site. Other smaller, probably residential, buildings that flank the main church building are so reduced in scale to emphasise the grandeur of this imposing church building. The visual power that one could associate with the imposing architectural qualities of the church matches the political power of the Afrikaner *volk*.

What this has arguably achieved is not so much religious as secular. For Goldblatt, there seems to be as strong an earthly power to monopolise the economy, politics and other areas of South African social life as the power of the God who supposedly gave the Afrikaners huge expanses of the land in the interior. In terms of composition, the overall photograph is divided into three main areas, with the background being divided by the tower into two areas. The horizontal foreground in front of the church building gives a sense of rest or peace due to its textural and chromatic difference from the troubled, wilderness-like background. The focal point, hinging on the vertical tower, I argue, gives a sense of order and thereby creates conditions for the requisite ‘piety’. If one would compare the architectural features in this particular church building and those in *Dutch Reformed Church, Completed in 1984. Querlerina, Jo’burg. Transvaal. INovember 1992* (sic) (Fig. 3.10),<sup>520</sup> for example, the impression would look apolitical, for example, the impression would look apolitical, simply pointing to the progression of time.

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<sup>520</sup> See Krantz, D. L., *Politics and Photography in Apartheid South Africa*, in [http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/artsmediaculture/protest\\_art/pdf/Krantz\\_revised.pdf](http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/artsmediaculture/protest_art/pdf/Krantz_revised.pdf), p.294. Accessed 29/06/10.

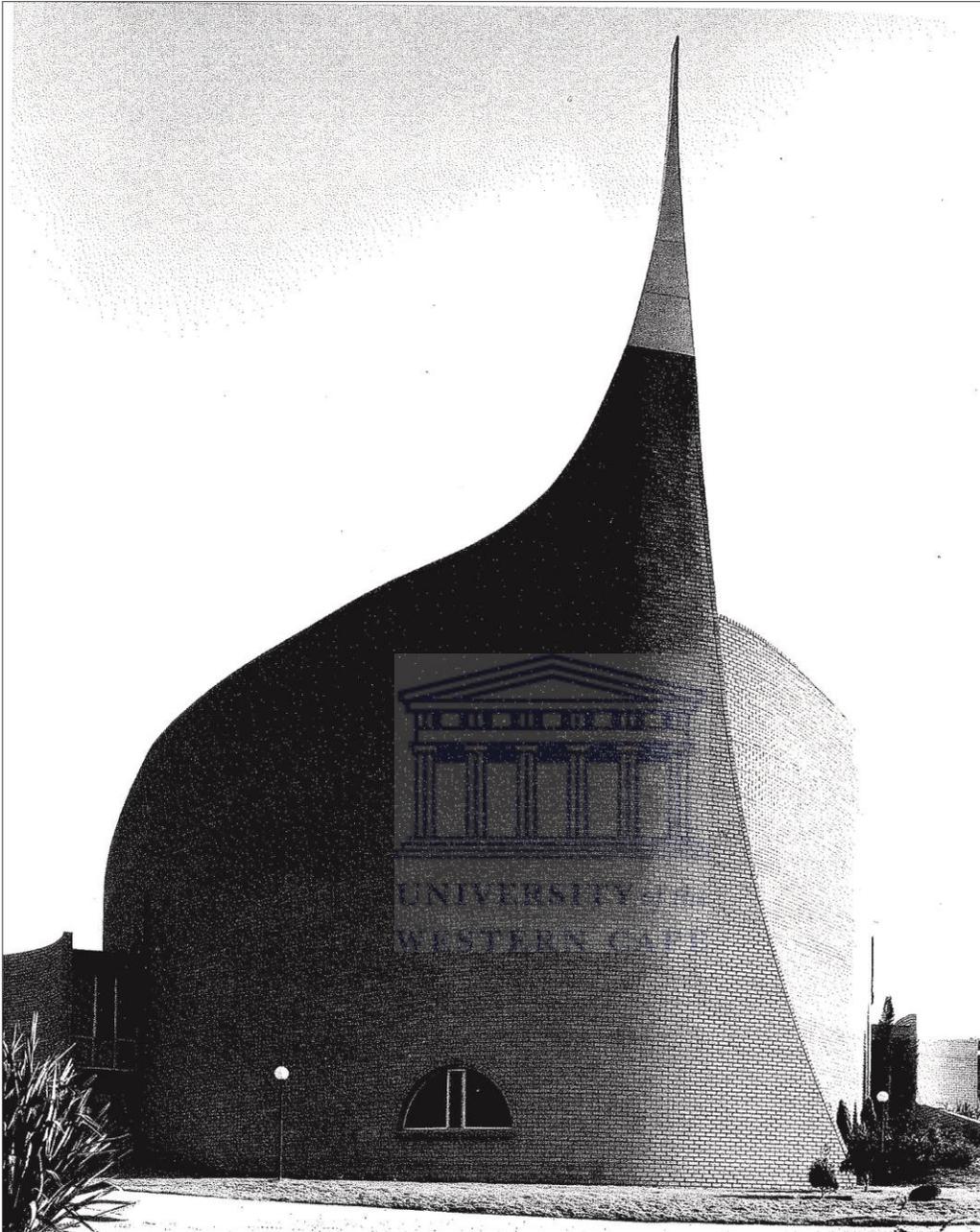


Fig. 3.10 David Goldblatt, *Dutch Reformed Church, Completed in 1984. Querlerina, Jo'burg. Transvaal. 1 November 1992.*

However, a close scrutiny of these images of architectural structures by Goldblatt, reveals something profound about their hidden political meanings. Instead of being just testimonies to Afrikaner piety and 'civilisation', they also allude to the Afrikaner

regime's transition from the openness of a church in Figure 3.9 to the closedness of the one in Figure 3.10.<sup>521</sup> In a subtle manner, Goldblatt possibly alludes to the regime's growing insularity and defensiveness.<sup>522</sup>

White racial hegemony had long been enforced in so many unashamed ways even during the first decade of the twentieth century when, in 1910, the municipal town hall of Durban was commonly understood to belong exclusively to white people as opposed to Africans and Indians. Officially opened on Tuesday 12 April 1910, *The City Hall and the Cenotaph. Durban, Natal. 29 August 1980* (Fig. 3.11)<sup>523</sup> was meant to be sacred, elevating the pomp and racial status of whiteness in the midst of other non-white races in the city. The following excerpt of one of several letters that appeared in the *Natal Mercury* newspaper (14 April 1910) points to the intended sacralisation of the building and the vicinity as racially exclusive spaces:

I understand the Hall was opened in the afternoon and evening for the convenience of the public, presumably burgesses, who, with their families, may not have had an opportunity of visiting it on the opening day; but what an insult to the Europeans to find every nook and corner overrun by thousands of Indians and natives of this town, and whom it was impossible to avoid, as they were in crowds everywhere. ... I pointed out to a constable that they – the Indians and the natives – ought not to have been allowed admission, as the walls were being disfigured by dirty finger-marks, and in any case it was a disgrace to see Europeans wedged in between coolies and kaffirs, but the only reply I got was that he had 'no instructions to interfere.'<sup>524</sup>

This incident took place several years before overt institutionalisation of the Apartheid system of government, elevating some groups over others in public spaces. But this supposedly supreme racial status of the whites in general also corresponded with forms of

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<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid.

<sup>523</sup> Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.118.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid., pp. 217-218.



Fig. 3.11 David Goldblatt, *The City Hall and the Cenotaph. Durban, Natal. 29 August 1980.*

racial segregation rife in mission Christian churches that were meant to evangelise and Christianise black people in preceding centuries. It is therefore not surprising that most

of the Dutch Reformed Church buildings photographed by Goldblatt, and analysed here, were exclusively for white, Afrikaner congregants. Goldblatt's visual strategy in framing Fig. 3.9, as compared with Figs. 3.5, 3.6, 3.8 and 3.11, is interesting in that the church building is marked by a strong element of rootedness, symbolically 'embedding' the Afrikaner religiosity in the African soil as well as its makers' possible claim to land ownership located in the 'perpetual' present. Other monuments discussed here are marked by their symbolic removal from the present, as it were, looking back to cherished pasts.

In 1965, Goldblatt photographically probed this Afrikaner supremacy, albeit in a subtle manner, when he took *Johannes van der Linde, farmer and major in the local army reserve, with his head labourer 'Ou Sam'* (Fig. 3.12).<sup>525</sup> The farm, almost marked by a strong element of infinity of space, is near Bloemfontein, Free State. Very close to the viewer's eye a conversation that is marked by a master-servant relationship is taking place. A bit further into the pictorial space is a servant who is 'subordinate' to 'Ou Sam', the head labourer, pausing slightly in the middle of his job, perhaps to listen to the conversation between Major Johannes van der Linde and 'Ou Sam'. It is not possible to know the details of the conversation, except a few words recorded by Goldblatt at the moment of photographing: "Old Sam, does the Baas swear at you? ... No, Baas, the Baas does not swear at me."<sup>526</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Some Afrikaners Revisited*, Roggebaai: Umuzi, 2007, p.65.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

In addition to labour relations, what Goldblatt is exploring here are the effects of black socio-economic inferiority that force people to pay respect to white employers who hold the reins of the economy. The power relations play themselves out here through the obvious subservient attitude of the head labourer, 'Ou Sam'. The status of the head labourer as the one slightly above his subordinate colleagues, but thoroughly below the master, is signified by his exclusive attire: the wide-brimmed helmet, the jersey on top of his clothing and his 'privilege' of being able to 'converse' with the Baas. It should be noted here that Goldblatt is dealing with a complicated context of layered power relations that are marked by a top to bottom (or pyramidal) hierarchy. Once again, the issue of who owns the land and also who provides labour is not just a black-and-white issue; it involves very subtle forms of hierarchy as can be seen in the case of 'Ou Sam' and his quasi-privileged relationship with the employer. Goldblatt tackles issues that are seldom, if ever, dealt with by his contemporary photographers and here he deals with hidden dynamics of 'Ou Sam's' ambiguous complicity with the boss.

The hierarchical arrangement signified by 'Ou Sam' and the Baas is a window through which labour relations of Apartheid South Africa can be viewed and analysed. The Baas' paternalism towards the head labourer amounts to and implies the generally supposed white superiority that had continued in the country since Dutch colonisation and slavery dating from 1652, modified and transformed by later British colonialist laws and further institutionalised through Apartheid legislature from 1948. Such a colonialist mode of reorganising space along racial lines would later serve the purposes of the Apartheid capitalist system because:



Fig. 3.12 David Goldblatt, *Johannes van der Linde, farmer and major in the local army reserve, with his head labourer 'Ou Sam'*. Near Bloemfontein, Free State, 1965.

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...It was hoped with the introduction of this Act that Africans could be forced to become less independent in relation to their participation in the colonial cash economy. The result was that thousands of poorer African peasants were forced off the land. One other thing which this Act did was to undermine the chieftain system of traditional African society as these tribal authorities acted as an independent political pole, which resisted these changes. This Act was set out to facilitate the formal establishment of African reserves...the Act also set out to eliminate independent rent-paying African tenants and cash croppers residing on white-owned land. This was done through restricting African residence on White land to labour tenancy or wage tenancy, and through prohibiting African land ownership outside of the reserves. It is through these tenancy regulations that the Act proposed to address the labour needs of White farmers.<sup>527</sup>

<sup>527</sup> Lephakga, T., 'The history of theologised politics of South Africa, the 1913 Land Act and its impact on the flight from the black self' in *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, Vol. 39 n.2 Pretoria Feb. 2013 in [http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1017-04992013000200021](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1017-04992013000200021) Accessed 08/03/16.

Lephakga's point above clearly provides a broader context of this image and helps one make sense of the systematic rendering of black farm labourers so dependent on white landowners. In further interrogating the question of labour relations, Goldblatt also looks at the significance of the appropriation of space by the powerful ruling elite and the marginalisation of the powerless masses, especially when it came to the system of, firstly, the 'self-governing' homelands and, then, the 'independent states', which were largely used as reservoirs of cheap labour to sustain South Africa's industrial cities.<sup>528</sup> *Tweefontein H Resettlement Camp* (Fig. 3.13)<sup>529</sup> is one of the dumping grounds for the labour force that was not afforded citizenship in white-dominated South Africa.

Also excruciatingly appalling were the living and working conditions dealt with by Goldblatt in his photographic essay, *The Transported of KwaNdebele*. I wish to focus on his photographic image entitled *2:45 A.M.: The first bus of the day pulls in at Mathysloop*

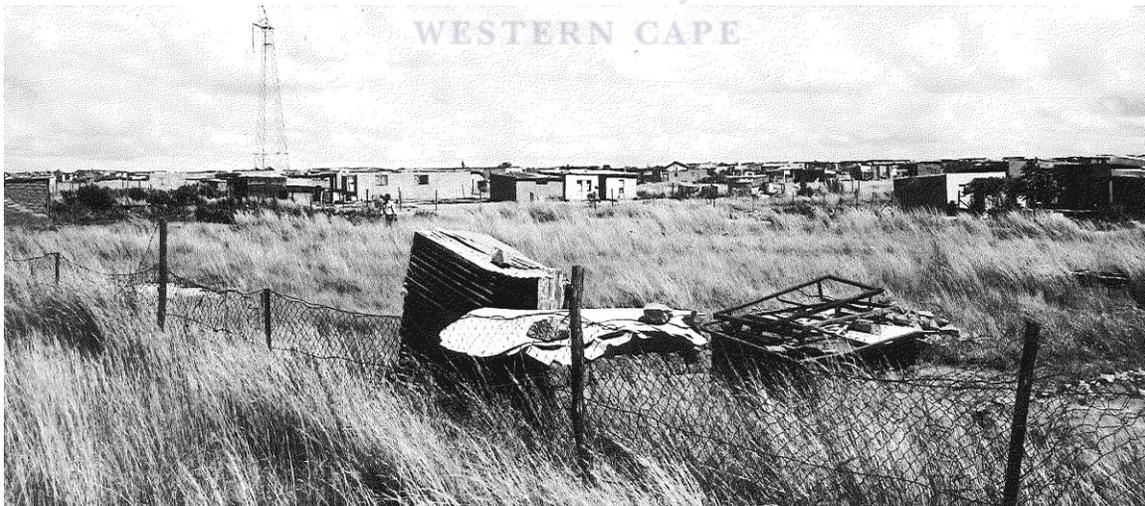


Fig. 3.13 David Goldblatt, *Tweefontein H Resettlement Camp*. n.d.

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<sup>528</sup> Van Niekerk, P., 'The Bus Stop Republic' in Goldblatt, D., *The Transported of KwaNdebele*, Hong Kong: Aperture Foundation Inc., 1989, p.65. It is crucial to note here that this state of affairs was a result of forced relegation of blacks to artificial "homelands", in this case KwaNdebele, outside a whites-only Pretoria.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid.

on the Boekenhouthoek-Marabastad route from KwaNdebele to Pretoria (Fig. 3.14).<sup>530</sup> It shows a queue of worker-commuters about to board the earliest bus that pulls in to take them to their respective places of employment around Pretoria, about 130 kilometres away from their resettlement camp. What emerges strongly here is the question around the meaning of daily life in an industrialised, segregated society. In the context of landscape depiction, Goldblatt invites us to think about the significance of the use of the body for industrial gain, where these people spend most hours of their day traveling to and from their workplaces and at work, and spend very few hours in the company of their families.<sup>531</sup> This photograph is yet another example of Goldblatt's work in which he pares South Africa down to its essentials: to the day-to-day experience of its people, where their mobility across space is strictly controlled.

This everyday experience also appears in what is remarkably different from most of Goldblatt's earlier photographs, namely *Swerwers, nomadic farm workers, on trek in the Karoo*, (Fig. 3.15).<sup>532</sup> The *swerwers*, also called *Family on trek in the Great Karoo, near Colesburg, August 1986*,<sup>533</sup> are seen from a high vantage point, thus encapsulating more space within a single photographic frame. This approach of framing the subject inevitably accommodates far more than would have been included should the view have been approached at eye level. It further minimises opportunities for the emphasis of linear perspective, but, instead, it lends itself to a different emphasis, that of an aerial perspective.

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<sup>530</sup> Ibid., p.15.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid., p.14.

<sup>532</sup> Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.57.

<sup>533</sup> Goldblatt, D., 'The Structure of Things Here' in Bunn, D. and J. Taylor (eds.), *From South Africa: New Writing, Photographs, and Art*, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987, p.216.

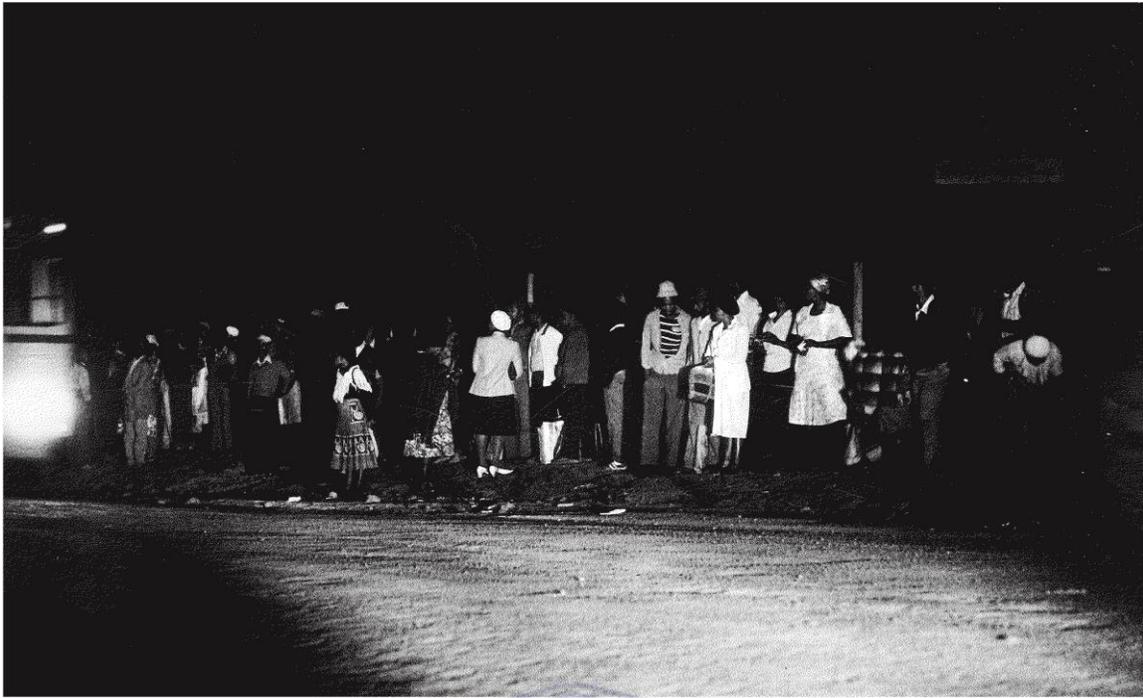


Fig. 3.14 David Goldblatt, *2:45 A.M.: The first bus of the day pulls in at Mathysloop on the Boekenhouthoek-Marabastad route from KwaNdebele to Pretoria.* n.d.

In this photograph, which is considered a turning point in Goldblatt's career at this time,<sup>534</sup> the expansion of the scope of what gets framed within the photograph in this instance has also rendered human figures as remarkably reduced in scale. The imposing, arid Karoo landscape is marked by details of rocks, wire fence, and stunted, sparsely distributed grass across the piece of land. As in other photographs with the fences that traverse the landscape, the fence here symbolises the division and possession of the land in South Africa.<sup>535</sup> The view suggests a number of instances of human activity or interference with this desolate countryside.

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<sup>534</sup> This point was discussed at a pre-colloquium workshop on *War & the Everyday* held at the Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape on 13/10/08.

<sup>535</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.110.



Fig. 3.15 David Goldblatt, *Swerwers, nomadic farm workers, on trek in the Karoo*. Near Colesburg, Cape. 1986.

This suggestion begins, though in a reverse order, with a tarred road leading to Colesburg, followed by a raised land strip that suggests a possible old, abandoned dirt road. Above and beyond the strip is what simply looks like a pasture that extends further up and conjoined, in a distance, by a hazy horizon. What suggests human intervention

here, either by basic or technologically advanced means, is low, roughly textured dongas, punctuated by naturally layered rocks.

A cart drawn by the beasts of burden and a bicycle are the only pictorial elements that directly point to man-animal relations, marked by man's control and exploitation of domesticated 'fauna'. Visually, the photograph offers layers of meaning based on the past that is spliced with the present. Framing the landscape from such a vantage point and in such an expanded scope has allowed more time to become an integral part of the photograph, thus offering more possibilities of reading the subject matter far back in time. A sense of immediacy, in this temporal sense, is evoked, in my view, by the itinerants who are on their journey, thus breaking the monotonous solemnity in the reading, as it were, of the visual data presented here. A possible sense of almost infinite contemplation has now been unsettled by the inclusion of the animate, unfixed creatures, thus signifying the endless flow of time in a linear, progressive fashion.

It is this compelling lack of the reversibility of time, coupled with its unbroken, uninterrupted continuity that offers a mesmerizing, intellectual engagement with this photograph. However, this photograph was taken in an interesting context of photographer-photographed relationship, which is why the *swerwers* are posed. Firstly, Goldblatt had to get permission to walk around and take photographs on the nearby farm in the Karoo in 1986. When he climbed a little hill, he saw the *swerwers*, itinerant farm workers and sheep shearers, trekking along the side of that N1 road to Colesberg and immediately shouted at them, asking for permission to photograph them, which, again, he received.

What should be noted here is Goldblatt's 'factual' approach to photographing his subject matter in that he does not try to construct an image of Africa 'frozen' in time. He confronts the reality of a changing society, a changing Africa within the context of Apartheid South Africa. The *swerwers*, though posed, are not presented here as pristine natives, confined in an unchanging cultural milieu, but the photographer shows how they, as the marginalised and deprived people, adapt and struggle for survival in the long-term socio-economic challenges confronting them. Their adaptation in a modernising South Africa is represented by what they use: the bicycle and an animal-drawn cart – wheels that are a product of modernity and an analogy of the progression of time, in my view.

As stated already, Goldblatt has framed these people as integral part of a dynamic society, not 'frozen' in time. He regards these people as the descendents of the Khoikhoi and the San who used to 'own' the land and freely wandered around without any restrictions before the arrival of the Dutch. Goldblatt rationalises his framing of this populated scene when he says: "Well because it gave me the opportunity of relating to the landscape and particularly those people who come from that landscape. These were the original hunters of that landscape. These were the San and the Khoi. These were direct descendants of the San and the Khoi."<sup>536</sup> Goldblatt feels that this photograph refers to the basic history of South Africa – land dispossession. These itinerant people camp on the side of the road every evening on their way to look for other seasonal employment opportunities. Goldblatt clarifies the situation of the *swerwers*:

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<sup>536</sup> See transcript of the interview by Prof. P. Hayes with David Goldblatt, 26/07/03, Cape Town.

By tradition and inclination, they are nomads. They seem not to want to settle permanently on farms; they prefer to be on the move... But whereas their ancestors roamed this whole territory freely, as hunters and pastoralists, the *swerwers* are confined to the *gang*, the space between the farm fences and the roads. They camp in these spaces, they hunt there, they pick up road kill, fish the rivers, and they look for farm work. It is a hard existence. A group that I photographed had been on trek for four months without paid work.<sup>537</sup>

Brett M. Bennett concurs with Goldblatt's point about the relationship of the Khoikhoi and San with the land: "The transhumant hunter-gatherer and pastoralist Khoikhoi and San lived in these arid regions".<sup>538</sup> Related to this virtual itinerant life of the Khoisan people is the idea of the wilderness that 'needs' to be tamed, and it may be pertinent at this point to introduce some views and arguments from a more literary context. I now turn to Nadine Gordimer, who deals with issues of landscape and power relations in South Africa that manifest themselves as a result of various aspects of spatial re-ordering. The re-ordering of colonised space, in the idiom of Gordimer's fiction, alienates the African who, like the *swerwers*, experiences the strange wildness of their territory as soon as it ceases to sustain them economically after the *digging*, the *breaking*, the *shooting* and the *driving off* of animals. Nadine Gordimer is likely to have had a bearing on Goldblatt's own work in this particular instance. She has produced work that explores themes such as racial stereotyping and aesthetic responses to the land in the colonial outpost. Gordimer wrestles with controversial, romantic notions of emotional attachment to or detachment from the land as a harsh and potentially dangerous domain. In essence, her work deals with, among other things, the disparate ways in which the European

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<sup>537</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London & New York, Prestel, 2005, p.110.

<sup>538</sup> Bennett, B. M., 'Reading the Land: Changing Landscapes and the Environmental History of South Africa' in Godby, M., *The Lie of the Land: Representations of the South African Landscape*, The Iziko Michaelis Collection, Old Town House, Cape Town, June – September 2010. Sanlam Art Gallery, Bellville, October 2010 – January 2011, p.46.

newcomers (the colonialists) and the indigenous (Khoisan) related and responded to the land.

The European taste of what was pleasant and comfortable in a newly found and conquered territory (southern Africa) did not really correspond with, for example, the Karoo. One may further argue that this was the wilderness which, in a colonialist perspective, needed to be tamed and 'civilised' to suit the taste and occupational purpose of the colonialist. The Khoisan suffered a major existential blow when, for example, the fauna that used to sustain them were driven away from their immediate reach and when the land was then divided and fenced up for organised, commercial farming, not taking into cognizance the original modes of survival of the indigenous population. The sentiments of the Khoikhoi reflect the following interesting points:

We of the Khoin, we never thought of these mountains and plains, these long grasslands and marshes as a wild place to be tamed. It was the Whites who called it wild and saw it filled with wild animals and wild people. To us it has always been friendly and tame. It has given us food and drink and shelter, even in the worst droughts. It was only when the Whites moved in and started digging and breaking and shooting, and driving off animals, that it really became wild.<sup>539</sup>

Goldblatt's acute awareness of these *swerwers*' economic dependency and their tendency of camping in the *gangs* at night, due to the inaccessibility of fenced-up spaces, should be seen as closely related to some of the issues dealt with by Gordimer in her *Landscape Iconography*,<sup>540</sup> as critiqued by Wagner.

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<sup>539</sup> Wagner, K., *Rereading Gordimer*, Johannesburg: Maskew Miller Longman, 1994, p.169.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid.

It would be relevant to make a visual comparison between the two photographs, Fig. 3.12 and Fig. 3.15. The manner in which Goldblatt frames human relations with landscape as a backdrop, in the case of Fig. 3.12, as well as human-land relations in the case of Fig. 3.15, is quite productive and has a potential of raising many other points for further discussion. It shows the dynamic role of landscape in that while it can be seen as a backdrop, it can also be seen as entering a mutual relationship with humans, depending on the photographer's intentions and positions at given moments.

Directly related to Fig. 3.15 above is *Swerwers, between Beaufort West and Loxton, Northern Cape* (Fig. 3.16),<sup>541</sup> taken on 18 September 2002. This colour photograph was taken at a close range, down on a dirt road, R381, between Beaufort West and Loxton.<sup>542</sup> They are still as landless and itinerant as they were in 1986 and at a close range it becomes easier to observe their physical features in detail and to realise the fact that they move around as families, with women and children. These *karretjie mense* (people of the little carts) had been on the road and without work for four months. They are, from the front and left to right: Piet Ludick, Jan de Beer, Petros Ludick, Sarah de Weer, Spaas Ludick, Martiens Ludick, and Liza de Weer.<sup>543</sup>

The post-Apartheid, celebratory mood expressed in the photograph through the use of colour, is interrupted by gloomy facial expressions of the human figures that populate the space. More importantly, the dominant occupation of space by these figures reduces the landscape into a mere compositional backdrop and this, in one way or another, borders on

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<sup>541</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.31.

<sup>542</sup> Wagner, K., *Rereading Gordimer*, Johannesburg: Maskew Miller Longman, 1994, p.121.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid. This image will be analysed in detail in the next chapter.

countering the emotional effect emanating from the state of poverty inscribed on the faces of the figures framed here. The pensive gesture of Piet Ludick, as well as prominently sculpted facial features and expressions of other group members are further reinforced by the intensity of the afternoon sunlight that dramatically casts shadows over their eyes. Notwithstanding this particular effect on the facial surfaces, the gaze that is returned by the figures is, in my opinion, not seen but felt by the viewer through the photographer's mediatory presence immediately behind the 'seeing' machine – the camera. This moment of mediated encounter between the subject-matter and the viewer opens up a space for the examination of the complex relationship between the photographer, the photographed and the viewer. This collapses the dominant visual relationship between the subject-matter and the actual message that is being conveyed – that of resilience in the face of adversity. This is one of many of visual explorations of the post-Apartheid socio-economic realities – the manifestations of the ghosts that haunt the new political dispensation from the tomb of social memory. This image exposes the conditions that allude to the aborted social changes and the elimination of various forms of 'Otherness' in a supposedly united, non-racial, democratic South Africa. The photograph, in Goldblatt's subtle visual idiom, offers a glimpse of the conditions of poverty on the margins of a supposedly free, democratic society.

Goldblatt's tendency to occasionally integrate human presence in his landscape photography reflects his opposition to the idea of fictionalising his visual messages.<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>544</sup> Danelzik-Bruggemann, C., 'On the Visual Language of David Goldblatt' in Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.119.



Fig. 3.16 David Goldblatt, *Swerwers, between Beaufort West and Loxton, Northern Cape*. 2002.

This is his approach to the exploration of the complex concept of realism, and this may be reminiscent of Realist European artists such as Jean-Francois Millet and Gustave Courbet who celebrated the real, rather than the mythologised, account of people's relationship to their physical world.<sup>545</sup> This point also alludes, in the same way, to Goldblatt's concern with the tangible, secular aspects of life in South Africa, focusing mainly on human power relations in their contested spaces. This point attempts to bring together, or conflate, two differing social and temporal contexts within which these

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<sup>545</sup> These two are French significant historical figures of the nineteenth-century Realist art movement, Courbet being the pioneer among them. Their focus on subject matter that elevated the countryside peasantry by depicting them in huge canvases was a significant break away from the then conventions of the academy and the Salon. Shifting the focus in that particular manner exposed the moral bankruptcy of political powers of the time, in one way or another, and this is partly what social documentary photography has sought to achieve in South Africa.

European artists and Goldblatt operate, in which the mythical and the mystified get demystified.

Goldblatt further demystifies a supposed unity under a common religious affiliation in what looks like a pair of posed photographs, *An elder of the Dutch Reformed Church walking home with his family after the Sunday service* (Fig. 3.17)<sup>546</sup> and *An elder of the Dutch Reformed Church walking home with his family after the Sunday service* (Fig. 3.18),<sup>547</sup> both taken in January 1968, where the human figures in both frames are set against different backgrounds. The figures of the father, the mother and the daughter are common in both photographs and have been taken almost at noon, judging from the position of shadows. While the first family is set against an area that is apparently settled by an affluent social class, the latter is set against houses that display a crowded settlement, probably occupied by a low income group. This difference is based on the tarred in the first photograph and the dusty road in the second road. Both daughters wear their Sunday best clothes but the daughter of the coloured elder wears no socks. This is one of the sideways photographs through which the viewer is invited to scrutinise these subtle differences that are informed by economic inequality. In this particular pair it is possible to deduce a general economic situation as determined by race and the people's religious commitment in spite of these inequalities. Goldblatt, however, was drawn to these subjects by the perceived separateness which, to him, amounted to "social segregation and religious 'ranking' within the church".<sup>548</sup>

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<sup>546</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Some Afrikaners Revisited*, Roggebaai: Umuzi, 2007, p.197.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*, p.203.

<sup>548</sup> This is based on Goldblatt's e-mail correspondence to the candidate, dated 20 November 2008.



Fig. 3.17 David Goldblatt, *An elder of the Dutch Reformed Church walking home with his family after the Sunday service*. George, Cape Province. 1968.

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### *Conclusion*

This chapter has attempted to outline David Goldblatt's approach to the exploration and documentation of the social history of South Africa, in terms of its ideological structuring by colonial and Apartheid powers. Goldblatt does not offer this history in a linear, structuralist mode, but his exploration and presentation of the intellectually challenging aspects of this history are marked, among other things, by his ability to convince the public that the mundane is very much a part of a broader social life in South Africa. However, more germane than mundane here is the manner in which Goldblatt visually articulates the relationship between vast space and the flow of more time into that space. The expansion of physical space, as presented pictorially, corresponds with that of time, as argued in this chapter in relation to particular photographs. This particular approach to

dealing with space and time through photographic means also allows for an apprehension of historical dimensions to the problem of how spaces have been shaped by those spaces. The social element of the relationship between time and space is very pertinent and has been successfully tackled by Goldblatt.

Through his photography, Goldblatt deals with concepts of the everyday and the secular as integral parts of each other, especially in instances where he collapses, as it were, a mystical grandeur of the architecture of the Afrikaner church buildings. The very act of photographing such structures, which visually represent the mystification of aspects of Afrikaner social and political power over the powerless black majority of South Africa during the Apartheid period, constitutes a significant part of Goldblatt's *oeuvre*. It also constitutes his use of the product of modernity, the camera,<sup>549</sup> in secularising and demystifying the mystified by depicting and rendering accessible those sacralised landscaped scenes such as church structures and sites.

All the social issues examined in this chapter allude not only to Goldblatt's concern with social issues and power relations, but they also show how Goldblatt considers the complexity of such issues in his dealing with reality within the context of power contestations in settings called 'landscape'. Labour relations, in their various manifestations and specificities of time and contexts, though not explored in a simplistic, mundane manner, do demonstrate the extent to which the element of the everyday is very

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<sup>549</sup> Cosgrove, D. E., *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984, p.257.



Fig. 3.18 David Goldblatt, *An elder of the Dutch Reformed Church walking home with his family after the Sunday service* . Carnarvon, Northern Cape. 1968.

much a part of the complexity and depth of social life and justice/injustice within the racially segregated South African society.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### Dawn of Hope? Post-Apartheid Landscape Photographs by David Goldblatt

*“Whereas black people previously needed a ‘pass’ to be on the streets of the city, and were subject to arrest in its absence, they now possess the streets.”<sup>550</sup>*

#### *Introduction*

The aim of this chapter is to interrogate circumstances around David Goldblatt’s dramatic departure from usage of black and white in his post-Apartheid photographic career. It asks questions around formal and thematic benefits that emanate from opportunities presented by this technical revolution.<sup>551</sup> It asks: How did this chromatic revolution affect landscape representation? When Goldblatt switched over to colour he wanted to celebrate the ushering in of the democratic order that replaced the old system of racial segregation.<sup>552</sup> However, visual analysis of photographs such as *Blue asbestos fibres, Owendale Mine, Northern Cape. 26 October 2002* (Fig.3.3), *Squatters’ shacks, Newtown, Johannesburg* (Fig 4.6) and *Women singing, Newtown Squatter Camp, Johannesburg. 1 November 2001* (Fig. 4.8) raises important issues around the democratic order that Goldblatt wanted to celebrate as images allude to the persistence of the Apartheid social and economic challenges under the new ruling class. This chapter therefore dissects major post-Apartheid social issues that Goldblatt is concerned with and how landscape helps to expose and explore these issues.

While the photographs speak to challenges mentioned above, Goldblatt articulates the technical benefits yielded by his use of colour. He mentions that it is the digital

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<sup>550</sup> Harworth-Booth, M., ‘Interview with David Goldblatt’ in Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.98.

<sup>551</sup> See transcript of an interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt, 17/11/08, Cape Town.

<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.*

reproduction of his photographs from processed colour film that really made a huge difference in his photographic methodology.<sup>553</sup> In essence, it asks how much latitude he has at his disposal after switching over to colour. The meaning of the term, 'latitude' will be examined in more detail later in this chapter.

While building mainly on particular arguments articulated in Chapter Three, I will derive most colour images that I examine here from Goldblatt's photographic essay produced in September 2002,<sup>554</sup> compiled and presented in book form, called *Intersections*, and published in 2005. During his more than fifty years of practice as a photographer, Goldblatt has probed "the cross-currents of 'ideas, values, ethics, postures, people and things'"<sup>555</sup> and has, on the basis of this very probing, put together "the first extensive publication of his personal colour work and of his explorations of post-apartheid South Africa."<sup>556</sup> These photographs are accompanied by an interview with Goldblatt by Mark Haworth-Booth and essays by Christoph Danelzik-Bruggemann (translated from German by John W. Gabriel, Worpswede)<sup>557</sup> and Michael Stevenson<sup>558</sup> in which they look at Goldblatt's visual language<sup>559</sup> and what his intersections with the

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<sup>553</sup> Ibid.

<sup>554</sup> Stevenson, M., 'Markers of presence: David Goldblatt's intersections with the South African landscape' in Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.100.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid., front cover sleeve. See also Stevenson, M., 'Markers of presence: David Goldblatt's intersections with the South African landscape' in Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.100.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid. Michael Stevenson alludes to the fact that this volume of Goldblatt's work was born out of the latter's initial idea of taking photographs at every intersection of a degree of latitude and longitude in South Africa. As soon as Goldblatt realised, to his disappointment, that at many of these points of intersections there was nothing that engaged him, he abandoned the notion and began to roam the country in search of those other, less precisely defined intersections.

<sup>557</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.124.

<sup>558</sup> Haworth-Booth, M., 'Interview with David Goldblatt' in Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, front cover sleeve.

<sup>559</sup> Danelzik-Bruggemann, C., 'On the visual language of David Goldblatt' in Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, pp.116-120.

South African landscape have to do with his ideas on ‘markers of presence’, respectively.<sup>560</sup>

This chapter examines the manner in which Goldblatt’s camera focuses on certain aspects of visible consequences of socio-political changes since the introduction of the new political dispensation. These and other pertinent questions that have to do with Goldblatt’s interrogation of the aftermath of Apartheid, as manifested in South Africa’s current social history, will punctuate the flow of this chapter. The same issues, as raised and dealt with in Chapter Three, around the relationship between landscape and social justice, values and beliefs – basically, issues that bring notions of human power relations to the fore – will be revisited and examined in the light of the post-Apartheid.

The chapter will also show that Goldblatt’s ‘secularising’ photography is further informed by additional health-related issues, which necessitate being incorporated as social issues, such as the HIV-AIDS ribbon. The depiction of this ribbon alludes to Goldblatt’s possible thinking about some of the challenges confronting post-Apartheid society including the impact of visual illiteracy in the context of access, or lack thereof, to information. In a subtle manner Goldblatt’s lens raises issues of social inequalities in areas of visual literacy. This, despite Goldblatt’s celebratory mood after the demise of the system of racial segregation, is one of the manifestations of the aftermath of those Apartheid policies which sought to entrench racial inequalities by, *inter alia*, providing unequal educational curricula to different races of South Africa.

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<sup>560</sup> Stevenson, M., ‘Markers of presence: David Goldblatt’s intersections with the South African landscape’ in Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, pp.100- 101.

However, this chapter also seeks to examine the extent to which Goldblatt ‘simply’ continues with issues he dealt with during the pre-1994 social historical era. Concerning this point, he describes the implications of his change from black and white to colour usage in his photography:

Okay, first of all let me say that to me that’s not a great change – from black and white to colour; it’s simply another medium to say much the same sort of thing that I’ve said all along. I’m simply using colour now instead of black and white. During the years of Apartheid...black and white was for me the medium that best suited what I wanted to say ...because colour was too pretty.<sup>561</sup>

However, it was only when he was photographing disused blue asbestos in Australia, after the abolition of Apartheid that Goldblatt first conceived of the idea of employing colour in his photography.<sup>562</sup> Back in South Africa, this idea was further inspired by the

metaphor of the ‘Rainbow Nation.’<sup>563</sup> Indeed, excessive prettiness of colour would not have resonated well with the socio-political light in which Goldblatt saw and made sense of the South African landscape marked profoundly by “a polarized state of conflict.”<sup>564</sup>

Using black and white, Goldblatt developed a range of intermediate tones that tallied with his nuanced view of things.<sup>565</sup> However, I would like to expand a bit on, and problematise, the implications of Goldblatt’s assertion that colour, for him, is simply another medium that he has employed to say much the same sort of thing that he has said all along. The argument presented hereunder seeks to problematise Goldblatt’s tendency to downplay the fruit of his switching over to colour after 1994. Goldblatt’s assertion surely suggests

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<sup>561</sup> Interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt, 17/11/08, Cape Town.

<sup>562</sup> Looek, U., ‘History in Motion’ in Goldblatt, D., *Intersections Intersected*, Porto: Museu de Arte Contemporanea de Serralves, 2008, pp.20-21. This use of colour is here being discussed in the context of David Goldblatt’s personal work.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid.

<sup>564</sup> Danelzik-Bruggemann, C., ‘On the visual language of David Goldblatt’, in Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.120.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid.

two differing but related ideas about his take on the idea of democracy and freedom in South Africa. Firstly, it suggests that the same social conditions of Apartheid South Africa are still detectable in the post-Apartheid era. Secondly, it suggests that the ushering in of the democratic political dispensation has leveled the ground upon which struggles against economic and other inequalities can be embarked. This is very pertinent to what is often thought or debated about the concept of a post-independence Africa: whether it is conceived of in terms of two disparate historical epochs or rather space for a deeper critique of Africa's political independence from her colonial or apartheid rulers.

Apart from examining certain nuances of such methodological changes and visual engagement with the postcolonial in Goldblatt's work, this chapter will also try to locate a space in which the tackling of pertinent social issues in his work emerges alongside the employment of advanced technological devices in coming up with more effective photographic results. Goldblatt is acutely conscious of such technological benefits and is able to articulate their technical implications in the presentation of his visual messages. He also compares the black and white phase of his career with the current colour phase in terms of how they differ when it comes to the amount and quality of visual details that one is able to present photographically – 'details' being an issue of great importance to him.<sup>566</sup>

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<sup>566</sup> David Goldblatt, in an interview of 17/11/08, Cape Town, articulates this point, using practical examples of his post-1994 work, by explaining how colour photography, in conjunction with use of digital photo shop, has solved a number of technical challenges that would otherwise have retarded his progress if he were using black and white photography.

*Detail, emotion and distance in colour: Visual analysis*

Dealing with the question of visual details that are presented in photographic terms may lead to other questions around the role of photography in delving into more conceptual issues around power relations in South Africa's economic grand narratives.<sup>567</sup> Figure 3.3, *Blue asbestos fibres, Owendale Mine, Northern Cape. 26 October 2002*, also evokes, in my view, thoughts around the value that is attached to the human body in the context of economic activities that were, and still are, dominated by the minority white interests in South Africa, even though new elites are emerging. The photographic and verbal narratives offered by Goldblatt around the context within which the *Blue asbestos fibres* were depicted allow one to interrogate the social implications of the continual devaluation of the black body that provides cheap labour. Goldblatt's camera has 'frozen' a particular moment in his narrative of this devaluation practice which, in essence, dates back to the Apartheid years.<sup>568</sup>

In the absence of human figures on the scene of environmental degradation, the sheer expression of toxicity through visual language brings up questions around the role of photography in cognitive engagement through visual metaphoricity. I argue that the photographic image itself is a visual metaphor, especially when it is loaded with a number of layers of possible meanings as is the case with the image in question. At a

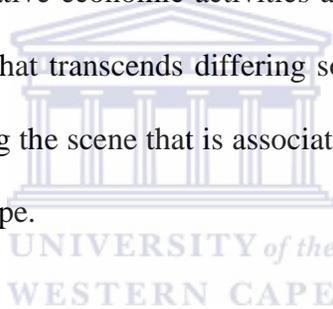
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<sup>567</sup> This point should be understood in accordance with David Goldblatt's tendency to focus his camera on aspects of the everyday in the South African social life. Grand narratives, whether visual or literary, tend to be informed by certain social power hierarchies or structures and thus downplay whatever 'peripheral' narratives occur on the margins.

<sup>568</sup> I am grateful to Dr Heidi Grunebaum for most of the ideas that I am articulating around the photograph in question, especially when it pertains to such conceptual ideas as the temporal, the treatment of the body within the South African capitalist economic context. She gave a general conclusion and remarks at a Programme in the Study of the Humanities in Africa (PSHA) colloquium, held at the Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, on 27/10/08.

different level, this metaphoricity is underpinned by the fact that the photographic image itself is, in essence, a visual, illusory symbol of the physical, three-dimensional scene as taken, processed and presented on a two-dimensional format by the photographer.

Photography, as necessarily a secular product of the age of the machine of the nineteenth-century industrial revolution, plays a significant role not only in examining such issues of social and environmental justice, but also in demystifying most aspects of social life that otherwise could have remained unquestioned. This includes the exposure of the exploitation of the human body and the environment in the context of the capitalist economy. While such exploitative economic activities are themselves manifestations of the construction of landscape that transcends differing social historical epochs of South Africa, the very act of recording the scene that is associated with such activities is itself a cultural construction of landscape.



This point may lead to the interrogation of the manner in which Goldblatt employs the product of industrial revolution as a cultural instrument in dealing with questions of seeing and understanding. To what extent does modern technology democratise such cognitive engagements with images that seek to tackle such issues of the postcolonial/post-Apartheid historical era? It is the possibility of perceiving a visual image as a metaphor of what has been photographed and presented to the viewer in this context that actually renders this toxic landscape a basis for thinking about multiple temporalities. This temporal multiplicity is based on the fact that the photographed scene, with all its visual elements, has a long narrative that alludes to multiple power contestations between the employer and the employee, Apartheid-sanctioned unjust

economic policies, devaluation of the black human body (labourer) in a capitalist economic context and apparent disregard for environmental justice that, in many senses, continues.

In addition to issues of environmental and social justice alluded to above, Goldblatt also touches on broader, national economic implications in relation to the image under study. Referring to the photograph, as presented as part of his *Intersections* photographic essay, Goldblatt extends the idea of exploitation to encapsulate economic implications for the post-Apartheid South African taxpayer. Explaining that the site in question was abandoned by the previous mining company without cleaning it of asbestos fibres, Goldblatt states:

...and incidentally, I went back to this place. ...and I did the same photograph here; it's now covered in grass and you and I are paying for that because we are paying, through the government, for the clean-up operations that the mines didn't do. So, this dump is now covered in grass; it looks very pretty, but it's costing us a huge amount of money and the taxpayers of South Africa...it's taxpayers of South Africa who're paying...<sup>569</sup>

Such a detailed verbal narrative, in the form of an interview, on the photographic image clarifies its intended meaning. However, it also presents a number of questions that pertain to the technical limitations of the medium of photography in terms of presenting a full narrative and the supporting role of both text, in the form of captions, and verbal narrative. This poses a challenge to the photographic medium in that it asks to what extent the meaning of the image is likely to be lost or distorted if other non-visual narrative approaches were not to be employed as an integral part of this cultural practice.

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<sup>569</sup> See the interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt on 17/11/08, Cape Town.



Fig. 4.1 David Goldblatt, *The mill, Pomfret Asbestos Mine, North West Province. 20 December 2002.*

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Thematically related to *Blue asbestos fibres* above are *The mill, Pomfret Asbestos Mine, North West Province. 20 December 2002* (Fig. 4.1)<sup>570</sup> and *In an abandoned mineshaft, Pomfret Asbestos Mine, North West Province. 25 December 2002* (Fig. 4.2).<sup>571</sup> The *Pomfret Asbestos Mine*, which began operating in 1978, closed in 1986<sup>572</sup> and, sixteen years later, Goldblatt came to photograph it. What is worth noticing here is Goldblatt's interest in dull, gloomy coloured, imposing structures, visible remainders of the mining industry with stunted grass and a group of children in the foreground that is marked by signs of environmental degradation over an eight-year period.

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<sup>570</sup> See Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.51.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.*, p.69.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.*, p.122.



Fig. 4.2 David Goldblatt, *In an abandoned mineshaft, Pomfret Asbestos Mine, North West Province. 25 December 2002.*

At the social and economic levels, Goldblatt's work on post-Apartheid life shows overt signs of the lack of integration of South African racial groups, as is evident in this particular image and others. On the basis of this point, I argue that the gigantic scale of claustrophobic and imposing, desolate mine buildings in relation to that of children in the foreground therefore evoke an ambiguous sense of both presence and absence. Within that space defined by this sense of ambiguity, presence is evoked in that there are figures of [black] children in the foreground, but this is an insignificant presence, marked by tremendous lack of economic or industrial activity since the closure of the mine. In a rather subtle, ironic manner, Goldblatt's camera raises issues that pertain to what became

the everyday in the Apartheid South African economic order: the positioning of most industrial areas with potentially hazardous emissions in sites more likely to affect the powerless, economically disadvantaged population, including diseases related to environmentally negligent and toxic industrial activities, often due to wind direction.<sup>573</sup>

Directly related to this image is Figure 4.2, which shows a figure of Fernando Augusto Luta, one of the veterans of a mercenary army formed from remnants of Angola's FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola) guerilla movement, washing his clothes in a pool of water in an abandoned mineshaft. Four topless boys at the background, the sons of the veterans who are resident around Pomfret, (Augusto Mokindo, Ze Jono and Ze Ndala) use this pool, which is believed to have been contaminated by blue asbestos fibres, for swimming.<sup>574</sup> Again, Goldblatt's visual narrative of the social realities affecting this Pomfret community pares down nuanced aspects of life such as lack of the provision of basic communal hygiene and recreational facilities. This also marks Goldblatt's continuation of the exposure and articulation of a lack of access to meaningful social justice by the poor majority.

The image under examination is highly loaded with a background of colonial/Apartheid history of military power contestations in the southern African region between South Africa's 32 Battalion and the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), the

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<sup>573</sup>There are many such cases in South Africa, especially if one looks at how urban environmental planning is often informed by the question of race. In Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal, one of the central pieces of the economy is ISCOR, a steel plant on the edge of town from which huge fumes of smoke are emitted almost on a twenty-four hourly basis. Ironically, such fumes often get blown in the direction of Madadeni, Osizweni and Blaaubosch, predominantly black residential areas which also serve as a huge reservoir for cheap labour that sustains the plant. Such observations about toxic proximity of residence and industry were commonplace among the local residents of townships around Newcastle where I was employed between 1993 and 1996 at the Madadeni College of Education.

<sup>574</sup> See Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.122.

dominant liberation organisation of the then South West Africa (now renamed Namibia). In 1992, Luta and fellow mercenaries, together with their families, “were granted South African citizenship and ‘shelter’ in the village of this remote, decommissioned asbestos mine.”<sup>575</sup> Here Goldblatt provides an important threshold from which to contemplate certain narratives that make up a significant, integral part of very complex post-Apartheid realities and contradictions.

One of the realities, with reference to this particular image, is the analogy that one may draw between the toxic waste from most of such abandoned mines and the dumping of these former mercenaries ‘in the village of this remote, decommissioned asbestos mine’. It seems obvious that these mercenaries, who were opposed to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), became an unwanted ‘toxic waste’, as it were, after the end of the operations for which they had been employed in 32 Battalion. It also becomes apparent that these mercenaries were stripped of legitimacy as citizens due to their involvement with the Battalion, thus becoming an unwanted ‘toxic waste’ even to their country of origin, Angola. This group of images on the theme of mining activities and their health-environmental repercussions on the population of Pomfret is a microcosmic example of the power relations that are informed by economic inequalities which date back to colonial/Apartheid years in the entire subcontinent.

The Apartheid years were marked, among other things, by deep economic divisions and social segregation with urban spaces being reserved mainly for whites, thus making South African cities colonial ones. Permit-holding blacks were allowed to be there only

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<sup>575</sup> Ibid.

as far as they were economically useful. The Apartheid era was basically that of forced absence for South African blacks in the city centres unless their presence could be officially justified. The dawn of democracy in 1994 represented a remarkable change for Goldblatt and this emerges quite clearly in a number of his colour photographs. About such political changes, Goldblatt presents his ideas upon which a number of photographic images on this subject are based:

And this, to me, represented a very, very important change; the move of people who had very little but who had somehow to make a way of making a living... Johannesburg streets changed out of all recognition because, previously, I think it could be said that the streets of Johannesburg were the streets of a colonial city – strictly controlled, mainly white; blacks were there by permit. After those times blacks...inhabited the streets; they relaxed in the streets; they worked in the streets; they walked and some of our streets in Johannesburg became...well, Johannesburg became, for the first time, an African city, no longer a colonial city...<sup>576</sup>

Such observations are reinforced by a number of Goldblatt's photographic images such as *Advertisement, Oaklands, Johannesburg. 20 November 1999* (Fig. 4.3),<sup>577</sup> *George Nkomo, hawker, Fourways, Johannesburg. 21 August 2002* (Fig. 4.4),<sup>578</sup> *Braiding hair on Bree Street, Johannesburg. 7 September 2002* (Fig. 4.5),<sup>579</sup> *Squatters' shacks, Newtown, Johannesburg. 1 November 2001* (Fig. 4.6)<sup>580</sup> and *Freedom Square, Kliptown, Soweto, Johannesburg. 10 December 2003* (Fig. 4.7).<sup>581</sup> Here Goldblatt's camera provides insights into aspects of black people's reclamation of the urban spaces in spite of apparent signs of poverty. Juxtaposed with this highly nuanced poverty is a profound measure of people's resilience and outright declaration of war against most Apartheid

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<sup>576</sup> Interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt, 17/11/08, Cape Town. See also [http://www.africultures.com/anglais/articles\\_anglais/40photo.htm](http://www.africultures.com/anglais/articles_anglais/40photo.htm), accessed 18/07/2009.

<sup>577</sup> See Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.6.

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.



Fig. 4.3 David Goldblatt, *Advertisement, Oaklands, Johannesburg. 20 November 1999.*

economic challenges. This is Goldblatt's depiction of a popular, steady attempt to shift from the periphery towards the centre – the mainstream – of the economy. Markers of human presence are visible in scenes where no human figures are apparent, such as in Figure 4.3. The information or advertisement board marked: PAINTER CALL TYMON TEL. 7256918, prominently displayed beside a street in Oaklands, represents Tymon's symbolic occupation of that (historically) predominantly 'white' space and his textual, instead of physical, encounter with his prospective clients. The hand-written advertisement is thus more personal, sincere and intimate, expressing the actual person of

Tymon, the painter, and I argue that this essentially signifies yet another way in which participation in the country's economy gets demystified. But Tymon's endeavours to carve himself a niche in the economic mainstream of South Africa, Johannesburg in particular, has a profound significance for the photographer whose ancestors were small



Fig. 4.4 David Goldblatt, *George Nkomo, hawker, Fourways, Johannesburg. 21 August 2002.*

traders. Goldblatt relates and connects Tymon's trade to his own ancestral background and also alludes to other possible benefits for the coming generations:

...and these represented very, very important changes because these people were now in business and you didn't need a bank account; you didn't need a secretary; you didn't need an office...So, this represented to me a terribly important thing because this is how my ancestors started – they were...small traders; they would sell things on the streets. Eh, and I imagined that the time would come when the children or the grandchildren of a man like that, Tymon,

would benefit from the money that he has saved by becoming a painter in Johannesburg and would become university graduates.<sup>582</sup>

This particular point alludes to Goldblatt's identification, or empathy, with aspects of socio-economic hardships and episodes of advancement or inclusion experienced and achieved by black South Africans. In continuous struggles against adversity, he appears



Fig. 4.5 David Goldblatt, *Braiding hair on Bree Street, Johannesburg. 7 September 2002.*

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<sup>582</sup> See a transcript of an interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt, 17/11/08, Cape Town. The analogy drawn here by Goldblatt is very significant in that his own people, the Jewish people, were severely persecuted and economically marginalised in many ways in anti-Semitic Europe, including Lithuania, from where his grandparents emigrated to South Africa. For Goldblatt, photographing such endeavours towards participation in the mainstream economy was part of memorializing his own heritage.

to recognise such episodes of victory as processes rather than events. Most of the images analysed here allude to this idea in various forms and those include *Braiding hair on Bree Street, Johannesburg. 7 September 2002 (Fig. 4.5)*, *On Freedom Square, Kliptown, Soweto, Johannesburg. 10 December 2003 (Fig. 4.7)* and *Women singing, Newtown Squatter Camp, Johannesburg. 1 November 2001 (Fig. 4.8)*.



Fig. 4.6 David Goldblatt, *Squatters' shacks, Newtown, Johannesburg. 1 November 2001.*

What should be taken into consideration here is that it is not just the cultural practitioner the photographer - who is engaged in this act of demystification of the erstwhile mystified. The painter goes around the city spaces 'reconstructing' the landscape,

reclaiming it, reordering it according to post-Apartheid economic imperatives and demystifying its erstwhile Apartheid-sacralised zones of exclusion. What is interesting



Fig. 4.7 David Goldblatt, *Freedom Square, Kliptown, Soweto, Johannesburg*. 10 December 2003.

here is the fact that Goldblatt focused on the advertisement *per se* and ignored, ‘effaced’, or eliminated other elements that could otherwise have interfered negatively with the painter’s intended visual message. Space and time have been treated differently from most of the examples cited here and this is reminiscent of Goldblatt’s black and white image captioned *Feathers and a childbook: debris after the forced removal of farm*

*workers from their roadside camp – Mngonya Valley, near Weenen, Natal. 26 July 1989*

(Fig. 4.9) that evokes, among other things, a profound sense of immediacy and proximity.



Fig. 4.8 David Goldblatt, *Women singing, Newtown Squatter Camp, Johannesburg. 1 November 2001.*

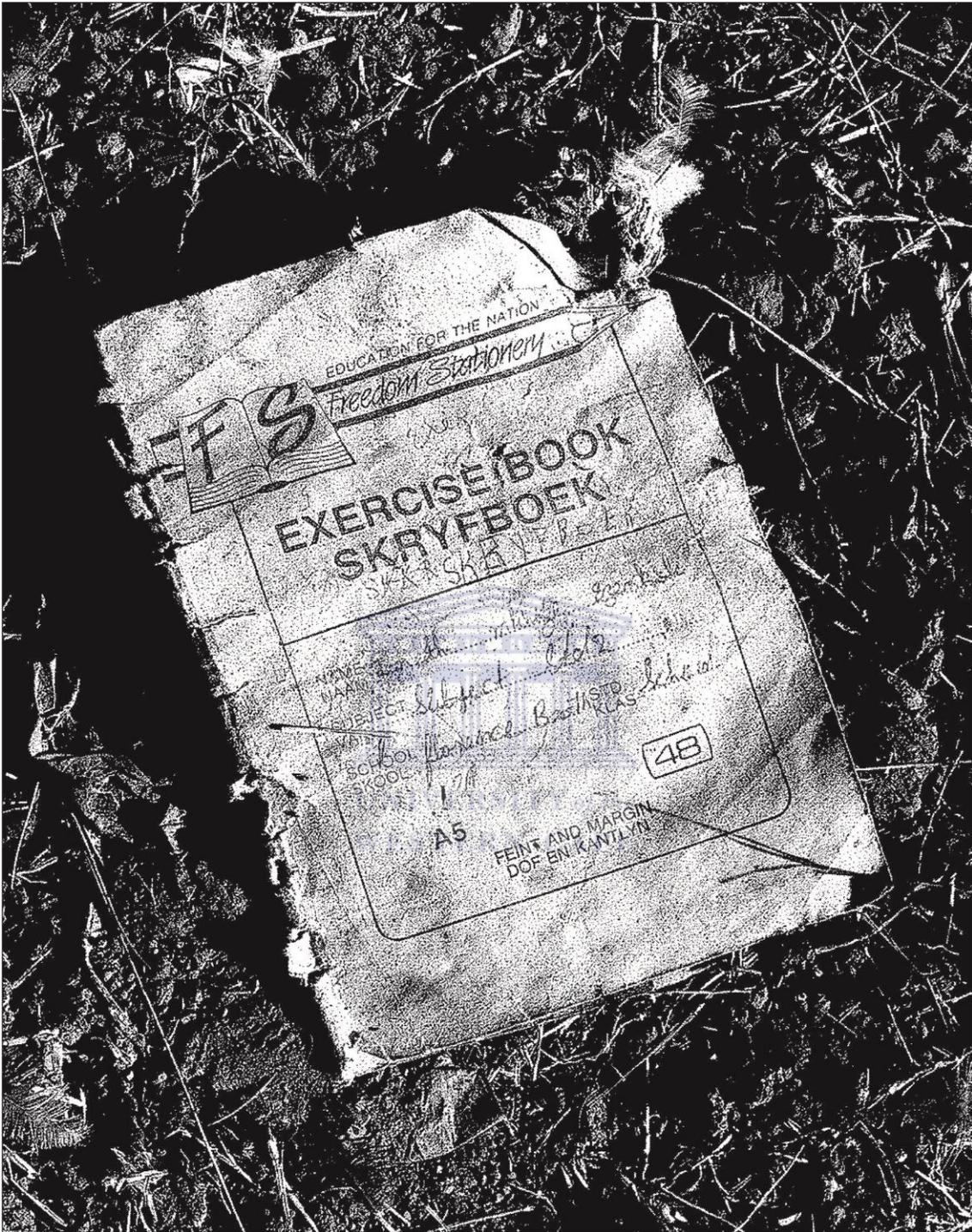


Fig. 4.9 David Goldblatt, *Feathers and a childbook: debris after the forced removal of farm workers from their roadside camp – Mngonya Valley, near Weenen, Natal. 26 July 1989.*

One of the aspects of ‘very, very important changes’, as observed and alluded to by

Goldblatt, is the return of the people to restricted, hallowed spaces, be they urban or rural, as opposed to their forced removals and displacement as referred to in *Feathers and a childbook*<sup>583</sup> during the Apartheid period.

Pertinent to note here is that the subtlety with which the ambiguous idea of presence/absence is expressed in this photograph seems to further enhance this idea as the conceptual interface that marks layers of, firstly, ‘arrival’ and, secondly, ‘returning’. Goldblatt has made this particular visual statement in a compositionally effective manner by eliminating other pictorial elements, thus focusing on the essentials – the suburban road/street, the advertisement and the jacaranda petals which, in a sense, serve to naturalise the erstwhile domination of this space by the affluent white suburban citizens. On the other hand, the act of ‘returning’ is symbolised by Tymon’s advertisement sign which is both synthetic and ‘alien’ given that it had to be erected on the spot, thus possibly evoking a sense of black people’s attempt to return not only to sacralised and segregated spaces but also to a racially segregated economic centre of South Africa, as it were.<sup>584</sup>

*George Nkomo*’s figure (Fig. 4.4) is part of such changes, ironically evoking thoughts, in my view, around economic inequalities in terms of two upward<sup>585</sup> strands that people tend to take: the mainstream and second economies. This has been visually referred to by

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<sup>583</sup> Ibid.

<sup>584</sup> I am grateful to Prof. H. Pohlandt-McCormick for ideas articulated here. They emanate from the discussion-and-question session of a Brown Bag seminar held on 06 May 2009 at the Interdisciplinary Center for the study of Global Change (ICGC), University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, U.S.A.

<sup>585</sup> Peires, J., *The Holocaust and Apartheid: A comparison of Human Rights Abuses*, Cape Town: Juliette Peires, 2006, p.v. This upward path that is alluded to in Goldblatt’s images, especially *George Nkomo*, had been embarked upon by South African blacks from 1980 when the Apartheid government’s repressive measures were opposed and actively defied. In the post-Apartheid era Goldblatt focuses on how people try to unshackle themselves from the economic oppression of the last political era.

provocative juxtaposition of *George's* simple perishable items, such as apples, that he is selling to the public and a huge, imposing advertising billboard erected there obviously by an established corporate company. Goldblatt's focus on all such visual details raises issues that deal, firstly, with huge economic disparities and, secondly, a scramble for opportunities in a free market economic environment. About the eruption of the second economy phenomenon in most post-Apartheid cities, one of the dominant ideas is that: "There being few job opportunities, the informal economy grew exponentially. With a few apples and some sweets you could become a hawker."<sup>586</sup>

Such opportunities are often accessed not on an equal footing by different racial groups and this has posed moral challenges for the post-Apartheid, democratically elected government since 1994. Scale differences between the figure of *George* and the billboard seem to reinforce this point, at least in a symbolic sense. Goldblatt casts a glance at such problematic issues – the remnants of the past – and shows how the powerful corporate world is always far ahead, as compared to smaller businesses, even signifying their economic and spatial dominance in grand, imposing scales.

Dominating and monopolising the economic and physical spaces in *Bree Street, Johannesburg* (Fig. 4.5) is a crowd of people who are engaged in various small business enterprises – selling a range of services and fresh produce from hair braiding to sales of fresh fruit. The hair stylists display their style samples and wait for their clients along the street, thus physically decolonising the scene, turning it into a part of the 'African city'.

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<sup>586</sup> See Danelzik-Bruggemann, C., 'David Goldblatt: Intersections', 2007, in <http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/exhibition/goldblatt> Accessed 02/05/2009.

The impact of this decolonisation is manifested in the marked absence of white city dwellers both in the photographic image and also in the hair-style samples that line the street pavement. The hair-braiding scene, seen against the spatially confining business houses of the city in the background, is marked by the distinction between the apparent permanency of the established businesses, as signified by a Wembley Building which forms the backdrop, and the imagined temporariness<sup>587</sup> of the smaller businesspeople. Post-Apartheid images of this kind, showing the transformation of urban spaces from colonial to 'African urban spaces' (in the words of Goldblatt), seem to be a direct opposite of the narrative around Figure 3.11 of this thesis and a situation where, during the past political era, blacks had been allowed to appear on the streets of Johannesburg only under strict conditions, being prohibited to do business.<sup>588</sup> They signal an entry into a different time zone where spaces are no longer reserved for one superior racial group and where derogatory names of the erstwhile dominated groups no longer apply. Again, this is how the cultural reconfiguration of concepts of time and space should be considered inextricably linked to social activity.

Marked by a certain degree of social permanency, as opposed to the temporariness associated with the urban hair-braiding scene analysed above, is the rural scene depicted in *Buffelsjagbaai, Western Cape. 5 October 2004* (Fig. 4.10).<sup>589</sup> Composed in a simple, almost symmetrical way, this image is marked by dignified simplicity. On the either side

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<sup>587</sup> This urban temporariness of black people's occupation of physical urban spaces is a visual parallel of itinerancy of rural *swerwers* in Goldblatt's image captioned *Swerwers, between Beaufort West and Loxton, Northern Cape* (Fig. 3.16) of this thesis. Goldblatt is highly conscious and concerned with various modes in which black people struggle to 'return' to ideological and physical spaces from which they had been forcibly removed by the Apartheid regime.

<sup>588</sup> See Danelzik-Bruggemann, C., 'David Goldblatt: Intersections', 2007, in <http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/exhibition/goldblatt> Accessed 02/05/2009.

<sup>589</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London & New York: Prestel, 2005, p.59.

of the format there are chopped-off houses of the village, with the view of the Atlantic Ocean dominating the central portion of the pictorial format. The subdued colours of the



Fig. 4.10 David Goldblatt, *Buffelsjagbaai, Western Cape. 5 October 2004.*

image, especially the sky and the ocean line, render it more mundane and secular. This sense, in my view, is reinforced by the fact that the colours making up the image are less dramatic, but, also, there is a history behind the depicted image.

The simplicity of the village depicted here parallels that of the lives of its villagers who were preceded, in the 1920s, by the founders, Johannes and Sophia Swam.<sup>590</sup> This couple started off by using planks from shipwrecks and driftwood to build their simple house

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<sup>590</sup> Ibid., p.122.

and a boat.<sup>591</sup> As the community of villagers expanded, over time, livelihood was sustained by sales of fish to surrounding villages.<sup>592</sup> What Goldblatt notes here is that “under Apartheid the community lacked rights of permanent residence”<sup>593</sup> and that they now have running water, electricity and security of residence tenure.<sup>594</sup> Here Goldblatt is concerned with this permanency of residence and economic sustainability that is supported by environmental resources.

Again, in addition to his concern with issues around economic sustainability, Goldblatt is celebrating not only the use of colour in conveying his visual message, but he is also celebrating the expanded latitude that allows him, firstly, to show all the details, given high resolution at his disposal, that constitute what he wants to say and, secondly, to ‘travel’ deeper into space without losing the details. What should be noted here is the manner in which Goldblatt comments, in visual terms, on similarities and contrasts between the urban and rural spaces occupied by blacks and coloured people and those include claustrophobic and open, vast expanses of spaces, respectively. Urban spaces are more unwelcoming, demanding entrepreneurial skills based mostly on synthetic resources to sustain small businesses as analysed with reference to Figure 4.5. On the other hand, rural spaces tend to provide environmental means for resilience against poverty, as analysed with reference to Figure 4.6.

Goldblatt’s photograph captioned *Squatters’ shacks, Newtown, Johannesburg* (Fig. 4.6) raises issues around aspects of poverty, resilience and unfortunate social realities that

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<sup>591</sup> Ibid.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid.

accompany the conditions of the dark side of black urban life. The squatters' shacks, covered mostly with plastic on top, seem to be very much in proximity with death as a distant building, marked: PERRY'S FUNERALS MORTUARY, looks much sturdier and a bit aloof from the shack area. In fact Goldblatt shows a transition, further towards the background, from the squatter camp in the foreground to the outskirts of the city with the required infrastructure that makes life convenient. Again, a shack in the background, marked: SHOW HOUSE, alludes to poor people's psychological victory over hopelessness that stems from such impoverished and squalid conditions. It is worth noting here that Goldblatt depicts the material, everyday aspects that speak to such intangible, intellectual strategies of day-to-day survival.

I argue that Goldblatt's methodology, as articulated in relation to the role of the intellect in comprehending and dealing with adversity, puts him on the spot in terms of power relations with his subject matter. A few questions may arise, such as: Is Goldblatt, a white, middle-class photographer, a legitimate practitioner to take such photographs of predominantly black poverty? To what extent does he or can he succeed in projecting the 'factual', the apparently anti-aesthetic, in his pursuance of the South African social history in visual terms? In depicting such adverse conditions, in conjunction with his ability to enhance the final photographic product through innovative scanning techniques,<sup>595</sup> to what extent can the 'factual' get muddled up with the aesthetic?

These are questions that may need to be contemplated as part of theorising post-Apartheid photographic practice when Goldblatt's aesthetic sensibilities shift over to

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<sup>595</sup> Interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt, 17/11/08, Cape Town.

colour. One wonders if this does not have a potential of causing a committed photographer such as Goldblatt to slip into older bourgeois tropes such as depicting the South African poor to set off the glories of bourgeois ‘culture’, ‘humanity’, ‘science’ and so forth, so that sensitive viewers, most of whom are economically advantaged whites,<sup>596</sup> can enjoy a feeling of sympathy and ‘compassion’ or else take pride in the consciousness of their own superiority. To what extent can Goldblatt tear down this façade?<sup>597</sup>

Set against equally squalid conditions in parts of South Africa are women hawkers and their clothing merchandise in *On Freedom Square, Kliptown, Soweto, Johannesburg. 10 December 2003* (Fig. 4.7). Seated on the margins of their own items for sale, under the scorching summer sun, these women wait patiently for prospective buyers. These women’s occupation of the margins of their own merchandise evokes, in my view, ideas on their economic marginalisation. Comparing this image to those already examined above, one may get a sense of stability and harmony in the sea of underdevelopment and crowdedness that marks most Apartheid and post-Apartheid South African townships. Some background houses and a caravan house various business ventures that township dwellers use in combating poverty and unemployment.

People seem to have learnt to confront various forms of economic impoverishment with courage. Goldblatt’s *Women singing, Newtown Squatter Camp, Johannesburg. 1*

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<sup>596</sup> The conclusion of this chapter insists that seeing from a white perspective is in no way homogeneous. So, this point is made cautiously in order not to essentialise whiteness, especially that within the South African context.

<sup>597</sup> These intellectually loaded but inconclusive questions are inspired and based on Roberts, J., *The art of interruption*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998, pp.47-48. I do not intend to attempt to come up with conclusions, but these questions may keep the debate around such ethical issues in motion and therefore productive.

*November 2001* (Fig. 4.8) expresses this point, with women working and singing outside their shack. The depth of poverty in this area, just about two kilometres away from the city centre of Johannesburg, is shown through the simplicity of the shack, which takes up almost more than two thirds of the picture format. However, this simplicity has, ironically, something complex about it, given both technological advantages of advanced image edition and production techniques by using the computer and the photographer's sharp and inquiring mind, in that the clear visibility of a portion of the city within a small slice of a spatial view on the right side of the image has been made possible and even enhanced by the fact that the colour film used here has enough latitude<sup>598</sup> as compared to earlier ones. About the advantages of using the latest photographic film in terms of showing every desired visual detail, Goldblatt explains:

So, that, to me, is very interesting...but there was a technical problem; I wanted to show the...city and I wanted to show the women singing. Now, it would have been impossible before to do that photograph in colour as I've done it because the...colour films in earlier...earlier days simply didn't have enough latitude and it was an extremely difficult job to make a print that embraced such a very wide range of contrast. Technically speaking, the contrast here is almost impossible to imagine in earlier days; you couldn't do it, but with modern technology and working on computer, we were able to hold the detail within the shack very, very precisely...and at the same time, we could show clearly what was happening on the outside.<sup>599</sup>

Goldblatt's insistence on showing both the shack, with all its interior details, and the distant part of the city juxtaposes two contrasting, unequal qualities of life under the post-Apartheid government. This image is an example of Goldblatt's critical view and presentation of what it means, especially for the majority of economically vulnerable

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<sup>598</sup> The term 'latitude' here means permission or space to do more. Goldblatt now has more space to exercise control of his final product, focusing equally on details of both vast, distant spaces and minute details that are now capable of being shown in high resolution. Colour transparencies, as opposed to colour negatives, did not have such a latitude.

<sup>599</sup> See transcript of an interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt, 17/11/08, Cape Town.

black people, to live in a post-Apartheid South African city,<sup>600</sup> but it also testifies to the aesthetic implications of his use of colour in that it meets his requirements for his love of huge space which can now be combined with his passion for particulars. One may argue here that such a technical innovation permits Goldblatt to operate more as an artist rather than just a photographer. This point of argument also serves to problematise his tendency to downplay some of the aspects of his career, especially pertaining to whether he can be seen also as an artist.<sup>601</sup>

It is pertinent here to examine the possibility of photography to be regarded as a form of art. Goldblatt's possible status as an artist seems to be complicated by a number of cultural politics affecting the South African photography in general and the role played by the art gallery world in particular.<sup>602</sup> As per his argument, Goldblatt's work, once embraced and re-contextualised by the art gallery spaces, assumes a different status and value on the basis of scarcity that it has been accorded by art market forces.<sup>603</sup> One then wonders what commercial impact Goldblatt's use of colour has had on his final product - the photographic print - once it is put in an art gallery context, bearing his signature and displayed as a product of aesthetic engagement with the depicted subject matter. On the common thread that runs through most of the images of the post-Apartheid urban slums

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<sup>600</sup> See Gibson, N. C., 'Fanonian Practices and the politics of space in postapartheid South Africa: The Challenge of the Shack Dwellers Movement (Abahlali baseMjondolo)', a paper presented at the Frantz Fanon Colloque, Algiers. July 7, 2009, pp.5-6. In Gibson's paper what emerges clearly is the question of class that becomes central among the post-Apartheid black city dwellers. It addresses, for the purpose of this chapter, the pertinent social and class dynamics that begin to define the South African society and what it means to occupy urban spaces in the context of economic inequality. The apparent confinement on the urban margins that Goldblatt explores here can be associated with dominant notions of a world class city that, according to Gibson, cannot be built with shack settlements in the line of sight and that shack settlements and middle class housing cannot exist side by side. This observation and Gibson's paper allude to the continuation of spatial segregation on the basis of post-Apartheid class, not only racial, differences.

<sup>601</sup> See transcript of an interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt, 15 May 2006, Cape Town.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid.

analysed here, I wish to propose that Goldblatt's camera explores the postcoloniality of the African city – how the city itself takes on an image of an ideological centre with its allegorical social periphery that attests to persisting economic neo-colonialist/postcolonialist features. Goldblatt's photographic/artistic techniques and sensibilities, I argue, should be seen as attenuating the distressing feeling of human adversity in negotiated urban spaces, and this raises a question around a possibility of such images being seen as emblematic of aestheticisation of suffering amidst pockets of economic power imbalances.

The above assertions about Goldblatt's status as an artist are being advanced in this study on the basis of my observations, as has been argued in this particular chapter. However, it is pertinent here to admit that Goldblatt holds a different view about whether photography can be seen as art. Here I wish to contextualize his contentions and also outline affirmations and oppositions to his contentions. At a public seminar, *Lens on History*,<sup>604</sup> Goldblatt responded to Riason Naidoo's question regarding pictures from magazines such as *Drum*, namely: "In what ways was photography an art form?" by contending that the terms 'documentary' and 'art' are to be viewed with a bit of suspicion.<sup>605</sup> Goldblatt further asserted that art is transcendental and that there is no easily defined position or characteristics that can be attributed to it, particularly in everyday terms.<sup>606</sup> Pointing out differences between art and photography, Goldblatt also drew the audience's attention to assumptions of scarcity upon which the former relies and

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<sup>604</sup> This public seminar took place on 26 November 2009, at the Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, as part of the *Strengths and Convictions* Exhibition. Riason Naidoo of this Gallery chaired this seminar which featured prominent South African photographers such as David Goldblatt, Santu Mofokeng, Paul Weinberg and George Hallett.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid.

contrasted this with unlimited reproduction with which the latter, he claims, is associated.<sup>607</sup> In response to Goldblatt's point I posit that art in general and graphic (printmaking) art in particular also has long entered the age of high, almost unlimited, reproducibility in the form of limited printed editions, be they silk screen, lithographs, woodcuts or linocuts. On the basis of this particular observation I propose that Goldblatt's point of argument may be problematic.<sup>608</sup>

George Hallett, Santu Mofokeng and Rashid Lombard took an opposite position to that of Goldblatt. Hallett pointed out that the photographers had been called artists (practitioners who painted with light) since, he claims, 1839.<sup>609</sup> Mofokeng, alluding to the element of subjectivity in photography, posits that photographs are a fiction in that one can choose what one wishes to photograph. Secondly, he cites the editing part of the photographic process as an element that qualifies photography to be seen as art. However, Mofokeng does not strictly distinguish between photography as art and photography as social documentary medium. He further reiterates that photography as an art form allows him to select what he wants to frame and that whatever he frames is political. Rashid Lombard, by virtue of having been very subjective, working against the system, also claims to be an artist. Hallett's, Mofokeng's and Lombard's assertions about their statuses as artists further problematise Goldblatt's insistence on the contrary, especially in his case. Goldblatt's methodology, according to this study, is also marked by subjectivity and, among others, colour editing.

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<sup>607</sup> Ibid.

<sup>608</sup> Here I wish to argue that the convention of producing limited editions of prints only serves to maintain the element of scarcity that Goldblatt alludes to as opposed to that of unlimited reproducibility of photography. It should be noted that both photography and art are capable of indefinite reproducibility.

As if to identify the scars left by the system that Lombard claims to have been working against, David Goldblatt framed structures and scenes that embody power contests between the Apartheid state and its oppressed subjects. Unintended, albeit apparently aestheticised, monuments to the insanity of Apartheid punctuate parts of post-Apartheid South Africa,<sup>610</sup> in addition to the manifestations of perpetual poverty, as shown in Figure 4.9 above. In *The Docrats' lavatory, Fietas, Johannesburg. 17 March 2003*



Fig. 4.11 David Goldblatt, *The Docrats' lavatory, Fietas, Johannesburg. 17 March 2003.*

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<sup>610</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.121.

(Fig.4.11),<sup>611</sup> Goldblatt revisits one of such aspects: the effects of forced removals as sanctioned by the Apartheid government through the Group Areas Act. Given the ruggedness and weeds that mark it as an abandoned structure, the lavatory, with its aesthetically appealing appearance, suggests a passage of time. This structure in no way reflects values and beliefs of its former owners, the Docrats, but those of the powerful regime that forcibly removed its former occupants on the basis of their being of Indian origin. Goldblatt first photographed, in black and white, *The Docrats' bedroom*. *Pageview, Johannesburg, Transvaal. 1976* (Fig. 4.12)<sup>612</sup> and *The Docrat's shop after*



Fig. 4.12 David Goldblatt, *The Docrats' bedroom. Pageview, Johannesburg, Transvaal. 1976.*

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<sup>611</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>612</sup> Goldblatt, D., *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.85.

*closure under the Group Areas Act. April 1977. (Fig. 3.1).*

1976 and 1977 were years in which the forced removals of Indians took place.<sup>613</sup> He had also established a more personal relationship with the Docrats and could, through conversations, make sense of the emotional repercussions they felt as a result of the forced removals then.<sup>614</sup> About this particular image (Fig. 4.11), Goldblatt recalls a part of his conversation with Mr Docrat who experienced the removal:

And I said to him: “Mr Docrat, have you ever been back to Fietas?” because he now had to live in Lenasia which was a group area for Indians outside Johannesburg, and he said: “Mr Goldblatt, I can’t, I can’t go back there and it’s ...I’m too...I’m too full of hatred.” But he said: “One day I was traveling in a double-decker bus and I, sort of, peeped out of the side of my...out of the side of the bus and there I saw our lavatory and I thought to myself that all that they left us is sh\*t”. Now, I thought that was pure poetry.<sup>615</sup>

The whole idea of forced removals reflects people’s vulnerability but does, in the same token, reflect their resilience – a concept that cannot, in reality, be recorded visually. However, the structure under analysis – the Docrats’ lavatory and the water tank – has, in my opinion, a symbolic significance, alluding to possible resilience that coexists with the depicted vulnerability of the victims of the removals. When the Docrats’ home on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street was demolished, this structure could not be toppled because it was supported by a concrete reinforcement.<sup>616</sup>

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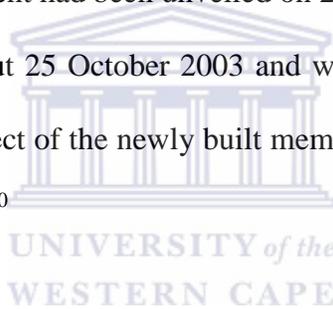
<sup>613</sup> Ibid., p.121.

<sup>614</sup> Ibid., p.203. Fietas was officially called Pageview.

<sup>615</sup> See transcript of an interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt, 17/11/08.

<sup>616</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London & New York: Prestel, 2005, p.121. For more details on the martyrdom, myth and memory around Abraham Esau, see Nasson, B., *Abraham Esau’s War: A Black South African War in the Cape, 1899-1902*, Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne and Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp.120-139.

Some of the unintended, as well as intended, monuments of Apartheid seem to haunt the post-Apartheid society of South Africa in numerous ways, but Goldblatt also considers situations where some monuments to the people's resistance against the Afrikaner hegemony have been demolished and re-erected during different political eras. *Memorial to Abraham Esau, Calvinia, Northern Cape. 6 October 2003* (Fig. 4.13)<sup>617</sup>, with Abraham Esau's mosaic portrait, was a memorial of a respected member of the Calvinia community who was brutally tortured and executed here by the Boers on 5 February 1901 for having shown an active loyalty to Britain, during the Anglo-Boer War, and for defiantly asserting the limited civic rights enjoyed by the so-called Coloureds in the Cape.<sup>618</sup> After this monument had been unveiled on 24 September 2003, it collapsed or was pushed over on or about 25 October 2003 and was to be re-erected on the same spot.<sup>619</sup> To consolidate the effect of the newly built memorial, a new hospital in Calvinia is to be named after this hero.<sup>620</sup>



The history behind this monument, including the skirmishes and contestations that surround it, shows the extent to which forms of asserting power took opposite directions in accordance with who is/was holding the reins of political power at a given socio-political moment. This point should be understood in the light of other monuments examined and analysed in Chapter Three and those include self-governing and independent states' statues and structures that were apparently used to foster feelings of false independence based on tribal nationalism. Other monuments were erected in honour and recognition of prominent Afrikaner historical figures while others were used

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<sup>617</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.63.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*, p.122.

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>620</sup> *Ibid.*

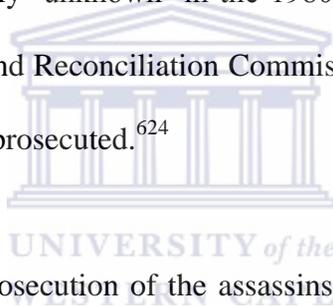


Fig. 4.13 David Goldblatt, *Memorial to Abraham Esau, Calvinia, Northern Cape*. 6 October 2003.

in rallying the Afrikaner *volk* around selected heroic episodes of Afrikaner history such as the Great Trek and the Battle of Blood River. Goldblatt's lens traces a number of South Africa's historical milestones and important historical figures from both sides of the political power scale and engages with issues or contexts within which these were executed.

It should be noted that most of Goldblatt's images that refer to memorialisation of the historical, national or tribal nationalist figures virtually aim at immortalising those figures. They are not juxtaposed with signs of death; they are squarely among the living, as it

were. Goldblatt's camera probes such heritage issues (in a very subtle manner) and also makes a remarkable shift when it is focused on how the fallen struggle heroes are symbolically resurrected from their graves by the democratic government-sanctioned heritage bodies established after 1994 such as the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). *The graves of the Cradock Four, Cradock, Eastern Cape. 14 October 2004* (Fig. 4.14)<sup>621</sup> commemorates four anti-Apartheid activists of the United Democratic Front (UDF) who were assassinated by the Security Branch of the Apartheid police on 27 June 1985.<sup>622</sup> The assassins, Eric Alexander Taylor, Gerhadus Johannes Lotz, Nicholas Jacobus Janse van Rensburg, Harold Snyman, Johan Martin van Zyl and Hermanus Barend du Plessis, were initially 'unknown' in the 1980s.<sup>623</sup> They were later identified and brought before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which refused them amnesty, but nobody has been prosecuted.<sup>624</sup>



The identification and non-prosecution of the assassins has no visual representation in the photograph, but one may assert that such heritage projects mark the ruling party's self-branding strategies. If this monument, including others within the same category, is to be seen as a spatialised war memorial within the context of the notion of the struggle against Apartheid, it can also be interpreted as a place where the post-Apartheid nation is invited to worship itself.<sup>625</sup> Colour UDF and SAHRA logos dominate the burial site

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<sup>621</sup> Ibid., p.79.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid., p.123.

<sup>623</sup> See The Posterbook Collective, *Images of Defiance: South African resistance posters of the 1980s*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1991, p.142.

<sup>624</sup> See Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.123

<sup>625</sup> Winter, J., *Sites of memory, sites of mourning: The Great War in European cultural history*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p.93.

while the names of Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sicelo Mhlauli and Sparrow Mkonto are inscribed in white on black tombstones. This simply complicates Goldblatt's notion



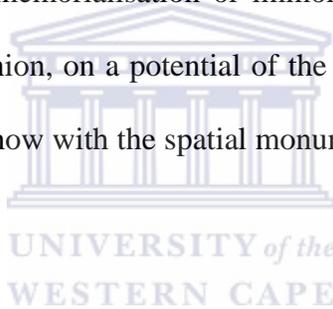
Fig. 4.14 David Goldblatt, *The graves of the Cradock Four, Cradock, Eastern Cape*. 14 October 2004.

of 'saying much the same thing' through his colour photographs this time around and it enhances his justification for switching over to colour because such chromatic modalities that reveal the ruling party's self-branding strategies would otherwise have remained obscure in black and white images.<sup>626</sup>

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<sup>626</sup> The self-branding practice of the ruling party was just a continuous one in that the four fallen comrades were iconised in 1985 when an offset litho poster containing their images was produced by the South African Students Press Union (SASPU). It served, among other things, to honour the Cradock Four and also to maintain the high morale among the struggling South African masses, especially those aligned with the United Democratic Front. See The Posterbook Collective, *Images of Defiance: South African resistance posters of the 1980s*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1991, p.142. See also Ritchin, F. in <http://changeobserver.designobserver.com/entry.html?entry=10557> Accessed 03/05/07, regarding,

Moreover, Goldblatt's black and white photograph, titled *After the funeral of the Cradock Four. Cradock, Eastern Cape. 20 July 1985* (Fig. 4.15),<sup>627</sup> from which this colour image emanated, also shows how advantageous the use of colour has been. The four huge grave mounds, with a young boy giving the clenched-fist salute of the then banned African National Congress, warrant no beautification but are simply emblematic of the brutality of the Apartheid state and the consequences thereof upon the oppressed. I argue here, around the idea of aestheticisation of death in this particular instance, that Goldblatt's use of colour has been suggestive of how consumable heritage can be constructed in the process of memorialisation or immortalisation of struggle heroes.<sup>628</sup> This point is based, in my opinion, on a potential of the monument being seen also as a tourist attraction as is the case now with the spatial monument of Apartheid incarceration, the Robben Island Museum.



Linked to this spatial articulation of memorialisation of struggle activities and its fatalities, in the case of the image under analysis, is the idea of time as a socially embedded concept. While the photograph touches on fatal consequences of heroic confrontation against an unwanted political power system, it also alludes, I argue, to a sense of continuity embodied in the figure of the young boy in the picture. I also argue that the cyclic idea of the use of time here is connected to the recent end of socially significant lives, as symbolised through the photographic framing of fresh graves, and the

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especially, the South African Heritage Resources Agency as the entity behind the development of the memorialisation project.

<sup>627</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections Intersected*, Porto: Museu de Arte Contemporanea de Serralves, 2008, pp.92-93.

<sup>628</sup> Osborne, B. S., 'Landscapes, Memory, Monuments, and Commemoration: Putting Identity in its Place' (Paper), in [http://clio.110mb.com/Osborne\\_Landscape.pdf](http://clio.110mb.com/Osborne_Landscape.pdf) accessed 27/06/09, p.26.

present, continuation of another socially significant life, as embodied in the still-developing body of the boy.



Fig. 4.15 David Goldblatt, *After the funeral of the Cradock Four. Cradock, Eastern Cape. 20 July 1985.*

Memorialisation through spatial means is not always obvious; it can be obscure at times. Obscurity has been one of Goldblatt's concerns since he first photographed *BHJ, Richtersveld, in the time of Aids, Northern Cape. 25 December 2003* (Fig. 4.16)<sup>629</sup> that was later followed by *Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, in the time of Aids. 13 October 2004* (Fig.4.17),<sup>630</sup> *Port Nolloth, Northern Cape, in the time of Aids. 28 December 2003* (Fig.

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<sup>629</sup> See Goldblatt, D., *Intersections*, Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel, 2005, p.38.

<sup>630</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52.

4.18)<sup>631</sup> and *Entrance to Lategan's Truck Inn on the N1 in the time of Aids, Laingsburg, Western Cape. 14 November 2004* (Fig. 4.19).<sup>632</sup>



Fig. 4.16 David Goldblatt, *BHJ, Richtersveld, in the time of Aids, Northern Cape. 25 December 2003*.

In Figure 4.16 above Goldblatt shows an arid, rocky, sloppy landscape with eight rocks in the foreground, with an AIDS ribbon and *BHJ*<sup>633</sup> prominently painted in white on the face of the middle one which he thinks is a memorial to an AIDS victim.<sup>634</sup> It is rather strange that this ribbon is white instead of red on this particular rock. Goldblatt's major concern with this and other HIV-AIDS-related photographic images is double-fold: the obscurity of the AIDS ribbon which gets lost or integrated into the physical environment.

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<sup>631</sup> Ibid., p.54.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid., p.57.

<sup>633</sup> See interview transcript by the candidate with David Goldblatt, 15 May 2006, Cape Town.

<sup>634</sup> Ibid.

Goldblatt's interest in this ribbon and other obscure notices about the disease stems from his concern about visual literacy or illiteracy on the part of the audience for which these are meant.



Fig.4.17 David Goldblatt, *Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, in the time of Aids. 13 October 2004.*

Like in the case of blue asbestos toxic waste which often have detrimental cost implications for the taxpayer, the display of HIV-AIDS ribbons and notices such as 'Prevent Mother-To-Child Transmission' (PMTCT) are, in his opinion, mostly a waste of taxpayer's money. He bases this claim also on his opinion that only a few privileged individuals can appreciate and access the meaning of this ribbon and accompanying notices. Here Goldblatt is using landscape, which is punctuated with AIDS ribbons and

awareness notices almost across the country, in probing questions around visual literacy (or lack thereof) in some social sectors and inability to access such information as a disempowering factor, denoting social inequalities in terms of information dissemination



Fig. 4.18 David Goldblatt, *Port Nolloth, Northern Cape, in the time of Aids. 28 December 2003.*

and reception. Articulating his ideas and concerns around the intellectual inaccessibility and obscurity of this ribbon to some individuals, Goldblatt relates:

As I say, I'm interested in the AIDS ribbon in our landscape. I'm interested in it for a number of reasons: First of all, what is this strange symbol? ...what does it mean to people? And my own private ...the way of seeing is that we don't see it. It's in our landscape, but we don't see it. It has become so much a part of our visual furniture that we don't see it

anymore. If I said to you: “Where is the nearest AIDS ribbon?” you wouldn’t be able to tell me.<sup>635</sup>

Here Goldblatt is dealing with the politics of seeing and knowing which has serious social implications in terms of combating life-threatening diseases such as AIDS.



Fig. 4.19 David Goldblatt, *Entrance to Lategan's Truck Inn on the N1 in the time of Aids, Laingsburg, Western Cape. 14 November 2004.*

However, at a cultural level, he is also interrogating the role played by visual symbols in the construction of post-Apartheid landscape. This construction is, however, marked, in very obscure and subtle ways, by serious power disparities on the basis of possible visual illiteracy on the part of some individuals, as decried by the photographer:

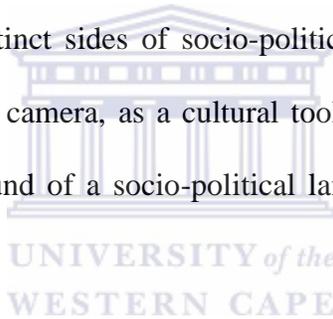
...on the road to Kimberley, suddenly there's a big billboard, a warning, and it says: 'Prevent Mother-To-Child Transmission' – PMTCT, whatever

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<sup>635</sup> Ibid.

it is. Now, who the f\*\*k in that place knows what ‘Prevent Mother-To-Child Transmission’ is ...beside, perhaps only a district nurse and a few other people? It shows...now, it stands at the entrance to the black township there...what used to be the black township, but it’s mad, bizarre because I’m perfectly sure that most of the people in that place, if they never looked at that thing, don’t know what it means. It’s a typical thing: ‘Prevent Mother-To-Child Transmission’. If I said that to Zachie Achmat, he would know exactly what you’re talking about...<sup>636</sup>

Goldblatt’s statement suggests that he feels this shows how much humans attach meanings and values to things.<sup>637</sup> However, I argue that this goes much further than Goldblatt’s point. Images with AIDS ribbons also represent post-Apartheid elitism which is not necessarily informed by race, but by class. Here Goldblatt complicates the issue of power relations and this point suggests the blurring and crisscrossing of lines that used to demarcate two supposedly distinct sides of socio-political power during the Apartheid period. Goldblatt is using the camera, as a cultural tool, in probing such controversial questions against the background of a socio-political landscape that is under perpetual construction.



One of the concepts that emerge quite prominently in the colour phase of Goldblatt’s career, especially in the context of socio-political landscape construction ‘in the time of AIDS,’ is that of the everyday. Ironically, the symbol that is supposed to educate or alert the population about the seriousness of the pandemic gets lost in the landscape; it becomes ‘a part of our visual furniture’, the mundane, the secular. This happens particularly in the case of Figure 4.17 where the AIDS ribbon, which is not even red, is compositionally dominated by elaborate architecture and public sculpture. The ribbon has become an integral, ‘lost’ part of the towering church on the left, a public house on

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<sup>636</sup> Ibid.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid.

the right, a sculptural monument on the right, a variety of street signs and lampposts, trees and a number of stationary and mobile vehicles.

### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, and in examining Goldblatt's claims around his use of colour, one may assert that colour usage has yielded many more benefits than initially indicated. The colour images examined above seem to have expanded and consolidated Goldblatt's visual messages that challenge the viewer, asking them to look at hidden, multi-layered meanings that are carried by the images analysed in this chapter. Goldblatt's camera is prompting one to think, from looking, what social, political and economic effects the ushering in of the democratic dispensation actually had on the lives of ordinary South Africans and what, more importantly, photography is telling us about such changes.

What Goldblatt's camera is probing are the implications of opportunities for the former oppressed to further entrench themselves in advantaged economic power positions. There is an autobiographical element about this because he draws analogies between the economically marginalised, including their endeavours to enter the mainstream economy, and his own Jewish ancestors of Lithuanian origin who used to sell things in the streets. This alludes to Goldblatt's identification with such black people of the post-Apartheid era and, again, complicates the whole question of whiteness in South Africa.

In Chapter Three I argue that while Goldblatt is a politically committed photographer, he bears signs of approaching his landscape subject almost as an outsider. This is a complex white way of seeing landscape in South Africa, but what aspect of whiteness can

be attributed to Goldblatt on this basis? Is there a homogeneous white way of seeing and interacting with landscape? In other words, what constitutes white subjectivity in South Africa? Is there just a singular, homogeneous white subjectivity? Given multiplicities of various aspects of the South African life, which are often complicated by the country's pasts, it is important to ask such questions in order to avoid dangers of taking notions of seeing and subjectivity for granted.

The whole question about Goldblatt's way of seeing and his cultural interaction with his landscape subject matter also encompasses his concern with social and environmental justice. Examples of images on mining activities show that such activities have a human factor and that their impacts on the environment have detrimental repercussions on the human body. Here the human body is shown and imagined to have been objectified in order to meet economic and military objectives of the Apartheid period. The aftermath of this objectification of the body – the dehumanisation process – is strongly felt during the post-Apartheid period, as has been argued in this chapter.

Most of the photographic scenes of this objectification put a particular emphasis on Goldblatt's manner of interrogating and engaging with the question of the everyday, the secular. His camera achieves this by demystifying the erstwhile mystified. He desacralises most or all of what Apartheid had managed to sacralise and this appears strongly in his scenes of painters' hand-written adverts, daily occupation of the urban and rural spaces by black and other non-white people, and many other related scenes. In this sense, decolonisation of urban and rural spaces fits the idea of the everyday. Both production and consumerist cultures emerge as the main features of the everyday and

show why the everyday should be understood as a product of modernity and the post-colonial.

The modernity and postcoloniality of South Africa are, according to Goldblatt's lens, closely linked to the complication of concepts of space and time. The issue of space has cropped up in multiple ways in the discussion of Goldblatt's work so far - space which often bears the scars of multiple temporalities. Goldblatt's visual, textual and verbal narratives on histories around abandoned mining sites, with all their histories of economic power contestations, allude to this idea of temporal multiplicity. When Goldblatt looks at the impact of the past military power struggles, as is the case with the former Angolan mercenaries, he is probing the political realities of postcolonial southern Africa. His camera thus becomes his tool of political critique, albeit in a visual sense.

Goldblatt's engagement with the political critique is further made possible by his utilisation of colour. Most of the examples of images analyzed here are marked by clarity of details across the format and Goldblatt's ability to delve deeper into distant spaces without losing any aspect of the visual detail. This aesthetic aspect leads to something Goldblatt often denies: that is, being seen not only as a photographer, but also as an artist.<sup>638</sup> This notion is also reinforced by the manner in which Goldblatt's work has been commodified by both the public and private art world nationally and internationally.

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<sup>638</sup> See Goldblatt, D., 'The Structure of Things Here' in Bunn, D. and J. Taylor (eds.), *From South Africa: New Writing, Photographs, and Art*, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987, p.211.

It should be understood that Goldblatt, like all contemporary photographers, operates within a period when the theoretical dispute between painting and photography has been brought towards its logical conclusion, from the time when the “question whether photography was an art was debated”<sup>639</sup> in mid-nineteenth century France.<sup>640</sup> Photography’s claim to be an art was raised by those who were turning it into a business and is contemporaneous with its emergence as a consumable commodity.<sup>641</sup> This, I argue, also applies to Goldblatt’s photography which, given his aura and the commercialisation of his name in the contemporary local and international art market, has become a medium of capitalist exchange under the guise of cultural appreciation. Wiesner, in concurrence with this argument, touching on the power of the art galleries, argues that: “The “rising power” of galleries is a symptom of, and stimulant to, the erosion of borders between the art world and traditional documentary photography practice...”<sup>642</sup> On the basis of Goldblatt’s commercialisation, I also argue that his work therefore requires artistic treatment and innovations, such as effective, subjective use of colour, in order to suit the taste of prospective connoisseurs and collectors. His work has entered the domain of aesthetic appreciation and critical scrutiny not only for socio-political relevance, but also for its commercial and sentimental values.<sup>643</sup>

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<sup>639</sup> See Benjamin, W. (Ed. Jennings, M. W. et al & trans. Jephcott, E. et al), *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2008, pp.312-313.

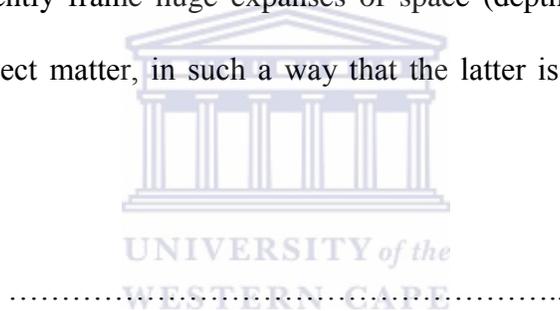
<sup>640</sup> Ibid. p.313.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid.

<sup>642</sup> See Wiesner, A., ‘Rediscovering the (extra)ordinary: Missed experience and South African documentary photography’ in *Javnost-the public*, Vol. 14 (2007), No. 3, pp 7-30, p.16.

<sup>643</sup> Here ‘sentimental’ can be viewed from more than one perspective including certain buyers’ sentimental attitude about post-Apartheid South Africa. It should also be recalled that post-Apartheid South Africa’s visual consumption is now marked by complexities that stem from questions around the extent to which socio-economic transformation is taking place in various walks of life.

It is this commercialisation and commodification that problematise Goldblatt's tendency to downplay his apparent artistic status. This is likely to be attributable to the fact that there has been a prolonged politicisation of culture in this country, especially if one thinks about culture being seen as a tool of the struggle, at one point, and cultural boycott at another point. It is likely that Goldblatt chooses to steer clear of such politicised spaces. The argument presented above places David Goldblatt squarely within an intellectually challenging cultural space in which he probes implications of social life in post-1994 South Africa. He interrogates certain realities of South Africa's postcoloniality and shows how he has benefited from switching over to colour which allows him to sufficiently frame huge expanses of space (depth) and minute, detailed particulars of his subject matter, in such a way that the latter is then 'consumed' by a purchasing art public.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Notions of the everyday and spirituality in landscape photographs by Santu Mofokeng

*“The beauty of the South African landscape ...is wrapped up in biblical mythology overlaid with some Africana mysticism.”<sup>644</sup>*

#### *Introduction*

The third and fourth chapters of this thesis have examined how David Goldblatt “addressed the materiality of culture and the way structures reveal the mindsets of their builders.”<sup>645</sup>

What is intensely captivating, in my opinion, about Santu Mofokeng’s photographic methodology, is his ability to employ the camera, the mechanical tool produced by nineteenth-century European modernity, to probe that which is beyond the here and now or the material. I wish to posit here that spirituality attached to landscape also raises important issues of black people’s marginal circumstance which persists into post-Apartheid South Africa. Mofokeng’s *Appropriated Spaces, 1998* (Fig. 5.1)<sup>646</sup> speaks directly to this point. This open-air church is the direct opposite of all churches that have been analysed in Chapter Three. This manner of framing spirituality through the channel of landscape is particularly interesting given that the South African photographic practice in general had, up to Mofokeng’s innovative approaches after joining the Afrapix

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<sup>644</sup> Warne, P. and S. Mofokeng, ‘Santu Mofokeng landscapes’ <http://www.warrensiebrits.co.za/show.php?id=245> Accessed 25/06/09, a site where Santu Mofokeng’s landscape photographic exhibition at the Warren Siebrits Modern and Contemporary Art Gallery, Johannesburg (12/08/08 – 12/09/08), was posted. This quotation is an extract from his written words about his ideas around the question of landscape in post-Apartheid South Africa.

<sup>645</sup> Metelerkamp, P., ‘Considering Coloniality in South African Photography’ <http://www.petermet.com/writing/coloniality%20essay%20for%20web.pdf>, p.23 Accessed 12/01/10.

<sup>646</sup> Mofokeng, S., ‘Trajectory of a Street Photographer’ in *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, Number 11/12 Fall/Winter 2000, p.44.

Collective, probed and documented mainly the material dimension of existence within a troubled, socially and racially segregated life.<sup>647</sup>

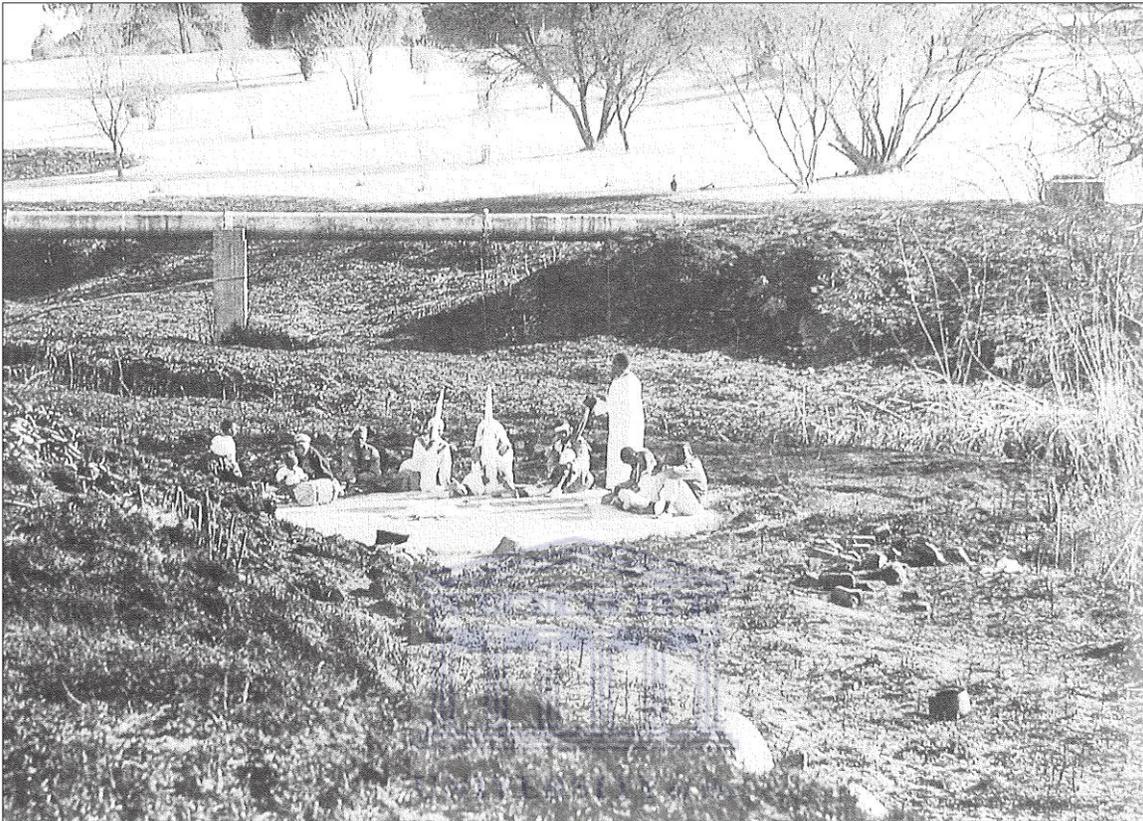


Fig. 5.1 Santu Mofokeng, *Appropriated Spaces*, 1998.

This chapter attempts to chart the increasing tendency in Santu Mofokeng's work to transcend the borders between the material and the spiritual in his endeavour to critically explore social conditions of Apartheid and post-Apartheid South Africa. The starting

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<sup>647</sup> It is important to note, however, that the 1980s photographic scene was not simplistic and without any tensions of purpose. It was marked by a combination of concurrent focuses. Firstly, the Afrapix Collective used the camera as a weapon of struggle, that is, to expose the evils of a brutal state and the social turmoil resulting from that reality. Secondly, there was a visual economy that was driven by an international market. 'Struggle' images met this market's demand and the Afrapix Collective came up with what was seen to be pertinent to the sympathies of the global anti-Apartheid movement. So, Santu Mofokeng's contribution was not just unique and actually occurred in a situation marked by such frictions as a need for a socially committed and relevant documentary photography, the reality of a need to earn a living, as in the case of Mofokeng, and an urgent need to portray Apartheid as an evil system and the oppressed masses as a collective of innocents. This biased approach has been commented upon by Mofokeng. I need to stress here the profound contribution made by my supervisor, Prof. P. Hayes to this line of thought .

point here in terms of Santu Mofokeng's photographic methodology is his productive use of the element of the everyday in his work.<sup>648</sup> Here I treat the everyday as entailing the unphotographed<sup>649</sup> of Apartheid South Africa, a sector of society without a visual vocabulary within the context of the mainstream photographic practice.<sup>650</sup> In addition to the everyday, which is largely material as opposed to spiritual, I also look at the spiritual that Mofokeng is conjuring up by photographic means as the ineffable, that which the mortals yearn to reach and experience or that which is unreachable in the mortal dimension of the material existence.<sup>651</sup>

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<sup>648</sup> It should be noted here that other South African photographers who also deal with the everyday as an element in their works include David Goldblatt, Omar Badsha and Paul Weinberg. Santu is just one of them.

<sup>649</sup> Hayes, P., 'Santu Mofokeng, Photographs: "The Violence is in the Knowing"' in Tucker, J. (ed.), *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History, Theme Issue 48, Photography and Historical Interpretation*, 2009, p.42. In this context, the 'unphotographed' refers to aspects of social, everyday, life that fell outside the ambit of what was called 'Struggle' photography. I am aware that the Afrapix Collective did not, in any way, own the photographic vocabulary, but they have been constructed as the most pertinent body, within the South African photographic genealogy, that assumed a self-imposed mandate of using the camera as a tool for waging the anti-Apartheid struggle. As a matter of fact, an overwhelming number of everyday Soweto photographs have been taken by unknown photographers and published in a number of documents. See *A 'Ghetto' in South Africa*, Pretoria: Publications Division of the South African Department of Information, (undated). This book contains images of various aspects of everyday scenes of Soweto township, but my contention is that it is primarily an Apartheid government propagandist account of a 'normal' life in a racially segregated South Africa. This is not what Mofokeng was interested in photographing and this category of visual propaganda in no way commands his attention. Individuals such as Richard Maponya and others who, according to Prof. Leslie Witz's claim, collaborated with the Apartheid regime in many ways did not need to be given a visual vocabulary by Mofokeng or any 'progressive' photographer of the Apartheid South Africa; they fell outside the paradigm of what Mofokeng saw as the 'marginalized' of society. This explanation concurs with the assertion advanced by Prof. L. Witz, the discussant of my paper presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> Colloquium on *War and the Everyday*, Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, 30 October 2009. Contrary to my observation, Witz contends that township folks are the most photographed. He has lost sight of the context within which I have made my observation: the differences between 'Struggle' photography by Afrapix Collective-aligned photographers and township photographs about 'struggling' by Santu Mofokeng.

<sup>650</sup> Santu Mofokeng has a particular usage and discourse in the context of the 1980s South Africa and audiences sympathetic to the anti-Apartheid struggle locally and internationally. For different, propagandist purposes, the state did photograph in the black ghetto. Greater clarity is needed here.

<sup>651</sup> Chapter One of this thesis briefly highlights dimensions that are marked by this ineffability, enigma or elusiveness in what David Goldblatt tried hard to reach through photographic probing of social life in Apartheid and post-Apartheid South Africa. Parallels can be drawn between these two photographers' struggles to reach the unreachable in their work.

The chief aim of this chapter is to interrogate the extent to which Santu Mofokeng explores and engages the everyday on the one hand and the transcendence of the material on the other hand. Here landscape serves as a visual vehicle of Mofokeng's methodology of connecting pertinent dimensions that have to do with the everydayness of urban material objects such as electric poles, lampposts and wires. Such objects resonate with Mofokeng's childhood memories of how the Apartheid state also used them as tools of surveillance, as I shall attempt to articulate below. Secondly, landscape comes in because of the psychic connection, the spaces which enable people to connect with a more spiritual realm as opposed to everyday materiality. This chapter will in fact explore these dimensions in a selection of photographic images made both in South Africa and abroad, because these themes transcend national boundaries.<sup>652</sup>

Mofokeng's photographic critique of such issues represents an interesting interface between his approaches to landscape and those of David Goldblatt who has, for years, pared down important, albeit largely ignored, dimensions of the South African history of problematic social and racial power relations as subtly inscribed in, amongst others, built structures. Like Goldblatt, Mofokeng's work is marked by strands of inquiry into various interrelated social issues that straddle both Apartheid and post-Apartheid periods of South African history.

Numerous images have been exhibited either repeatedly or interchangeably under various portfolios, depending on respective themes that Mofokeng was exploring at given

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<sup>652</sup> I have deemed it necessary to look at images produced both in South Africa and abroad simply because they, together, seem to offer a full insight into what Santu Mofokeng's work is all about. The idea of *chasing shadows*, for example, seems to transcend national boundaries and needs to be treated as such.

instances. Landscape has emerged, I argue, as an important theme that Mofokeng has been developing in the context of his probing of social issues inside and outside South Africa, in urban and rural areas. His photographic explorations and probing also reflect his own conception of what the South African (and other) landscapes are all about. Citing Schama, Mofokeng refers to landscape not only as a mental construct but also as a genre that is germane to memory: “Landscape is a construct of memory, it is a work of the mind, built up as much from the strata of memory as from layers of rock”.<sup>653</sup> He is, however, cautious about defining it in particular contexts of meaning and sense, stating, within the post-Apartheid context: “I am careful to use the word landscape in its modern meaning and sense. I would like to posit that landscape appreciation is informed by personal experience, myth and memory, amongst other things. Suffice to say, it is also informed by ideology, indoctrination and prejudice.”<sup>654</sup> Also stressing a need to take psychic ownership<sup>655</sup> of the land, Santu Mofokeng is searching for the interface of the inner and outer worlds.<sup>656</sup> Defining his concern with landscape photography and issues that partly explain his landscape project, Mofokeng refers to the idea of reclaiming the land for himself.<sup>657</sup>

Considering the fact that Mofokeng’s career (that is, when he started working in his professional capacity as a photographer) has lasted from the early 1980s up to very recently, one can appreciate the fact that many exhibitions that have been staged so far

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<sup>653</sup> Mofokeng, S., ‘Santu’s landscape’ in Mofokeng, S. and P. Warne, *Santu’s landscape*, Johannesburg: Warren Siebrits, 2008 (Exhibition catalogue) (no pagination).

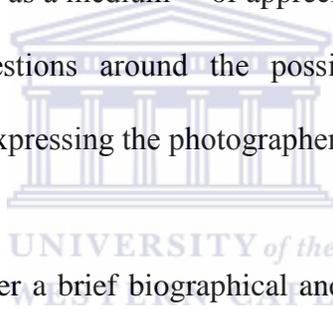
<sup>654</sup> Mofokeng, S. and P. Warne, *Santu’s landscape*, Johannesburg: Warren Siebrits, 2008 (Exhibition catalogue) (no pagination).

<sup>655</sup> See transcript of an interview by the candidate with Santu Mofokeng, 30/12/07, Johannesburg.

<sup>656</sup> Mofokeng, S. and P. Warne, *Santu’s landscape*, Johannesburg: Warren Siebrits, 2008 (Exhibition catalogue) (no pagination).

<sup>657</sup> Ibid.

have sought to explore various issues that seem to diverge and converge at certain points, thus making his work seem multi-directional. However, in his 2007 nationally travelling retrospective exhibition called *Invoice*, Mofokeng put together most photographic images from thematically-related and disparate portfolios that he had dealt with in the past twenty-five years of his career, trying to situate Apartheid in a global context. *Invoice* engaged with pertinent questions such as prejudice - be it racism, anti-Semitism, ethnocentrism or classism – as an intrinsic human behaviour (trait) or an aberration. A selection of images, falling under various themes, will be analysed here, as long as they serve as visual thresholds from which one may be in a position to make sense of Santu Mofokeng's landscape imagery as a medium<sup>658</sup> of appreciating aspects of power relations. Mofokeng's work raises questions around the possibility of seeing documentary photography also as a way of expressing the photographer's subjectivity.



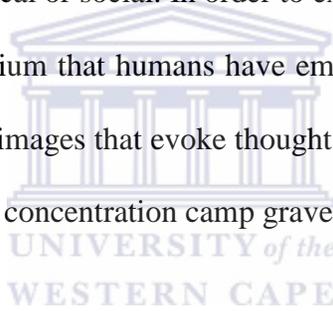
The chapter will, firstly, cover a brief biographical and professional account of Santu Mofokeng, building into it some relevant remarks on photographic image portfolios and publications that offer more insight into his work, where and when feasible. Starting from the 1980s, this chapter will look at a sample of works that comment on aspects of quotidian life in the townships and rural areas, as framed by Mofokeng. I will also interrogate how Mofokeng's work deals with issues of spirituality, beliefs and memorial sites in what he calls the "Train Church" series as a moving landscape, sacralised environmental scenes and monuments of human suffering in and outside South Africa, as

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<sup>658</sup> In this study landscape is not treated just as a genre of representation, but it can also be seen as a medium of social encounter. Chapter Two of this thesis also treats landscape as a medium of power contestation. This theoretical position is, however, not to be confused with photography as a medium of visual representation. Also see Mitchell, W.J.T. (ed.), *Landscape and Power* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.), Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.5.

this chapter will show. His globalised view of sites and narratives of atrocities that are inflicted upon the dominated peoples will be explored with a view, among others, to uncovering a myriad of meanings with which such spaces are invested.

Mofokeng's theme, *Chasing Shadows*, though it originated in South Africa, spills over into other African, European and Asian countries such as Namibia, Poland, Germany and Japan,<sup>659</sup> and he makes comparisons of humanity's attitude toward religion and public memory almost across the cultural spectrum. Mofokeng has identified landscape as a medium through which humanity finds spiritual spaces to endure the material hardships of life, be they economic, political or social. In order to explore the depth of horror and to interrogate landscape as a medium that humans have employed in dealing with memory and trauma, Mofokeng framed images that evoke thoughts around suffering and mortality such as cemeteries, prisons and concentration camp graves in and outside South Africa.



*Biographical account and dimensions of his work: Interface between the material and the Spiritual*

Santu Mofokeng, a researcher, curator and award-winning, internationally-renowned South African photographer, was born in Newclare,<sup>660</sup> outside Johannesburg on October 19, 1956,<sup>661</sup> almost eight years after the ascension to state power of the National Party representing Afrikaner interests. He was born into a 'grand apartheid' South Africa, a

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<sup>659</sup> Oyinda, F., *Autograph ABP presents Santu Mofokeng at Rivington Place 2009*, <http://alter-native-me.blogspot.com/2009/01/autograph-abp-presents-santu-mofokeng.html> Accessed 22/05/09.

<sup>660</sup> Belluigi, D. Z., *Broken Vessels: The im-possibility of the art of remembrance and re-collection in the work of Anselm Kiefer, Christian Boltanski, William Kentridge and Santu Mofokeng*, MFA thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 2001, p.192.

<sup>661</sup> Raditlhalo, S., 'Communities of Interpretation' in Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, p.65.

political system that was in the process of being consolidated by mapping, or remapping, and fixing the boundaries of all African reserves with a view to strictly controlling the movement of black Africans within ‘white’ areas.<sup>662</sup> As a black Sesotho-speaking<sup>663</sup> South African, Mofokeng was, by law, regarded as a Qwaqwa citizen in terms of the systematic separation and settlement of blacks along ethnic lines.<sup>664</sup> Recalling and articulating the implications of such segregation, Mofokeng states: “By law, by law, I don’t belong there. That’s reality; that’s Apartheid. ... You’re told that because you are Sotho, you belong to Qwaqwa; you’re told...you don’t have any rights here...”<sup>665</sup> Here Mofokeng is referring to a political administrative system that cost so much black dignity and that was meant to create an artificial ethnic nationalism from various African linguistic groups, as already highlighted in Chapter Three of this thesis. Marinovich and Silva articulate the politically motivated reasoning behind the homeland system: “The laws of apartheid allowed them [black people] to stay in urban areas only as long as they were gainfully employed. When their labour was no longer needed, they had to return to their homelands. Under the pass laws more than 17 million black people were prosecuted from 1916 to 1981.”<sup>666</sup>

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<sup>662</sup> Switzer, L. ‘Introduction: South Africa’s Resistance Press in Perspective’ in Switzer, L. & M. Adhikari (eds.), *South Africa’s Resistance Press*, Ohio: Center (Retain American spelling) for International Studies, Ohio University, 2000, pp.3-4.

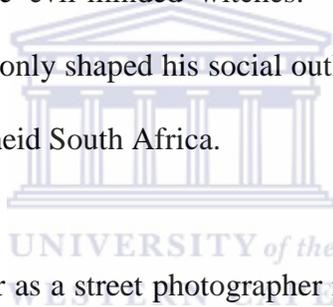
<sup>663</sup> ‘Sesotho’ is preferred here to the term Sotho. The use of the prefix is not conventional in English, but the prefix authenticates the word and decolonises it from the old ways of naming African languages. For the purpose of this thesis, ‘Sesotho’ will be used instead of ‘Sotho’ when it refers to the language.

<sup>664</sup> The issue of the imposition of black South African ethnically-based homelands system and its social implications has been dealt with in Chapter Three of this thesis. Since Lesotho was a sovereign state, having been a British protectorate, Qwaqwa was assigned as a ‘homeland’ to Sesotho-speaking Africans of Apartheid South Africa. For further clarity, see a transcript of an interview by Prof. P. Hayes, Farzanah Badsha and the candidate with Santu Mofokeng, 24/07/05, Johannesburg. Also see Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001.

<sup>665</sup> See transcript of an interview by the candidate with Santu Mofokeng, 30/12/2007, Johannesburg.

<sup>666</sup> Marinovich, G. and J. Silva, *The Bang-Bang Club*, London: William Heinemann, 2000, p.13.

Some highlights of Mofokeng's biography give further insight into the reasons for his focus on spirituality and religion in 1986 and 1996. Mofokeng was born into a family that was very much in touch with the spiritual aspects of life, asserting that every phenomenon, whether good or evil, had a spiritual significance. Life and death were imagined to be determined by certain spiritual forces; so were circumstances that surrounded the birth of Santu Mofokeng and the birth and death of his younger brother, Benjamin, who, when his birth was delayed, had been induced to 'force' his way out of his mother's 'locked' womb.<sup>667</sup> The priest had performed a 'washing' ritual on Mofokeng's mother, healing or protecting her with sacred ash against evil spells that had supposedly been cast by some evil-minded witches.<sup>668</sup> It is such experiences of the spiritual world that I argue not only shaped his social outlook as a photographer, but also his black identity within Apartheid South Africa.



Mofokeng began his career as a street photographer in high school, making portraits of family and friends for two years until he lost his camera.<sup>669</sup> It is important to point out here that outside the framework of the career pattern articulated above, Mofokeng became involved in numerous other photographic and related engagements. From 1977 to 1981, he worked for Adcock Ingram Laboratories as Quality Control Tester before he worked as darkroom assistant for *Die Beeld* newspaper, the *Chamber of Mines* newspaper

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<sup>667</sup> Mofokeng, S., 'Lampposts' in Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, p.27. The details of this narrative around the birth and death of Benjamin allude to the fact that Mofokeng's mother had been in labour for eleven or twelve hours without delivering. Eventually, when Benjamin was born, he was covered in ash that the priest had used to 'wash' the mother with a view to protecting her against the evil deeds of witches. According to seers, traditional healers and sangomas referred to, because of the spiritual forces present, death was actually meant for Mofokeng instead of Benjamin.

<sup>668</sup> Ibid.

<sup>669</sup> Diserens, C., *Chasing Shadows: Santu Mofokeng: Thirty Years of Photographic Essays*, Munich, London and New York: Prestel, 2011, p.9.

and *Citizen* Newspapers and, in 1984, as photographer's assistant at Thomson Publications.<sup>670</sup>

The Afrapix Collective, comprising particular activist-photographers of South Africa as mentioned in Chapter Three of this thesis, had been established in 1982 with the chief aim of dedicating photography to the service of the popular anti-Apartheid struggle. When Mofokeng joined this Collective, from 1985 to 1992,<sup>671</sup> he felt that focusing solely on documenting township people as urban activists locked into violence<sup>672</sup> was very limiting. He preferred, instead, to focus on everyday conditions which he pursued as a freelance photographer since 1985.<sup>673</sup> The following observation by Pam Warne rationalises Mofokeng's professional independence in a much more nuanced manner:

At an early stage he exhibited an independent approach and a vision that differed from many of his peers, swiftly moving away from what fellow Afrapix photographer Lesley Lawson called 'the aesthetics of flags and fists'. His images of everyday life in the townships, he explains, 'are about struggling, but are not Struggle images'.<sup>674</sup>

Mofokeng, when commenting on his peculiarity among most of his fellow 1980s photographers due to his attention to the everyday, relates:

In terms of the idiosyncrasies of life in the eighties whereby we want to show that apartheid is bad, I'm making pictures of ordinary life. Football, shebeen, daily

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<sup>670</sup> Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, p.96.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid. Also see Waller, M., A Bigger Picture: A manual of photojournalism in southern Africa, Kenwyn: Juta, 2000, p. 330 and Hayes, P., 'Everyday Life in Soweto: The Photography of Santu Mofokeng' in Crais, C. and T. V. McClendon (eds.), *The South Africa Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2014, p.268.

<sup>672</sup> Njami, S., 'Santu Mofokeng Exhibition' <http://uk.oneworld.net/article/view/161945/1/5889>. Accessed 28/01/11.

<sup>673</sup> Atkinson, cited in McEvoy, K., *Romantic Tendencies in the Landscape Photography of Post-Apartheid South African Artists*, MTEch (FA) dissertation, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria, 2007, p.75.

<sup>674</sup> Warne, P. <http://www.warrensiebrite.co.za/artist.php?aid=550> Accessed 10/05/12.

life ... When the world becomes tired of seeing ...sjamboks or whatever, they come to you ... (sic) they start to ask what is daily life like?<sup>675</sup>

This preoccupation with the urban and semi-urban everyday world would allow Mofokeng some space to operate in a less overtly political manner<sup>676</sup> and it is arguable that he used this particular opportunity as one of the means through which he “sought to negate the literal recording of apartheid referents and the typical lexicon of township-living as spectacle.”<sup>677</sup> Here I would also argue that it was at this point in his career that he specifically embarked on his self-assigned task of reclaiming the landscape, at least in a symbolic manner, the central aim of which was to “engage with an historically rooted relationship between the land, cultural identity, and its representation.”<sup>678</sup> In his capacity also as a freelance photographer, Mofokeng would be able to document such everyday township scenes, which he called ‘metaphorical biography’.<sup>679</sup> However, his professional life during his period with Afrapix Collective was also marked by a reality of lagging behind most of his colleagues who had their own means of transport and easy access to the darkroom facilities.

It may be pertinent here to trace a few aspects of the South African ‘struggle photography’ of the 1980s that seem to have spiced up the genre itself to suit the international taste for violence-charged struggle images. Available material shows that both the producing and consuming sectors of such ‘struggle’ images were, in one way or

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<sup>675</sup> Hayes, P., ‘Santu Mofokeng, Photographs. The Violence is in the knowing’, in *Tucker, J. (ed.), History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History, Theme Issue 48, Photography and Historical Interpretation*, 2009, p.42.

<sup>676</sup> Ibid.

<sup>677</sup> Firstenberg, L., ‘Representing the Body Archivaly in South African Photography’ in *Art Journal*, Vol. 61, No 1 (Spring, 2002), pp. 58-67 [www.jstor.org/stable/778168](http://www.jstor.org/stable/778168), p.62. Accessed 10/05/12.

<sup>678</sup> Ibid.

<sup>679</sup> See a transcript of an interview by Prof. P. Hayes, Farzanah Badsha and the candidate with Santu Mofokeng, 24/07/05, Johannesburg.

another, obsessed with bloody, violent scenes. Mofokeng figured this out one day when he became aware of the media aesthetic appreciation of violence against the black body. When he was still employed as a darkroom assistant in 1981, he once overheard this conversation:

“Come check this. Isn’t this beautiful?” he enthuses. The subject of this outburst of glee is a transparency. The trannie depicts a corpse, an ANC cadre bleeding in death, lying on asphalt near a kerb. A casualty in what is now known as the Silverton Siege. ... “I don’t get it. I see nothing beautiful in this. This is ghoulish, man.” “...There’s nothing as beautiful as black skin and blood. It makes beautiful contrast. There’s nothing like it, china.”<sup>680</sup>

At this point I wish to make reference to another phenomenon which occurred much earlier within a global context. It was also marked by the similar aesthetic appreciation of violence against the black body. Almost at a similar level of obsession with the dehumanisation or gross objectification of the black body, about 3,500 incidents of lynching and mob violence against African Americans, most of them in the South, were documented between mid-1870s and World War II.<sup>681</sup> The victims would often be tortured, killed and photographed. Photographs of murdered victims’ bodies (sometimes dismembered for grisly souvenirs) and mobs would be distributed among friends or families back in Europe or elsewhere. This point serves to illustrate the parallel in the depth of this aesthetic appreciation of murder across a broad temporal space and, more importantly, that Mofokeng’s darkroom experience was in no way unique or new.

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<sup>680</sup> Mofokeng, S., ‘Lampposts’ in *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, p.29. See also Hayes, P., ‘Santu Mofokeng, Photographs. *The Violence is in the knowing*, seminar paper presented at the Centre for Humanities Research and Department of History, University of the Western Cape, 2008, p.3. See also Mofokeng, S. ‘Trajectory of a Street Photographer’ in *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, Number 11/12, Fall/Winter 2000, p.44.

<sup>681</sup> For the rest of this section on lynching, see audio-visual material narrated by Allen, J., *Without Sanctuary* in <http://www.withoutsanctuary.org/main.html> Accessed 19/06/09. I am grateful to Prof. Peter Rachleff, Macalester College, St. Paul, U.S.A. for referring me to this source and for lending me his own written reflections on lynching and racial violence in the USA.

The apparent collision between aesthetics and ethics will be critically examined in more detail in Chapter Six, but here I propose further complicating this beautified ‘evil’ from the perspective of what Aaron Meskin implies as the reunion of art and aesthetics.<sup>682</sup> Here I use film as an art form as my point of departure. Contemporary scholarship on the philosophical aesthetics of film has not yet resolved the debate whether there are objective ethical values or principles according to which to judge morality or immorality around beautified ‘evil’. Mary Devereaux argues that the ‘disturbation’ and ethical ‘disvalue’ stem from artworks which are marked by the conjoining of evil and beauty.<sup>683</sup> This point begins to account for the obsession with the aesthetics of murder in the case of the darkroom conversation and lynching incidents already mentioned above. In both cases, people were attracted to images of murder by this conjunction of beauty and evil within single photographic frames. I have to caution, at this stage, that there is no universal perspective from which to distinguish the moral from the immoral. In both the South African and American South cases, maiming, killing and presenting the black body as a trophy of white superiority were not considered unethical, especially since blacks were to be constrained in states of subjugation and control.

It was such distasteful ‘aesthetic’ remarks that contributed to Mofokeng’s hatred of documenting violence. He questioned his own ethical position as a photographer – how his photographs got absorbed into the media’s visual mainstream. This had a significant

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<sup>682</sup> Here I use the term ‘art’, once more, given Mofokeng’s self-declaration as the artist, not just the photographer. For Meskin’s critique, see Meskin, A., ‘Art and Aesthetics Reunited’ in Levinson, J. (ed.), *Aesthetics and Ethics*, (Place of publication not provided): Cambridge University Press, 1998 <http://www.film-philosophy.com/vol2-1998/n11meskin> Accessed 18/06/10.

<sup>683</sup> Ibid.

impact on his professional choices.<sup>684</sup> However, concerning Mofokeng's ethical position and his love for the everyday, Goldblatt's possible influence when he gave him some guidance early in his career should not be overlooked. This is germane considering the fact that Goldblatt's concern was not just about imparting technical skills of photography, but he was also concerned with visual literacy *per se*.

Having been accused of 'making money from blacks', during his first solo exhibition in Johannesburg in 1990, Mofokeng realized that he had not been paying enough attention to the narratives and aspirations of the people he was photographing.<sup>685</sup> Either he had forgotten, neglected or disregarded his early beginnings.<sup>686</sup> In response to his self-critical introspection, Mofokeng curated a collection of black and white family photographic portraits taken between 1890 and 1950, called *The Black Photo Album/Look At Me*. He submitted them for inclusion in the Johannesburg Biennale Exhibition of 1997<sup>687</sup> and held a solo exhibition of the same photographic portfolio at FNAC Montparnasse, France, in 1999.<sup>688</sup>

What may be interesting here is to look at the social significance of Mofokeng's focus on the visualisation of 'Self' at the time because it raises interesting questions around the idea of black society's appropriation of the camera outside what I would call the Apartheid social, political and economic centre. This is even more important because if

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<sup>684</sup> Hayes, P., 'Santu Mofokeng, Photographs. The Violence is in the knowing', in Tucker, J. (ed.), *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History, Theme Issue 48, Photography and Historical Interpretation*, 2009, p.5.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>686</sup> Ibid.

<sup>687</sup> *Rhizomes of Memory tre Sorafricanste fotografer Goldblatt: Mofokeng: Hallett*, Oslo: Onstad Kunstsentor Forlaget Press, 2000, p.83.

<sup>688</sup> Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, p.96.

Mofokeng is considered a social insider then, he would have had a full intrinsic, first-hand, experiential understanding of the main forces that shaped certain ways of making sense of 'Self' in a marginalised mode of living on the outskirts of the metropole.<sup>689</sup> Was this a strategy of self-modernisation on the part of the township dwellers, by repositioning or redefining an 'Other-ed' colonial subjectivity?

At this stage I wish to contextualise, to some extent, Mofokeng's *The Black Photo Album/Look At Me* portfolio. It should be noted that these photographs had been taken before the Apartheid system became effectively national policy, having existed in effect prior to 'official' Apartheid. They reflected the virtual burial of visual traces of early black modernity in colonial South Africa. They represented an arrested development due to oppressive Apartheid policies that included "pass laws, Bantu Education, forced tribalisation, and the whole disruption of family life..."<sup>690</sup> Mofokeng posits that though the portrayed sitters<sup>691</sup> were dressed and posed like colonial Europeans, "they still challenged the racism of colonial policies."<sup>692</sup> What may be pertinent here is the fact that while these bourgeois-class black South Africans from a relatively distant era adapted to the colonial lifestyle, they also used their class privilege to resist "the colonial encroachment upon the African lives and lands."<sup>693</sup> They were the modernised, self-assured bourgeois 'Other' within a colonial reality of imposed racial inequality.

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<sup>689</sup> I use this term in the context of problematic relations between 'Self' and 'Other' – the centre-occupying subject and the 'Other' that is confined on the periphery of the centre – the colonizer and the colonised. However, the racialised South African economic realities have often informed social relations that evoke thoughts about such a dichotomous relationship, especially if one considers the socio-economic implications of the city (predominantly white domain) and the township (predominantly black domain) as domains produced by the Apartheid system and compliant with capitalist imperatives.

<sup>690</sup> Peffer, J., *Art and the End of Apartheid*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009, p.278.

<sup>691</sup> Ibid. These middle-class black South African sitters of a bygone era included prominent political personalities such as John Tengo Jabavu, Sol Plaatje, and Pixley ka Isaka Seme.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid.

<sup>693</sup> Ibid.

Confusion does possibly exist, however, around Mofokeng's intention about the portfolio. Many might have mistaken this display of natives in European middle-class dress as an act of exoticising them in the international market and thus reducing them into an aestheticised commodity.<sup>694</sup>

This 'Otherness' persists in the post-Apartheid period. In *Dukathole* (Fig. 5.2),<sup>695</sup> Mofokeng's attention to the mundane, everyday reality within the township context is clearly detectable, with the figure of a presumably ageing, stooped man, facing away from the camera, and therefore from the viewer, almost symmetrically dominating the composition. Being the focal point of the image, this figure moves feebly in an open space – a dusty street - that is flanked by township houses, fence poles and a number of electric lampposts. In this case I also argue that townships were not just dwelling places, but they were the state's sites of both social segregation and political control over the black people. More importantly, they were reservoirs of black cheap labour that was meant to support the capitalist industry, as it appears in the analysis of Figure 5.9. *Dukathole*<sup>696</sup> is one of Mofokeng's images that represent his shift away from representing township people merely as activists locked into the anti-Apartheid struggle; here he looks at the everyday aspect of that township life. The political aspect of this life, as represented in this particular image, is the eloquent visual pronouncement of unfavourable living conditions that these township people were, in fact, struggling

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<sup>694</sup> Ibid., p.279.

<sup>695</sup> Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, p.9. 'Dukathole' literally means 'a calf going astray', but it contextually means an extremely huge village or homestead in which calves can easily go astray and get unwittingly detached from their mothers.

<sup>696</sup> Though a considerable number of Santu Mofokeng's images are not dated, this one is likely to fall under one of his series produced during the Apartheid period as is the case with most of those that do not fall under later series such as *Chasing Shadows*.



Fig. 5.2 Santu Mofokeng, *Dukathole*. n.d.

against. This landscape image touches on the fundamental causes or conditions that were at the root of black wrath in South Africa – lack of provision of basic services such as decent housing and roads of acceptable quality, without broken or leaking water pipes, as is visually alluded to in this image.<sup>697</sup> I argue that Mofokeng’s vision of the treatment of black township dwellers is also an eloquently condemning one.<sup>698</sup>

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<sup>697</sup> This image, as well as numerous other images discussed in this thesis, is quite likely not to be considered a landscape photograph given that it focuses on social conditions of black township dwellers. However, landscape, in the context of this study, expands questions around social conditions, thus imbuing it with more complex meaning rather than just a pictorial background against which these conditions are presented.

<sup>698</sup> It is important to probe various photographic gazes within the South African context given the country’s disparate historical epochs and problematic racial relations under colonialism and Apartheid. Chapter Three of this thesis identified David Goldblatt’s gaze as subtly condemning – pointing out the evils of Apartheid and a sense of complacency among those who benefited and supported it. I see photography in this context as an empowering medium for the people on the receiving end of the colonial gaze in that they, like Mofokeng, are able to return it to its original bearer – the oppressor. Also see Hayes, P., ‘Everyday Life in Soweto’ in Crais, C. and T.V. McClendon (eds.), *The South Africa Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2014, p.271.

This township scene, I posit, may be seen as epitomising the notion of a ghetto as an imagined, ‘real’ Africa in a semi-urban setting – on the margins of the city – and resonates with arguments advanced in Chapter Four of this thesis where Goldblatt’s images expose appalling living conditions just outside the city centre of Johannesburg. Furthermore, this photograph comments on what I would associate with a situation that ironically foregrounds the post-Apartheid urban crisis that occurred as a result of the setting in of neo-liberalism and its economic implications.<sup>699</sup> David Goldblatt has framed a number of post-Apartheid rural scenes with such poor housing conditions in his colour series, *Intersections*, as discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis.

If this particular space would be understood as a site, rather than just a place, it would be seen as a site of human degradation, which, as argued in the previous chapters of this thesis, has been brought to this level by well-calculated strategies of racially informed spatial organisation. This, and other images that raise issues around black poverty in townships, should also be seen as a marginal place where its citizens, including this man, carry the stigma of its socio-economic marginality. This opens up another way of thinking about what Mofokeng’s work is also probing. The South African social periphery, because of racial segregation, is not just cultural,<sup>700</sup> as in other social contexts elsewhere, but it is also geographical, albeit on a relatively small scale. The treatment of

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<sup>699</sup> Bond, P., *Cities of Gold, Townships of Coal*, Trenton & Asmara: Africa World Press, Inc., 2000, p.xiii. What is important to point out here is that Patrick Bond treats his work as a revelation of the heightened crisis of a problem that was already prevalent in township life under Apartheid, as also photographed by Santu Mofokeng.

<sup>700</sup> Shields, R., *Places on the Margin*, London and New York: Routledge, 1991, p.3. The adaptation of this idea is not to claim that what Rob Shields is referring to in his work is similar to the South African situation. Rather, I intend showing the fluidity of the idea itself in terms of how it also can be applied in what may be understood as the ‘centre’, outside the colonial outpost or economically marginalised regions of the world. I see Santu Mofokeng dealing, whether wittingly or unwittingly, with this question in the image under analysis.

space in *Dukathole*, with its limited projection into distance, confines the viewer's attention within the township scene, instead of leading their eye further away from the site of black degradation. This seems to have resulted either from Mofokeng's intentional framing of such a scene or from his darkroom manipulation of the final appearance of the image.

The idea of converging lines of perspective, here represented by the dusty street, houses and shacks flanking the street and electricity poles, end abruptly nowhere, at no clearly defined diminishing point, beyond which the viewer cannot 'see', thus, in my view, evoking a feeling of uncertainty and that of ill-defined or sabotaged destiny of black people living in slums. The poetic side of the image, in my view, deals with the psychological impact of black people's marginalisation – a situation in which all goalposts, as it were, seemed to have either been shifted or obliterated altogether. This point is also based on my awareness of Mofokeng's interest in probing not only the concrete aspects of social life, but the abstract as well, as will be interrogated in more detail in those works that deal with belief – the spiritual.

The figure of a man in *Dukathole* is facing away, thus obscuring the facial expression, or possibly a wrinkled face. The facial expression, that would perhaps give a hint of this man's emotional situation at the moment of photographing, has been obscured probably in order to allow some space for the immediate shortcomings of environmental care to serve the same purpose. This shows how Mofokeng is able to utilise space in expressing the sorry living conditions that affect the human body without necessarily achieving this expression by showing the face of a troubled township dweller. Landscape has been used

here as a medium of this expression, as it were, since it also represents a site that has been ‘pushed’ to the margins of urban prosperity. This point is far more applicable if the image itself is not just seen as ‘documenting social conditions’ but also as a form of expression. Hayes raises a pertinent point when she points out what the excesses of social inequality probably did to people’s lives, referring to apparent equality in importance between the stooping figure of the old man and the rivulet of dirty water.<sup>701</sup> This is a space that can be regarded as a microcosm of elements of inequality according to Mofokeng’s framing of this space.

In *Target Practice, Mofolo* (Fig. 5.3)<sup>702</sup> township children are engaged in a pastime activity of sharpening their skills of aiming at a target – bottles lined up on a low concrete wall. This photograph, being part of what Mofokeng calls his ‘metaphorical biography’, resonates well with some stories that he tells in his ‘Lampposts’ essay and is quite likely to recall some of such childhood games – desirable moments sometimes naughtily spent away from any parental restrictive gaze. Reminiscent of a shooting range for rifle target practice, this particular photograph points at a childhood pastime activity that often turned out to be a serious quasi-military engagement for some township dwellers in situations of bloody confrontations with the Apartheid South African police in which the unarmed youths would throw stones in order to assert their demands for social justice.

However, this photograph also represents one of the signs of social marginality as epitomised by township life. Neglected as they were by the government of the day, most

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<sup>701</sup> Hayes, P., ‘Everyday Life in Soweto: The Photography of Santu Mofokeng’ in Crais, C. and T. V. McClendon (eds.), *The South Africa Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2014, p.271.

<sup>702</sup> Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, p.85.

townships lacked sufficient recreational amenities. Living conditions, no matter how pathetic they were, would often be psychologically overcome in this way, especially at the childhood level of intellectual and physical development in the ghettos. More than anything, this is one of the images that use the depiction of landscape as a medium of developing capacities of resilience or a means of coping with various aspects of adversity. The children framed here show no outward signs of depression, even though the environment is not conducive to any kind of meaningful recreational activity.



Fig. 5.3 Santu Mofokeng, *Target Practice*, *Mofolo*. n.d.

*Limbless Doll, Klerksdorp District* (Fig. 5.4)<sup>703</sup> is yet another image that reflects something that is even worse than what is depicted in *Target Practice* above. Children

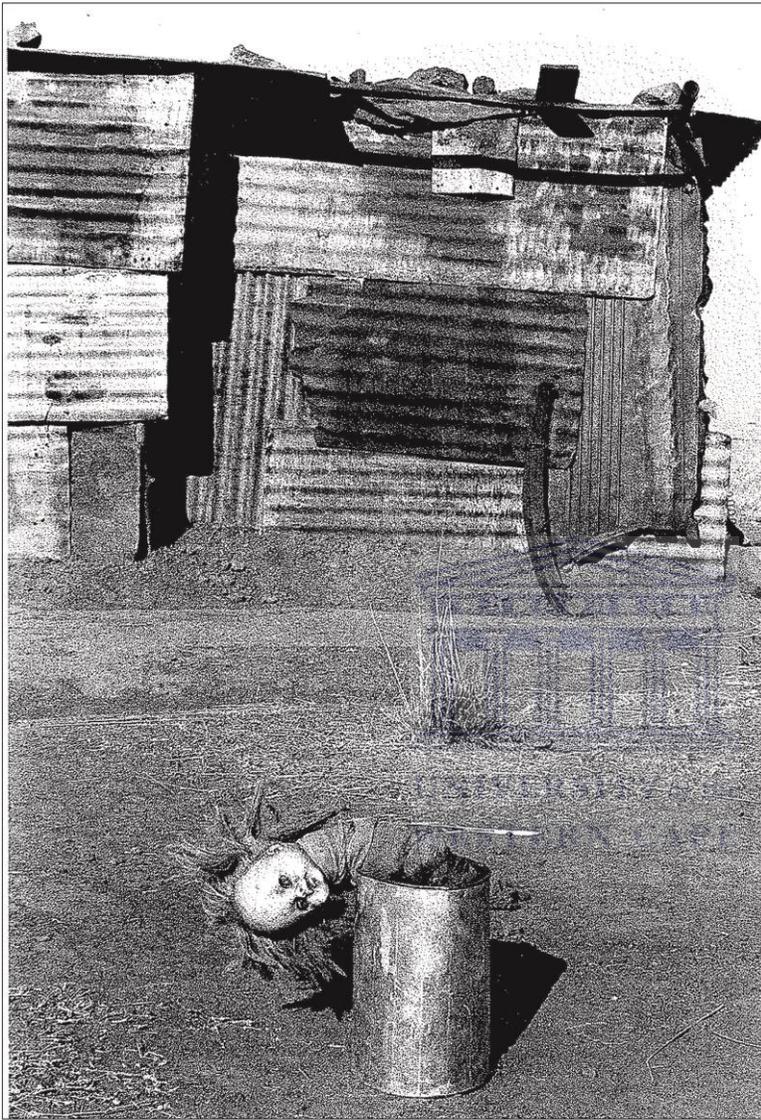


Fig. 5.4 Santu Mofokeng, *Limbless Doll, Klerksdorp District*. 1989.

too are on the receiving end of social marginalisation. Both the doorless and windowless shack and the limbless doll show not only a certain kind of enigmatic presence-absence ambiguity about them, but also an ambiguity around penetrability-impenetrability given

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<sup>703</sup> Ibid., p.21.

the visibility of signs of impoverished humanity and this unfenced yard of a shack without doors and windows. All these are signs of not fully owning this space on the part of the poor, as indicated by the makeshift dwelling structure of a corrugated iron shack, alluding to a virtually itinerant lifestyle that most blacks had been subjected to due to abrupt forced removals and resettlements.

This also describes Apartheid as, in many senses, “a migration policy”,<sup>704</sup> turning blacks into foreigners in “white South Africa.”<sup>705</sup> Another way of understanding this situation of such levels of impoverishment is to look, yet again, at the far-reaching socio-economic effects of a combination of natural disasters such as droughts and the gradual collapse of the system of Apartheid in the South African context, especially in the 1980s. The mid-1980s saw the abandonment by the National Party of the Verwoerdian Apartheid.<sup>706</sup> This rendered the ruling party incapable of managing the process of black urbanization. This is how this situation is accounted for:

The 1982-1985 drought (especially severe during 1983-1984) caused immense dislocation across Africa. Although South Africa did not experience the famines seen in other African countries (due to government relief measures), black homeland socioeconomic infrastructures collapsed, generating massive flows of people into ever-growing “squatter” slums surrounding the cities. Apartheid’s “influx control” system simply collapsed under the pressure.<sup>707</sup>

Commenting on the ghettoisation<sup>708</sup> of black South African life in townships is the photograph *Fairways, Golf at Zone 6, Diepkloof* (Fig. 5.5).<sup>709</sup> Framed in this particular

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<sup>704</sup> Louw, P. E., *The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of Apartheid*, West Point, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2004, p.77.

<sup>705</sup> Ibid.

<sup>706</sup> Ibid.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid., p.73.

<sup>708</sup> Ibid., p.36

<sup>709</sup> Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, p.41.

photograph are a number of landscape elements, including township houses that are congested in space, as seen in the background, and a grassy veld (field), instead of a conventional, green golf course, in the absence of suitable recreational facilities. Children, who are searching for the golf ball in a neglected field, surely not suitable or designed for the game, aspire to a better quality of life, which might include gaining access to other predominantly white sporting facilities of the time. This image interrogates various ways in which landscape lends itself to such expressions of aspirations by those who occupy the margins of society in South Africa. This image is also a possible humorous comment against the preoccupation with suffering by other South African photographers.



Fig. 5.5 Santu Mofokeng, *Fairways, Golf at Zone 6, Diepkloof*. 1987.

Further alluding to such decent suburban aspirations within the township context is *Diepkloof ext. 4* (Fig. 5.6)<sup>710</sup> in which Santu Mofokeng focused his lens on architectural, picturesque landscape features. It is quite likely that this property is located within a high income area of Diepkloof given the good conditions of most houses in the neighbourhood that seem to defy the ghettoisation effects of Apartheid. Garden sculptures, pot plants and supposedly green, regularly watered lawns represent black resilience and aspiration to better qualities of life in spite of racially informed spatial assignment and social marginalisation. It is such exceptional cases of affluence that are likely to give impressions of the township as a possible hub for marketing, as discussed in relation to *Winter in Tembisa* below.

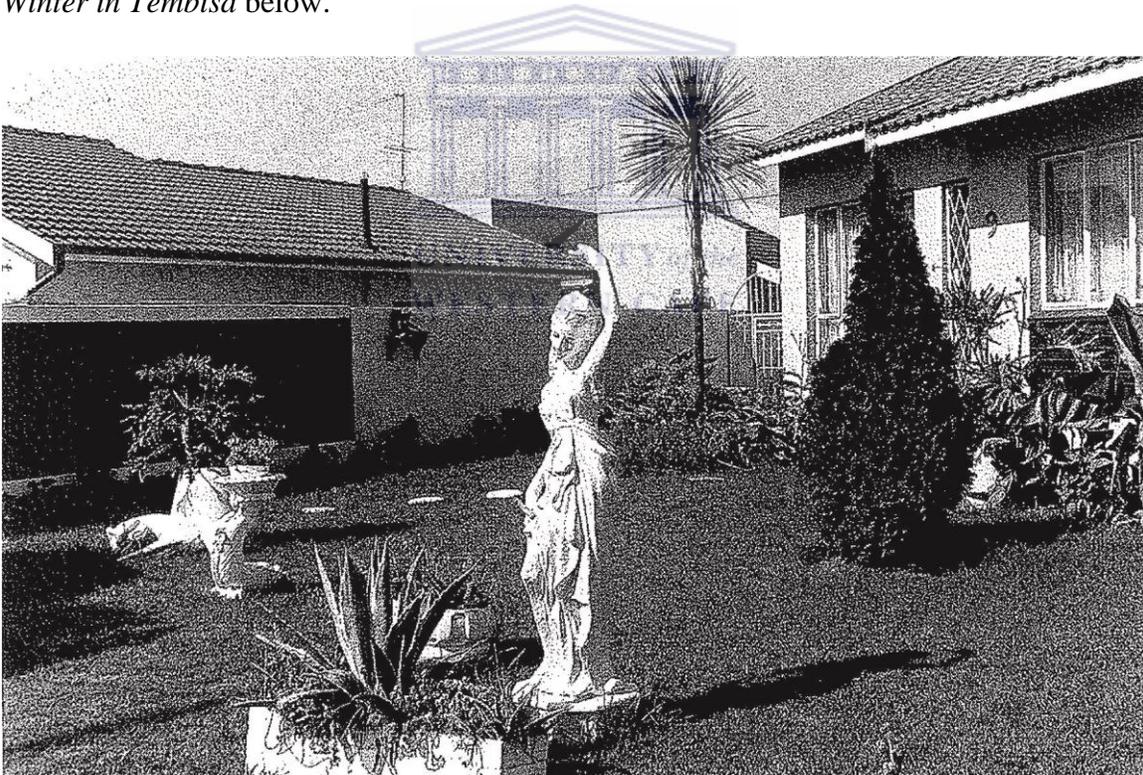
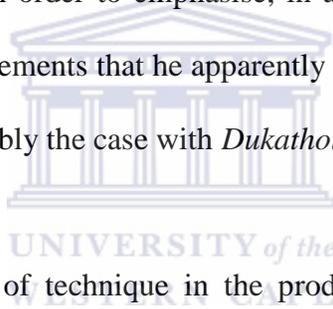


Fig. 5.6 Santu Mofokeng, *Diepkloof ext. 4*. n.d.

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<sup>710</sup> Ibid., p.42 (top).

In spite of all these forms of selective affluence and prevalent economic deprivation, racial segregation and social marginalization, townships, being on the periphery of society, were still seen as hubs of a black consumer market. *Winter in Tembisa* (Fig. 5.7),<sup>711</sup> from the *Rethinking Landscapes* series (2004),<sup>712</sup> with a prominent outdoor advertising billboard of one of South Africa's commonly used brands of detergents, OMO, clearly displayed against the gray wintry background, shows subtle contrasts between this almost desolate township scene, with a few houses, a lone human figure in the foreground and electricity pylons that disappear in deep pictorial space. Here the weather seems to support the photographer's strategy of 'screening out' thematically insignificant pictorial details in order to emphasise, in a minimal but visually effective fashion, only the essentials – elements that he apparently wishes to use in the conveyance of a visual message, as is probably the case with *Dukathole* above.



However, such possible use of technique in the production of Figure 5.7 is highly marked by its contribution toward rendering the image enigmatic rather than didactic, thus creating a visual yearning for the abstracted detail. It allows space for engagement with the viewer and evokes, in my opinion, thoughts around the transition from the material to the spiritual – from the seen to the unseen. Such an apparent presentation of landscape in a state of becoming can also be seen as the photographer's attempt to

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<sup>711</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>712</sup> Johnson, J., *Santu Mofokeng – Billboards*, 2007,

<http://politicstheoryphotography.blogspot.com/2007/05/santu-mofokeng-billboards.html> Accessed 24/08/09.



Fig. 5.7 Santu Mofokeng, *Winter in Tembisa*. c 1991.

animate it – imbuing it with dynamism that echoes that of South Africa. But what is more noticeable about this manner of working is the extent to which the photographic image is made intellectually productive by leaving it open instead of closing it. Too concrete and visually conclusive photographic images tend to lack the quality that Mofokeng achieves through abstraction, as has been argued with reference to Figure 5.7.

In addition to such a philosophical dimension in the use of photography, Mofokeng's camera exposes remote communication means, through billboards, employed by the powerful business houses, such as Lever Brothers then, later renamed Unilever,<sup>713</sup> in

<sup>713</sup> See Trinidad and Tobago Express, *New Name, logo for Lever Brothers*. in <http://www.ukwhitegoods.co.uk/modules.php?name=News&title&sid=886> Accessed 19/08/09.

order to exploit opportunities of harvesting as much township cash as possible. But Mofokeng argues for billboards playing roles of both economic and social engineering apparatuses, also signifying townships as spaces not designed for random visits by whites during the Apartheid period, as he asserts:

Billboards have been the medium of communication between the rulers and the denizens of townships since the beginning. The billboard is a fact and feature of township landscape. It is a relic from the times when Africans were subjects of power and the township was a restricted area, subject to laws, municipality by laws and ordinances regulating people's movements and governing who may or may not enter the township....Billboards capture and encapsulate ideology, the social, economic and political climate at any given time. They retain their appeal for social engineering.<sup>714</sup>

This assertion refers to contrasts that are detectable between capitalist interest in township markets and, ironically, lack of the same interest in investing in social development for the benefit of black people under Apartheid. Later on, during the post-Apartheid period, Santu Mofokeng shows the pervasive tendency of capitalism when, in *Democracy is Forever* (Fig. 5.9)<sup>715</sup> and other related images showing billboards, it appropriates the struggle language and slogans for its own sustenance.<sup>716</sup>

In *Township Billboard* (Fig. 5.8),<sup>717</sup> Mofokeng does not only expose the commercialisation of beauty but contrasts it with non-idealised, non-cosmetic everyday life marked by hard struggles to survive within township economic milieu. With very little visible landscape, Mofokeng seems to be interrogating issues around capitalist practices here in relation to the human body, exposing a commonplace association of beauty and youth, on the one hand, with labour and ageing on the other hand. This may

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<sup>714</sup> Johnson, J. in *Mofokeng – Billboards* <http://politicstheoryphotography.blogspot.com/2007/05/santu-mofokeng-billboards.html> Accessed 24/08/09.

<sup>715</sup> Ibid.

<sup>716</sup> Ibid.

<sup>717</sup> Ibid.



Fig. 5.8 Santu Mofokeng, *Township Billboard*. n.d.

be interesting to look at even from a feminist perspective in which the role of capitalism is critically viewed in conjunction with the objectification of the female body for commercial purposes.

Images analysed above confirm this point and further raise questions around who benefits from the erection of such outdoor advertising billboards and other seemingly developmental features such as electricity pylons, lampposts and telephone wires that punctuate township spaces. Here Santu Mofokeng shows how, through such

communication techniques, poor blacks were still seen as “valued economic hubs with growing disposable income.”<sup>718</sup> The business owners such as Richard Maponya<sup>719</sup> after



Fig. 5.9 Santu Mofokeng, *Democracy is Forever*. c. 2004.

whom a recently opened shopping mall in Soweto is named, were another matter, but I shall return to this below.<sup>720</sup>

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<sup>718</sup> Primedia Outdoor, *Primedia Outdoor Talks To The Townships*, 2008, <http://www.fastmoving.co.za/news-archive/non-client-activity/primedia-outdoor-talks-to-the-townships> Accessed 25/07/09.

<sup>719</sup> Mentioning Richard Maponya here is by no means meant to portray him as one of the former marginalised of Soweto. Whether Maponya became affluent at a certain point in his life has no bearing on the manner in which Figure 5.9 is being analysed here. Of major import, for the purpose of this chapter, is Mofokeng’s interest in the scene framed here.

<sup>720</sup> Chance, K., *Richard Maponya – Taking Stock* <http://www.thepropertymag.co.za/pages/452774491/articles/2005/August/Richard-Maponya.asp#> Accessed 27/06/08.

*Near Maponya's Discount Store, Soweto* (Fig. 5.10)<sup>721</sup> is one of Santu Mofokeng's landscape photographs that almost dictates an exclusive reading without necessarily paying too much attention to the interference of text in the form of a caption in that the idea of a *discount store* is not detectable at all in this photograph; it is only provided on the basis of the photographer's knowledge of the place framed here. Richard Maponya's *discount store*, where he, under Apartheid, was permitted to sell only foodstuff suitable for working-class blacks, such as mealie meal, sugar, condensed milk and other simple items instead of asparagus or tuna, was one of the first black business ventures that were destined to grow immensely after years of hard work, thus defying the shackles and fetters of poverty that were designed for the black population.<sup>722</sup> Probably about this obscure store, shrouded in a sun- or moon-defying mist or smoke, and his subsequent rise to higher levels of affluence, Richard Maponya recalls:

When I first tried to start a business in Soweto, the powers of the day told me I was "off my head." They said no black is allowed to own a business; we were temporary residents and privileged to be in an urban area and were there to serve industry. This was in the 1950s, back when both Soweto and Maponya were young. 'We've watched each other grow...'<sup>723</sup>

The gravity of the ugliness of township poverty (and, by extension, that of the Apartheid system), as reflected in the image, has, in line with David Goldblatt's observation about photography in general, been attenuated in this particular photograph in which human

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<sup>721</sup> Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, p.16.

<sup>722</sup> Chance, K., Richard Maponya – Taking Stock  
<http://www.thepropertymag.co.za/pages/452774491/articles/2005/August/Richard-Maponya.asp#> Accessed 27/06/08.

<sup>723</sup> Ibid.

forms and most of the content have been shrouded in this ethereal, smoky or misty atmosphere.<sup>724</sup>



Fig. 5.10 Santu Mofokeng, *Near Maponya's Discount Store, Soweto*. 1985.

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<sup>724</sup> Hayes, P., 'Santu Mofokeng, photographs: 'The Violence is in the Knowing'', in Tucker, J. (ed.), *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*, Theme Issue 48, *Photography and Historical Interpretation*, Wesleyan University, 2009, p.34.

This tendency towards the abstraction of form raises possibilities of thinking about photography as a medium that can easily lend itself to a redefinition of *reality*. In the context of the attenuation of reality here, the viewer is rather obliquely made aware of a boy urinating just outside a discount store and beside a shack-like structure. However, the fact that this figure, and many other pictorial elements around it, is silhouetted and put in contrast with a shimmering light, mist and possibly smoke behind it, evokes a compelling aesthetic appeal, in my opinion, rather than just conveying documented, reported visual information.

This, again, is one particular example of Mofokeng's work that shows the benefits of his shift away from overtly or obviously political photography. The imposing verticality of the photographic frame itself, the long shadow of the boy and the reduction of the whole composition into minimalist rendering of form are features upon which the whole visual power of this work rests. Here Mofokeng has exploited a two-fold opportunity: that of investigating possibilities of diversifying technological applications toward documenting or commenting on social conditions and that of applying aesthetics and the artistic license to the attenuation of *reality*.<sup>725</sup>

*Reality* might not have seemed attenuated for Santu Mofokeng when, in 1988 to 1998, he worked as documentary photographer/researcher for Institute for Advanced Social Research (formerly African Studies Institute) at the University of the Witwatersrand.<sup>726</sup>

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<sup>725</sup> This term is being used cautiously here given its complex meaning and implications in the context of visual expression and visual documentation.

<sup>726</sup> Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, p.96. See also an e-mail correspondence from Santu Mofokeng, dated 26/11/08.

This opportunity suited Mofokeng very well as it provided him a more sympathetic rhythm of work rather than being confined to “episodic single shots.”<sup>727</sup> When he started working with this institute, Charles van Onselen, who was in charge of the Oral History project, was completing his book called *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper*.<sup>728</sup> Mofokeng’s *Sunflower Harvest, Bloemhof* (Fig. 5. 11),<sup>729</sup> which forms part of what he documented while engaged in one of the research projects and, later, his *Rumours/The Bloemhof Portfolio*,<sup>730</sup> interrogates an interface between complexities of land ownership and labour relations between white farmers of Klippen, Bloemhof, such as Attie Jakobs,<sup>731</sup> and sharecropping farm tenant workers in a socially dynamic and racially-ordered rural South Africa.<sup>732</sup>

Trying to articulate this relationship, Kas Maine, the sharecropper to whom the workers in Mofokeng’s work are related, explains: “The seed is mine. The ploughshare is mine. The span of oxen is mine. Everything is mine. Only the land is theirs.”<sup>733</sup> This explains the complicated relationship between white farmers and black sharecropper families.

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<sup>727</sup> Hayes, P., ‘Santu Mofokeng, photography: ‘The Violence is in the Knowing’ in Tucker, J. (ed.), *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History, Theme Issue 48, Photography and Historical Interpretation*, Wesleyan University, 2009, p.39.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid.

<sup>729</sup> Mofokeng, S, *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, p.14.

<sup>730</sup> Ibid. p.96.

<sup>731</sup> Bradford, H., *Highways, Byways and Culs-de-Sacs: The Transition to Agrarian Capitalism in Revisionist South African History*, <http://rhr.dukejournals.org/cgi/reprint/1990/46-47/59.pdf>, p.71 accessed 18/08/09.

<sup>732</sup> Keegan, T., *Facing the Storm: Portraits of Black Lives in Rural South Africa*, Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip, 1988, pp. 131-146.

<sup>733</sup> Bundy, C., ‘Review: Comparatively Speaking: Kas Maine and South African Agrarian History’, in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2, Special Issue for Terry Ranger (Jun., 1997), pp.363-370, p.367. See also Keegan, T., *Facing the Storm: Portraits of Black Lives in Rural South Africa*, Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip, 1988, p.146.

*Sunflower Harvest* is based on the results of a transition from agrarian to capitalist agricultural industry in early twentieth-century South Africa.<sup>734</sup> What Mofokeng is also



Fig. 5. 11 Santu Mofokeng, *Sunflower Harvest*, Bloemhof. 1988.

pointing out here, in visual terms, is the paradox of white land ownership and landless labour-providing blacks as a relationship sealed only by economic imperatives.

A considerable literature exists on the subject of this paradox. Keegan for example, in his reconstruction and recording of the lives of four rural South African families who lived and worked in the early twentieth century, offers microcosmic representations of black and white relations in rural South Africa in the midst of white fears and desperate

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<sup>734</sup> Bradford, H., *Highways, Byways and Culs-de-Sacs: The Transition to Agrarian Capitalism in Revisionist South African History* <http://rhr.dukejournals.org/cgi/reprint/1990/46-47/59.pdf>, p.70 Accessed 18/08/09.

attempts to survive economically alongside industrious black peasants.<sup>735</sup> At stake in Keegan's stories is the portrait of a changing social landscape of an industrialising South Africa, with particular focus on the socio-economic dynamics in the countryside. The accounts are presented against a backdrop of, on the one hand, a paradoxical, systematic land dispossession of black rural population through legislature and its enforcement and, on the other hand, a desperate need for black labour and agrarian production that ranged from waged to sharecropping contribution towards white farmers' economic survival. Black aspirations and attempts to attain meaningful social and economic status through hard labour, entrepreneurship and education are well articulated in these accounts, especially in the case of Barney Ngakane's life story.<sup>736</sup>

In the case of *Sunflower Harvest* and recalling Figure 3.13, there seems to be a well-defined master-worker relationship marked by labour that is provided by landless blacks to a landowning Attie Jakobs. In fact, following the destabilisation of the earlier sharecropping practices after the passing of the Natives Land Act of 1913<sup>737</sup> and its systematic enforcement in the years leading up to the formalisation of the Apartheid system in 1948,<sup>738</sup> Kas Maine's statement should probably be: "The labour is mine. The capital is theirs. The land is theirs. The profits, too, are theirs." The photographer's selective framing here is significant and calls for more attention. The 'disembodied' arm of the master, focusing the viewer's attention specifically and principally on the workers, seems to attenuate this blatant racial tension and compensate for the lowered social status

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<sup>735</sup> Keegan, T., *Facing the Storm: Portraits of Black Lives in Rural South Africa*, Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip, 1988, pp.ix-x, and 3-128.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid., pp.81-83.

<sup>737</sup> Ibid., p.147.

<sup>738</sup> Ibid., p.84.

of the latter. Alternatively, it seems to allow for more emphasis on the core issue: the provision of back-breaking labour and conditions under which it is provided. This scene frames these workers as a microcosmic representation of what happened after the enforcement of the 1913 Land Act: the reduction, by and large, of black farmers and farm labourers to proletarian status.<sup>739</sup>

To return to the urban landscape, the material condition of back-breaking daily labour was very often preceded by train rides, due to a need for people to commute from the ghettoised margin – the township - to the industrialised centre, the city. This routine experience caught Mofokeng’s attention as such commuter trains would be turned into moving churches with people singing, preaching the Christian gospel and praying before embarking on each day’s work, thus serving as the first category that Mofokeng identified and documented as part of worship scenes in unusual places. Such church churches were both unusual and undesirable for him because they were noisy and would not allow him a chance to fall asleep. The series of photographs that emanate from this commuter experience were taken as “revenge” against the passengers.<sup>740</sup>

This series can be compared with David Goldblatt’s series of bus riders from KwaNdebele to Pretoria and back. While Goldblatt’s subjects are always framed yawning or slumbering on their seats, Mofokeng’s subjects sing, clap, stomp and pray fervently before they disembark and rush to their respective places of work. Even after disembarking, running in circles and chanting before dispersing to respective work places

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<sup>739</sup> Ibid., p.84.

<sup>740</sup> Hayes, P., ‘Santu Mofokeng, photographs: ‘The Violence is in the Knowing’ in Tucker, J. (ed.), *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History, Theme Issue 48, Photography and Historical Interpretation*, Wesleyan University, 2009, p.43.

would be performed as a spiritual ritual, as depicted in Santu Mofokeng's *People running in circles and chanting before dispersing for work* (Fig. 5. 12).<sup>741</sup> As Law-Viljoen asserts, such train church activities "were partly a response to the strains of commuting forced upon millions of South Africans: the rising in the dark, the long journey to places of work, the return home late at night. One simply had no time to go to church."<sup>742</sup> This series of images, alluding to a daily spiritual solace from various work-related conditions and to the immersion in an allegorical spiritual world through the train, served as a springboard for Mofokeng to further probe other aspects of spiritual escape routes from unbearable material conditions.

However, this daily spiritual solace is also understood as a channel of emotional release from and a reminder of oppression.<sup>743</sup> Law-Viljoen's assertion, made from outside the cultural environment of black township people, may have to be treated cautiously; it might as well reflect one of those instances of reading too much into social situations of black people in South Africa while, in fact, some of these commuters may not have necessarily been always politically conscious of their situation, especially if it may be seen as part of the everyday. I therefore contend here that the validity of such an assertion could perhaps depend on whether such commuting and religious activities in transit may also be understood to be subconsciously political. This, I suggest, may also depend on whether some scholars have specifically probed

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<sup>741</sup> Mofokeng, S., 'Train Churches' in Bunn, D. and J. Taylor (eds.), *From South Africa: New Writing, Photographs, and Art*, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987, p.361.

<sup>742</sup> Law-Viljoen, B., *Train Church* in <http://davidkrutpublishing.com/607/train-church> Accessed 25/02/07.

<sup>743</sup> Ibid.



Fig. 5. 12 Santu Mofokeng, *People running in circles and chanting before dispersing for work.* n.d.

this particular notion through personal interviews or other reliable data collection methods.

It is quite likely that most of such assumptions are based on certain formulaic, constructed notions about cultural and social circumstances of blacks as an oppressed race in South Africa. It may be interesting to ask to what extent some researchers still appoint themselves as spokespersons for such people who are the subjects of the research that are often rendered voiceless. This observation serves to register my preference for a more cautious approach to analyses of inter-disciplinary academic claims around abstract aspects of black people's lives. A great number of the victims of Apartheid, though

conscious of their impoverishment, might not have been as well-informed as the educated elite were about the causes of their relatively poor socio-economic situation. There may have been ways in which ordinary people's awareness was less legible to the outside world. There seems to be an overlooked possibility of this disparity between the educated and the ordinary, everyday people who see their conditions primarily as part of their everyday aspects of life. This is perhaps what Mofokeng is attempting to illuminate.

Further probing the essence of the power of the spirit within the framework of the everyday, Santu Mofokeng also shifted, quite overtly, from the standpoint of the traditional or missionary Christian spirituality and returned to yet another non-conventional<sup>744</sup> approach to religiosity and spirituality. About this, Williamson asserts that people held services in spaces such as “fields, caves or other urban or sub-urban spaces because they had/have no other place to meet.”<sup>745</sup> *Doornfontein* (Fig. 5.13)<sup>746</sup> shows figures of church congregants that use a city sub-way as a shelter, thus sacralising the imagined circle around which a section of the group is running probably during a healing prayer session (*isiguqo* in isiZulu).

A number of Zionist Christians<sup>747</sup> and sangomas held services and performed spiritual rituals in the caves of Motouleng hill,<sup>748</sup> Clarens, Free State, where Mofokeng later also

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<sup>744</sup> In this thesis I treat Christianity essentially as a Western religion with its particular conventions which are culturally embedded.

<sup>745</sup> McEvoy, K., *Romantic Tendencies in the Landscape Photography of Post-Apartheid South African Artists*. MTEch (FA) dissertation, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria, 2007, p.76.

<sup>746</sup> Mofokeng, S., *Santu Mofokeng*, Johannesburg: David Krut, 2001, p.78.

<sup>747</sup> Zionist Christianity is not connected, in any way, with Jewish Zionism. ‘Zion’ has been conceptualised in religious terms and is understood to refer to God’s Holy Mount. This shows how the biblical notion of the Middle East as a Holy Land has captured many African Christians’ imagination.

<sup>748</sup> See transcript of an interview by Prof. P. Hayes, Farzanah Badsha and Visual History class with Santu Mofokeng, Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, 20.9.06. This

accompanied his brother Ishmael who had an AIDS-related illness.<sup>749</sup> At this point Mofokeng had decided to put aside his ‘metaphorical biography’ photographic series in



Fig. 5.13 Santu Mofokeng, *Doornfontein*. 1998.

in order to deal with an ontological question around resilience in the harsh economic and social milieus. He wanted to identify a source of this resilience as he points out:

The resilience comes from the fact that you believe in spirituality; you are spiritual as a person. ...I go to Motouleng to find out, actually, what’s going down; actually what’s going down? ...Eh, people tell us *sinobuntu* (*we have*

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place is endowed with a special spiritual significance among the local Basotho people of the Free State province because its other name is Amanzopa, named after a prophetess (Manzopa) who was also an advisor to King Moshoeshoe. The aura of the place comes from the fact that Manzopa’s bones are believed to have been interred in the cave under the hill according to local oral tradition. Most pilgrims, including Ishmael, visit the place on account of the imagined presence of the ancestral spirits that are believed to have assembled around Manzopa’s spirit.

<sup>749</sup> See transcript of an interview by the candidate with Santu Mofokeng, 30/12/07, Johannesburg. It should be noted here that when Mofokeng accompanied his brother Ishmael to the caves, he had visited the place on other occasions, starting in 1986.

*humanity*); people tell us we are wonderful; people tell us we are resilient; now, I'm trying to figure out where's that resilience coming from.<sup>750</sup>

This point alludes to Mofokeng's awareness of people's resilience as a result of their state of being both corporeal and spiritual within their visible, tangible bodies. But it also suggests that Mofokeng imagined a physical environment as being regarded as an impetus for the people's material-spiritual mode of existence. Here Motouleng is a place constructed both spiritually and culturally as a space endowed with meaning and power. However, Mofokeng has more to say about the motive behind his focus on these caves. Though landscape is an overarching thematic element here, it encompasses a number of concerns for Mofokeng. He went to frame these caves at the end of what he calls his metaphorical biography which he intentionally aligned with the latter part of the Apartheid period. This project, incorporating *Train Church* series, had been started in 1986 and, ten years later, was extended to Mofokeng's critique of the practical implications of the transition from Apartheid to the post-Apartheid political dispensation.

Using landscape as a point of departure, he asks what it means to claim political victory over the oppressive system. He also posits that his inquiry was fuelled, among other things, by his skepticism around the notion of freedom without ownership of land. The element of spirituality or belief in a higher power comes in when Mofokeng asks what makes people resilient in the face of freedom devoid of ownership. Insisting on his skepticism about the demise of Apartheid in a practical sense, Mofokeng states: "...*'ma uthi sinqobile (if you say that we have prevailed)*, I don't know what did you win. I don't know that ...we are chasing shadows. That's why we still have no control of all what we

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<sup>750</sup> Ibid.

imagine we have.”<sup>751</sup> Among other things, Mofokeng does not just reclaim the landscape, but he also questions the false ideals and dream-like utopia he senses in the post-Apartheid political discourse.

It is tempting to argue that there is something evocative here of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic break with false ideals and utopias, its “powerful emotions in response to violence, suffering, chaos, and ugliness”,<sup>752</sup> and its response to the inner and outer worlds, when considering Mofokeng’s flight from violence and pursuit of the spirit. Brutality existed in abundance, specifically the violence that was often imposed by the Apartheid state on the oppressed black masses. Here Mofokeng is challenging the viewer to think about the difficult existential challenges beyond the concrete.

The secular state power, that had tried to sacralise itself and its agenda, as articulated in previous chapters, was seen to oppress the material dimension of the racially degraded living soul, at least in a material, concrete sense. Mofokeng’s style and focus however transcended the physical and tapped into the spiritual. This is particularly the case with those images of cave scenes at Clarens, Free State, and as I shall argue later in this chapter, also with others depicting various scenes of genocide or collective death in and outside South Africa in places such as Birkenau in Poland, Free State in South Africa, Auschwitz in Poland, Lodz in Poland and Luderitz in Namibia.<sup>753</sup>

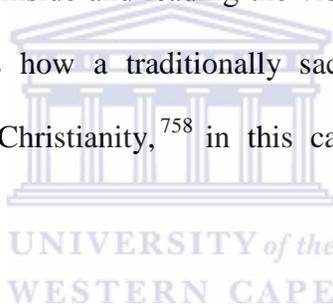
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<sup>751</sup> Ibid.

<sup>752</sup> Ibid.

<sup>753</sup> *Rhizomes of Memory: sorafrikanske fotografer Goldblatt: Mofokeng: Hallett*, Oslo: Onstad Kunstcenter Forlaget Press, 2000, pp.152-155.

His caves such as *Temple 1996* (Fig. 5.14),<sup>754</sup> *Easter Sunday church service 1996* (Fig. 5.15)<sup>755</sup> and *Sisters Gladys and Cynthia leading sangomas and initiates in ritual chants, song and dance of exorcism* (Fig. 5.16),<sup>756</sup> are also neither natural nor do they comprise natural elements or components; certain schools of contemporary scholarship are often responsible for a number of such problematic constructions that are mostly based on the nineteenth-century notions of colonial outposts as natural<sup>757</sup> and, at times, endowed with sublime qualities. I argue here that there cannot be a homogeneous way of seeing; aesthetic responses to whatever evocative phenomena should be largely informed by personal or cultural orientations not necessarily known to the educated elite. Figure 5.12, apparently photographed from inside and leading the viewer's eye towards the entrance or portal of the cave, shows how a traditionally sacralised environment has been appropriated by acculturated Christianity,<sup>758</sup> in this case some congregations of the Zionist church.



Just as the colonial and Apartheid powers used to map out their territories of white hegemony, so has this site been mapped out and reorganised for a sacred purpose. Within this underground space, compartmentalised spaces that are apparently dedicated to

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<sup>754</sup> Ibid., p.140.

<sup>755</sup> Ibid., p.149.

<sup>756</sup> Ibid., pp.145 and 146. This image was printed over two pages.

<sup>757</sup> This notion has been raised and problematised in Chapter One where John Urry's and Phil Macnaghten's argument has been applied.

<sup>758</sup> This point is based on the notion that although Christianity, in its orthodox form, was formerly Western, it was later adopted by some African converts. What is significant in this context is the fact that Christianity was acculturated during the emergence of the African Initiated Churches movement, as is articulated in greater detail in this chapter. However, Christianity, in its orthodox form, as presented by white missionaries, remains Western. The emergence of what became known as Black/Contextual theology brought about this division and had an impact in KwaZulu-Natal as early as the late nineteenth century.

various rituals have been demarcated, thus sacralising a spiritually and culturally developed environment.<sup>759</sup> Here the roughly circular space, with a pile of flat stone slabs



Fig. 5.14 Santu Mofokeng, *Temple 1996*.

towards the back, marked out with a circle of stones, is probably the sanctuary or the most holy place of the temple that can only be entered through the ‘gate,’ as it appears in the image. Words that are inscribed in white on the wall or face of the cave may be meant to be a supposedly inspired divine message with a prophetic significance. This appropriation and sacralisation of such environmental spaces should be analysed in contrast with erstwhile sacralised Afrikaner churches in David Goldblatt’s *Structures of Things Then* series (see Figure 3.11).

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<sup>759</sup> ‘Development’ can be seen primarily as a Eurocentric term, but here I posit that the transformation of caves from desolate, physical spaces into sacred and culturally significant spaces is, in itself, a developmental exercise.

The act of sacralising within a capitalist, socially segregated country such as South Africa is often informed by respective economic positions of those responsible for the act. While, as argued in Chapter Three, some Afrikaner churches were increasingly marked by closedness or insularity, caves, including the stone ‘gate’ leading into the holy circle, as sites constructed as mystical points of human-divine encounter, are always open and accessible. Here Mofokeng’s statement: “I look at spirituality and churches which are not built”<sup>760</sup> is very suggestive of a variety of possibilities and further evokes a mystic sense as opposed to the materiality and closedness of most of the churches framed in Goldblatt’s images. The supposed presence of these churches which are not built elevates a sense of enigma with which Mofokeng’s cave scenes are imbued.

Though the gate leading into the fold is in a material form, the concept of the ‘gate’ within the context of this construction of sacred spaces should be seen in the light of one of the most significant religio-social phenomena in the history of Christianisation of blacks in South Africa. Most religious elements of the Zionist belief system in the material world are imagined to mirror the heavenly ones.<sup>761</sup>

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<sup>760</sup> See transcript of the interview by Prof. P. Hayes, Farzanah Badsha and the candidate with Santu Mofokeng, 24/07/2005, Johannesburg.

<sup>761</sup> Sundkler, B. G. M., *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (second edition), London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1961, p.291.



Fig. 5.15 Santu Mofokeng, *Easter Sunday church service 1996*.

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The Zionist concept of a Gate, according to the myth, can be understood to be the thirteenth one given that Africans are supposedly not included in the twelve tribes of Israel which enter the New Jerusalem through twelve respective gates, according to

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<sup>762</sup> Sundkler, B. G. M., *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (second edition), London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1961, p.291.

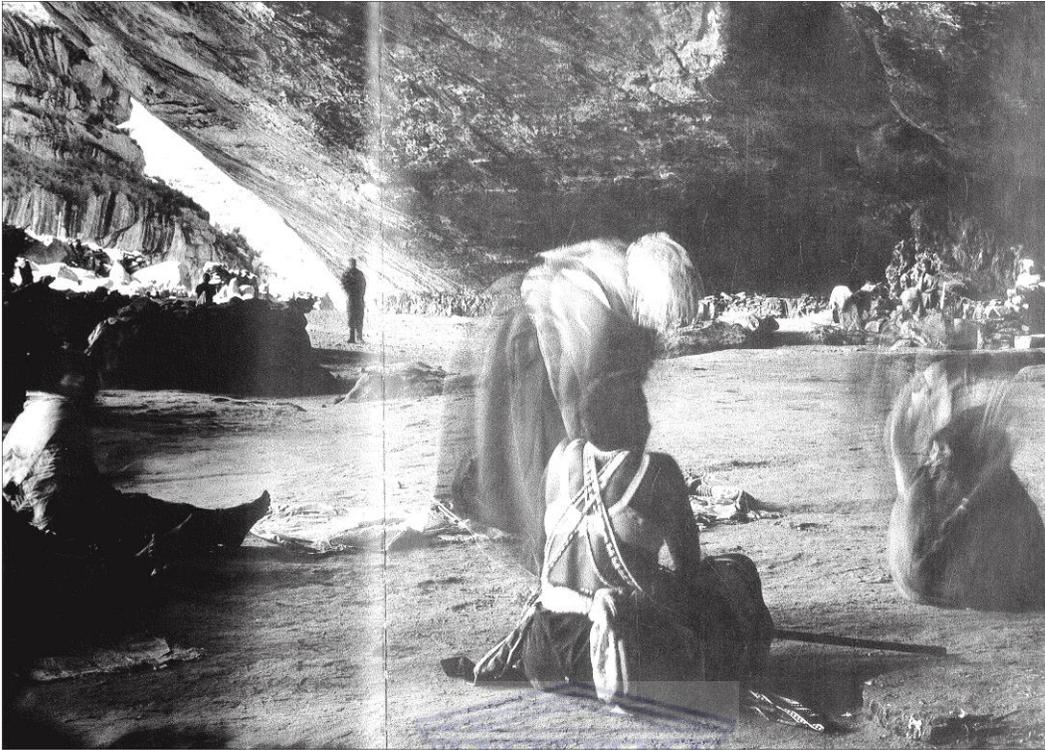


Fig. 5.16 Santu Mofokeng, *Sisters Gladys and Cynthia leading sangomas and initiates in ritual chants, song and dance of exorcism.* 1996.

Revelation 21: 2, 12.<sup>763</sup> This analogy also makes sense within the racially segregated society of South Africa where the Afrikaner, with his grandiose churches, elevated themselves up to the status of being chosen, as articulated in Chapters Three and Four of this thesis. The marginalised, supposedly un-chosen Zionist church congregants also apply the same colour-bar method in their conception of a Gate and as to who, in fact, guards it against trespassers. According to the Zionist Christian myth, the Black Christ, sometimes supposedly incarnated in the persons and offices of figures such as Bishop E. Lekganyane of the Zion Christian Church<sup>764</sup> and Prophet Isaiah M'dliwamafa Shembe of the Nazareth Baptist Church,

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<sup>763</sup> Ibid., p.289.

<sup>764</sup> According to a transcript of an interview by Prof. P. Hayes, Farzanah Badsha and the candidate with Santu Mofokeng, Mofokeng's father died a member of this church.

...turns away the Whites, because they, as the rich man, have already in their lifetime received their good things, and he opens the gate only to his faithful followers. The fate of the Africans who belonged to White Mission Churches is lamentable: "One race cannot enter by the gate of another race", and on their arrival at the White people's gate, they are turned away.<sup>765</sup>

In this sense I propose another notion of Santu Mofokeng's cave photographic series: that while they reflect some black people's Christian faith and their low economic status, hence no built churches, they also reflect an embedded racial conflict within the faith in general. At this point it may be useful briefly to trace the history and the rationale behind the emergence of the African Initiated Churches (AICs) in South Africa. Also attributed to this phenomenon is the tendency to conflate aspects of the 'orthodox' Christian beliefs or precepts and those of the African traditional belief systems.

As early as the 1870s there were signs of the emergence of African Christian offshoots from the European and American mission churches. One of the reasons for this was black people's desire to liberate themselves from white missionaries' authority and to gain a certain measure of independence and self-determination. However, the primary source of this secession was persistent racism within the Christian Church as one young African man expressed the position:

For a long time the church acted as a mellowing influence in African life. Whatever inequalities existed in the harsh every-day world, the Africans firmly believed that these would not exist within the church. But in many cases these hopes have not been fulfilled. The result has been racial bitterness and the ultimate formation of Bantu separatist churches. Even where this has not happened there is a general acceptance of the inevitability of an African National Church, unless relationships between African and European take a turn for the better.<sup>766</sup>

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<sup>765</sup> Sundkler, B. G. M., *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1961, p.291.

<sup>766</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

One of the pioneering figures of this movement was the Wesleyan minister, Nehemiah Tile who, in 1884, formed a “Tembu Church”, headed by Chief Ngangelizwe. As early as the first decade of the twentieth century, the African Native Baptist Church, which was an offshoot of Negro Baptist groups from the United States that had begun evangelising fellow Africans in the then Natal province, had emerged under the leadership of the Rev. W. M. Leshaga.

The AIC phenomenon had two major strands: the Ethiopian and Zionist movements. Pertinent to this chapter is the Zionist movement which can be traced back to the United States apocalyptic church, the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, founded by John Alexander Dowie in 1896, the main teaching of which was “divine healing”, among others. Though this church was eventually divided into six different American groups, it managed to convert twenty-seven Africans in Johannesburg in May, 1904, thus paving a way for the formation of the first South African Zionist group, the Zion Apostolic Church. From 1917 to 1920, the Zionist movement had produced various denominations that were led mainly by African priests.

Congregants of one of the contemporary sects of this Zionist movement are framed photographically in Figure 5.15 in which various spaces, demarcated by stones, serve various religious purposes. Four white-clad women who kneel and pray in front of white candles are in a space that may be imagined to be suitable for this particular religious activity, where human supplication is combined with the power of the cave to maintain faith and hope for the granting of supplications. This represents one breakaway sect within Zionism.

A compelling sense of the sanctity of this space is, in Figure 5.16, enhanced by the huge rocky roof of the cave and evokes, in my opinion, a feeling of awe generated by the immensity of this imposing space. The animation of the action in the foreground, almost in a trance-like spiritual possession by the spiritual forces, represents the photographer's attempt to express the transcendent existence of the sangomas and the initiate, in which the material realities, with all their attendant hardships, are being faced, as it were.

This spiritual moment in this appropriated space seems to fulfil Mofokeng's need to reclaim the post-Apartheid landscape. In this case Mofokeng has also identified an interface between the Christian religion and the sangoma cult given that they both focus on the power of healing and fellowship with the spirit in caves. This is one of Mofokeng's images of spiritual significance that displays his experimentation with a tried and tested chronophotographic technique that the French physicist, E. J. Marey, attempted to use to record motion in short intervals<sup>767</sup> – his manner of investigating the relationship between time and space within the context of movement. Mofokeng differs from Marey in that his lens was focused specifically on the material bodies under the spell of a spiritual force. Motion was not thought of as confined in the material mode of existence and it would be interesting to make an attempt to theorize the manner in which Mofokeng tries to employ photographic techniques in bringing the spiritual to the material domain, and vice versa, thus desacralising the spiritual world, inscribing it through a modern, visual mode of accessing the invisible and the intangible. Here I

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<sup>767</sup> Kern, S., *The Culture of Time and Space 1880 – 1918*, Cambridge & Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983, p.21.

propose that a greater body of theory on the workings of photography and its relationship to the physical world might have missed a very important aspect of reality that is not, according to Mofokeng's probing discussed here, just material but spiritual too. John Harvey touches on this relationship between the material and the spiritual, relating it to the photography's double identity:

The coming together of photography and spirit allied modern technology to ancient belief and apparatus to apparitions, reconciling reason to religion and thereby confirming conviction. They also united two expressions of faith: one in the existence of invisible realities, the other in the camera's indifferent eye and unerring ability to arrest the truth. Spirit, unlike any subject matter that the camera would survey, drew attention to the paradox of photography's double identity: at one and the same time an instrument for scientific enquiry into the visible world and, conversely, an uncanny, almost magical process able to conjure up the semblance of shadows and, with it, supernatural associations.<sup>768</sup>

Mofokeng's camera even probes spirituality embedded in linguistic concepts such as *seriti* (in Sesotho) or *isithunzi* (in isiZulu), in a more generic sense, a shade.

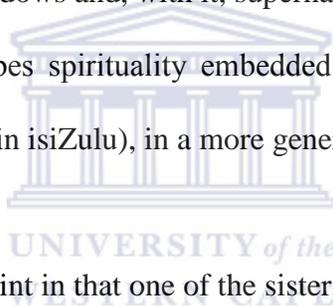
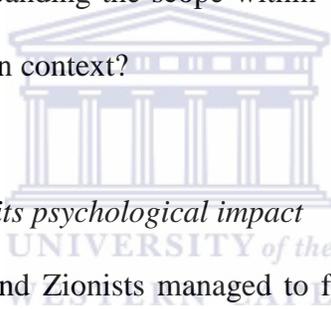


Figure 5.15 touches on this point in that one of the sisters, on the extreme right of the picture format, seems to be in a state of intense spiritual possession or trance. Her body seems to be undergoing a transformation from the material to a spiritual mode of existence. Mofokeng has expressed this by attenuating the outline of the upper body thus creating a feeling of blurred outlines, perhaps due to motion. The figure looks more like a shadow and recalls this concept of *seriti* that Mofokeng admits is very difficult to define in clear terms. His conception and application of the term in this particular series includes its understanding as dignity, aura or power. This makes more sense if one considers power relations involved in both Zionist and sangoma rituals between the spirit that possesses the human body as its host and the body 'hosting' that spirit.

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<sup>768</sup> Harvey, J., *Photography and Spirit*, London: Reaktion, 2007, p.7.

The host often takes on a state of being a patient, being pestered by the ancestral spirit whose extreme effect should be neutralised and normalised for the patient (novice sangoma) to graduate to become a seasoned sangoma.<sup>769</sup> Here it is likely that the cave is seen as a space that is powerful enough to neutralise such a spiritually extreme possession, thus bringing about ‘healing’. The spiritualised ‘mode’ of existence of the figure on the right end of the picture format is visually alluded to by its state of near-dissolution or ‘evaporation’. This could, again, allude to the double identity of photography, as highlighted by Harvey, and the idea of human existence that seems to transcend the material. Is Mofokeng not expanding the scope within which photography is known to operate within the South African context?



*On political incarceration and its psychological impact*

While the train commuters and Zionists managed to find solace in spirituality, many political prisoners’ bodies were incarcerated in a notorious prison on Robben Island. Later seen as martyrdom to apartheid’s socio-political injustice, the incarceration and the ‘spiritual’ endurance of heroes such as Nelson Mandela on the Island are still capturing many people’s imaginations and almost evoke a religious feeling among those who take pilgrimages to the site. For Mofokeng, Robben Island is one of the places that are invested with meaning, in this sense, and at a time when there was a public debate about the fate of such a heritage site and others, he set out to investigate his country’s

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<sup>769</sup> Sundkler, B. G. M., *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (second edition), London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1961, p.247.

monuments and sites of public memory.<sup>770</sup> Embarking on his journey of exploring and documenting sites of atrocities in and outside South Africa, Mofokeng framed *A view of Robben Island from Signal Hill Cape Town, SA 1996* (Fig. 5.17).<sup>771</sup>

It is interesting that here he adopted the photographic method of being not at the scene of human degradation, hiding behind his camera and framing mostly the overwhelming vastness of the ocean around the Island. Here the Island is depicted as a timeless, insignificant space lost in the vastness of immensity in which the horizon line is not clearly defined. No political and criminal prisons are visible; all are imagined and belong to the mental distance and are also pushed towards a temporal obscurity, as it were. This manner of framing seems to be analogous with the demise of Apartheid and the setting in of amnesia about the realities of the unjust past. Mofokeng's distance from the Island may also necessitate a brief contemplation around how he has treated the triangular relationship of society, time and space, with the photographer hidden behind the complex photographic event thus effacing the photographer from this set of relationships.

The enormous distance between the camera and the Island recalls the same distant relationship that was imposed upon the black sector of the South African society and their

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<sup>770</sup> Oyinda, F., 2009, *Autograph ABP Presents Santu Mofokeng at Rivington Place* <http://alter-native-me.blogspot.com/2009/01/autograph-abp-presents-santu-mofokeng.html> Accessed 22/05/09.

<sup>771</sup> *Rhizomes of tre sorafrikanske fotografer Goldblatt: Mofokeng: Hallett*, Oslo: Onstad Kunstsenter Forlaget Press, 2000, p.136.

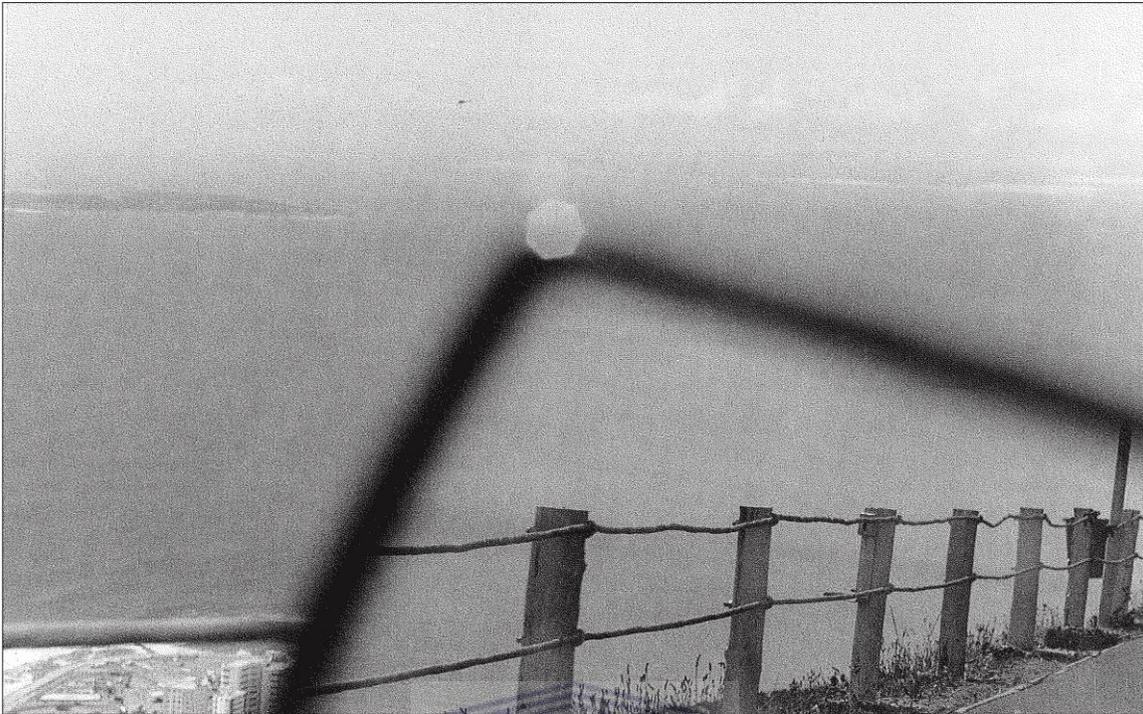


Fig. 5.17 Santu Mofokeng, *A view of Robben Island from Signal Hill Cape Town, SA 1996.*

political heroes such as Autshumato of the Khoikhoi (imprisoned from 1658 to 1659),<sup>772</sup> who successfully escaped the ordeal, Chief Langelibalele of the Hlubi (imprisoned from 1874 to 1884, when he was moved to house arrest),<sup>773</sup> Ahmed Kathrada, Raymond Mhlaba, Aaron Motsoaledi, Prophet Makana Nxele, Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela, Jacob Zuma and Govan Mbeki who were once banished and confined in obscurity on the Island for challenging the colonial/Apartheid powers.<sup>774</sup> This distance can also be understood in conjunction with the fact that such political banishment from society was highly racialised especially by the Apartheid regimes, incarcerating Dennis Goldberg, the

<sup>772</sup> Deacon, H., *The Island: a history of Robben Island, 1488-1990*, Bellville: Mayibuye Books, 1996, p.17.

<sup>773</sup> Zondi, M., '130 years later, a king is freed', October 11 2004, in [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=13&art\\_id=vn20041011100953641C967928](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20041011100953641C967928) Accessed 27/06/10.

<sup>774</sup> Kohler, S. (ed.), 'Zuma: Celebration of Ten Years of Freedom', 2004 <http://www.polity.org.za/article/zuma-celebration-of-ten-years-of-freedom-07122004-2004-12-07> Accessed 18/06/06.

only white member of the Rivonia Trial to be sentenced, in a prison in Pretoria. Such gaps also evoke, in my opinion, an element of an imagined infinity, with a constructed lack of racial affinity,<sup>775</sup> suggested in terms of the melting marine horizon into an ineffable celestial eternity.

The element of spatial infinity in some of Mofokeng's images, such as in his *End of the line, Birkenau – KZ2, Poland 1997* (Fig. 5.18),<sup>776</sup> evokes a mystical feeling, in my view. Furthermore, the idea of the ineffable, imagined horizon, as a result of the illusory unlimited space,<sup>777</sup> and a 'lost' vanishing point of perspective beyond and out-of-the-picture plane, or ideological space, enhances the image's quality of spirituality, based on this illusory intangibility, ethereality of the imagined horizon and invisibility of the *end of the line*. It is also important to point out here that this infinity – the unidentifiable *end of the line*, is not just spatial, but also temporal. Both these concepts have been forced into a state of perpetuity, reinforcing their feature of infinity. Such an idea resonates well with Mofokeng's notion of *chasing shadows*, trying to depict what is at times not photographically frame-able, asking deeply ontological questions that attempt to probe a spiritual dimension of human life and social implications thereof in South Africa.<sup>778</sup>

Here there is an obvious sense of Mofokeng being drawn to human pain and difficulty, but it is remote from him. Hayes observes in this remoteness how "Mofokeng stretches

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<sup>775</sup> The Apartheid system artificially constructed lack of racial affinity in order to legitimise the idea of separate development – a development along separate racial lines.

<sup>776</sup> *Rhizomes of Memory: tre sorafrikanske fotografer Goldblatt: Mofokeng: Hallett*, Oslo: Onstad Kunstcenter Forlaget Press, 2000, p.80.

<sup>777</sup> Neumeyer, A., 'Is There A Romantic Style?' in *Parnassus*, Vol. 9, No. 7 9 Dec., 1937), pp. 13-15 in <http://www.jstor.org/stable/771894>, p.14 Accessed 18/06/06.

<sup>778</sup> See transcript of an interview by the candidate with Santu Mofokeng, 30/12/07, Johannesburg.

form, plays with composition, and shrinks expectations about content.”<sup>779</sup> The stretching of this form and heightening of senses imbues the image with a compelling power of intellectual engagement, leaving almost boundless space for the viewer to engage with the potent but ineffable visual message framed in the picture.<sup>780</sup> It is this quality of enigma that invites viewers of such images to travel towards unreachable horizons.

Furthermore, the element of the unreachable or the ineffable in this work has been enhanced by the melting horizon and the merging of the terrestrial and the celestial, further reinforced by Mofokeng’s employment of technique that produces a compelling atmospheric element toward the hidden horizon and aerial and linear modes of expressing a sense of perspective. What Mofokeng’s photographic approach has done here is to interrogate the problematic of the subjectivity of both the photographer and the viewer of this image. The idea of the *end* is highly provocative and intellectually challenging here; it is probably meant to engage the viewer not only in the activity of *seeing* this end, but also of constructing it inasmuch as the photographer has done. This image opens up a space for the production of multiple subjectivities in as far as the *end* is constructed from various social, cultural and aesthetic viewpoints. The ‘reading’ of the image is hereby democratised, thus forcing the rational and logic into their states of oblivion. This particular image has the potential to pose further questions around the relationships of various imagined subjectivities: according to whom is the invisible *end of the line* the

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<sup>779</sup> Hayes, P. ‘Santu Mofokeng, photographs: ’The Violence is in the Knowing’ in Tucker, J. (ed.), *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History, Theme Issue 48, Photography and Historical Interpretation*, Wesleyan University, 2009, pp.46-47.

<sup>780</sup> Ibid.

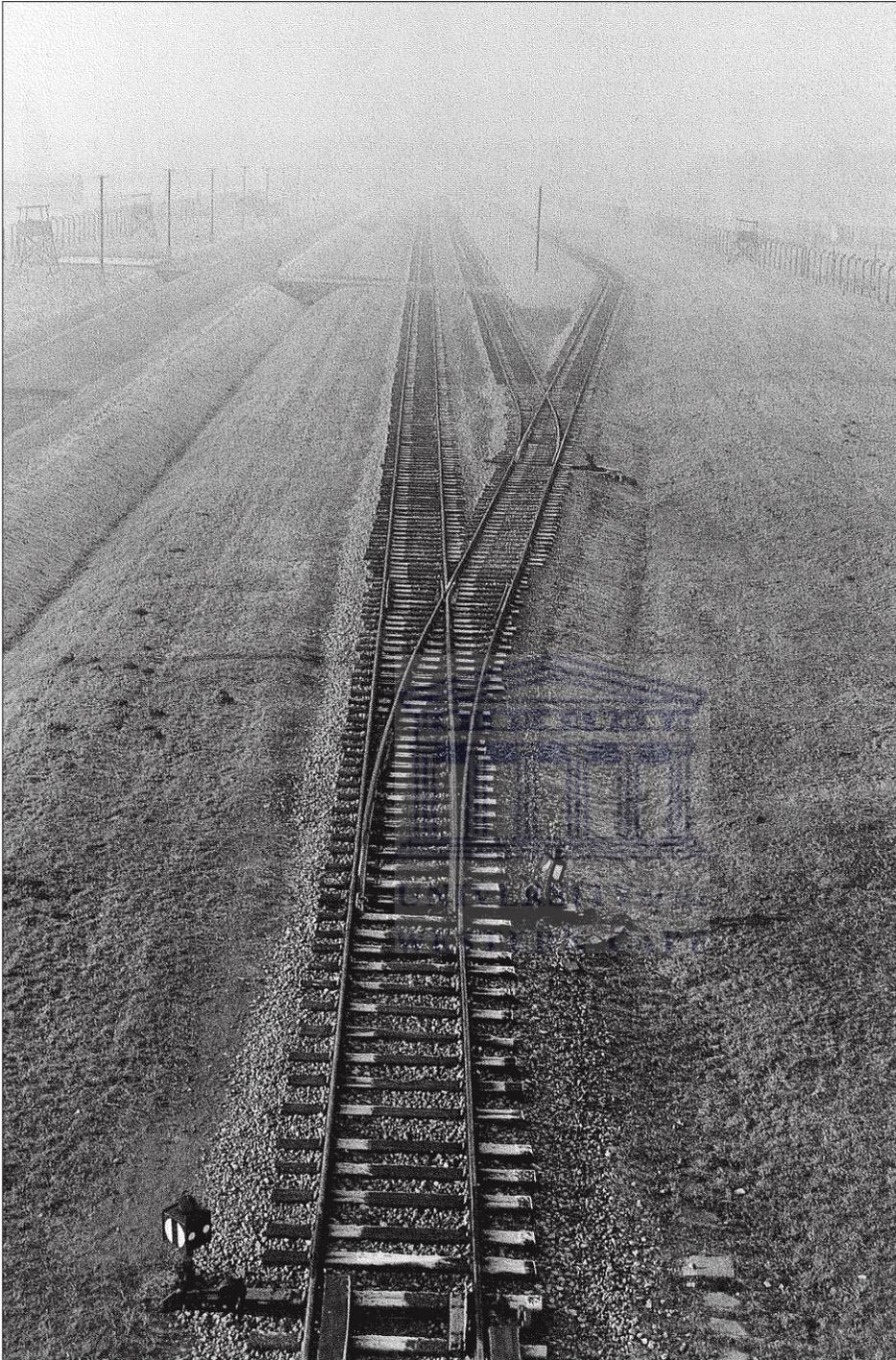


Fig. 5.18 Santu Mofokeng, *End of the line, Birkenau – KZ2, Poland 1997*.

end? According to the photographer, or according to the viewer? Why should the beginning of the line, in proximity to the photographer's position at the time of the photographing act, not be the end?

It is when such questions around the ‘reading’ of such intellectually elusive but seemingly obvious visual codes arise that the debate around multi-layered or almost inexhaustible meanings of photographs becomes even more productive. Here Mofokeng has opened up a space in which the photographer’s role as cultural mediator can be problematised and reduced to mere technicality: that of simply producing an image, a photographically recorded illusion of reality, as opposed to that of mediating its intellectual access - a space for engagement.

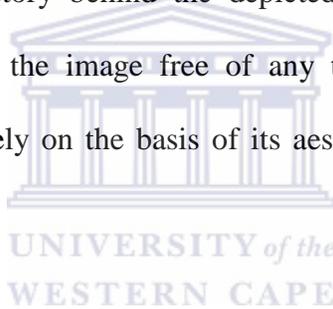
It is important to examine here the paradoxical way of captioning that Mofokeng has employed to make even the fatal significance of the *end of the line* obscure. It is highly arguable here that this image of a railway line that connected Auschwitz Nazi concentration camp and a centre for “Special Treatment”<sup>781</sup> has been produced intentionally to document one of the sites of the 1940s Holocaust-related atrocities to make a visual statement about yet another place associated with horror. The enigmatic execution of the image could be Mofokeng’s manner of commenting on impending horror by emphasising the notion of uncertainty of what was awaiting the victims beyond the misty, invisible horizon. Alternatively, or additionally, this image also evokes an idea of the merging of the material and the spiritual – the last moments of troubled life under Nazi-inflicted persecution and the yet unknown spiritual reality that is about to be entered after the extermination of the material body at the camp. The element of obscurity

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<sup>781</sup> Brugioni, D. A. and R. G. Poirier, *The Holocaust Revisited: A Retrospective Analysis of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Extermination Complex*, <http://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/pdf/v44i4a06p.pdf>, p.12 Accessed 22/06/09. “Special Treatment” was a Nazi code word for ‘extermination’.

beyond the picture plane evokes, I suggest, the state of ineffable mortality after extermination.<sup>782</sup>

This is one of the images that do not just operate at a visual level, but demands and evokes a deeper philosophical engagement that is marked by persisting contemplation. Though it has been dexterously produced, it is not aesthetically pleasing, especially if it is associated with the horror and tragedy of the Holocaust that is imminent, but it has a force that is reminiscent of Kathe Kollwitz's<sup>783</sup> visual comments on the evils of war. Such a displeasure at reading the narrative aspect of this image stems only from pre-knowledge of the horrific history behind the depicted scene. The removal of that historical narrative would set the image free of any textual interference; it has the capacity to be appreciated solely on the basis of its aesthetic, visual qualities analysed here.



The photographer's visual comments on such aspects of human life, especially in the case of this image, are marked by how time and space are treated and made to interface with given social situations that are attached to images produced. Mofokeng's *End of the line*, for example, is a visually compelling image with, I suggest, the element of the sublime – evoking a sense of awe from an overwhelming, psychologically imposing infinity of the railway line and illusory deep space. Such elements operate strongly at an intellectual level mainly due to this 'perpetuity' of the end. When the end is neither capable of being achieved photographically, nor capable of reversing itself to a starting

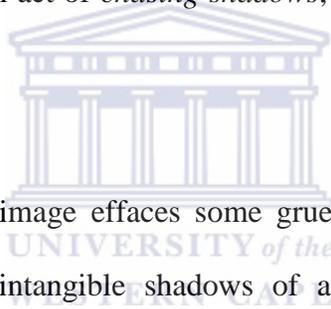
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<sup>782</sup> Ibid.

<sup>783</sup> Kathe Kollwitz was a German artist of the early twentieth century who lost both her husband and son to both World War I and World War II. Most of her graphic prints were seen as war memorials and emotional outlets of mourning.

point, this further complicates the notion of *reality* within the context of documentary photography.

However, given a prominent role played by text, in the form of captions, as well as historical accounts that employ mainly words in conveying knowledge of the past, these notions cannot be taken for granted; they also should be subjected to critical scrutiny. The supposed grasping of *reality* is often aided by such textual reinforcement, but to what extent could Mofokeng record any *reality* about an endless *end* of the journey/s to extermination camps on the moors of Birkenau<sup>784</sup> given the time when the image itself was made? This is, in itself, an act of *chasing shadows*, an attempt to record that which is not, at times, recordable.



The aesthetic appeal of the image effaces some gruesome details of the Holocaust, almost dissolving them into intangible shadows of a past reality. The Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination complex was, in fact, so atrocious that the inmates who were transported here in the 1940s were first forced to construct a gas chamber and crematorium complex which would be used in exterminating them. The temporal gap between the 1940s and the time Mofokeng took his photograph under analysis is striking if one looks at a photograph taken circa 1942 (Fig. 5.19)<sup>785</sup> (Courtesy of the State Museum at Auschwitz).<sup>786</sup>

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<sup>784</sup> Brugioni, D. A. and R. G. Poirier, *The Holocaust Revisited: A Retrospective Analysis of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Extermination Complex*, in <http://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/pdf/v44i4a06p.pdf>, p.12 Accessed 29/06/09.

<sup>785</sup> Young, J. E., *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993, p.121.

<sup>786</sup> Ibid.

In a nutshell, this chapter has interrogated power relations that are embedded in Santu Mofokeng's landscape photographs in a manner that is both documentary and also expressive. Reference to both artistic and reportorial aspects of Mofokeng's landscape photography reveals an interesting interface between a visual narrative based on realist techniques and also a visual expression based on the artist's license towards self-expression. With a combination of these aspects of photography, Mofokeng interrogates ways in which landscapes manifest Apartheid capitalistic modes of spatial organisation both in township settlements of black people and then their cheap labour that they are required to provide to support white-controlled industry.



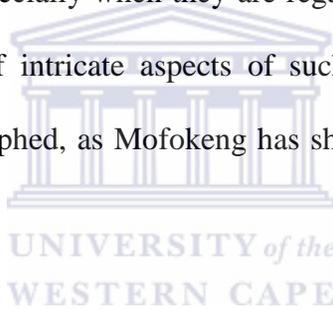
Fig. 5.19 Inmates constructing a gas chamber and crematorium complex which would be used in exterminating them, Auschwitz-Birkenau (Photographer and title not supplied) (Courtesy of the State Museum at Auschwitz). n.d.

In the context of labour that is symbolically 'reserved' in townships, Mofokeng also probes spiritual tactics of survival by workers who are forced to commute by train and

looks at how such ‘moving landscapes’ provide a daily solace for those who are locked into economic abuse, perpetual servitude and adversity. Here landscape has also been depicted as a spiritual home for some of these believers, using it as a site of waging a ‘holy war’ against racist treatment that most African Christians defy by establishing their own acculturated church denominations.

### *Conclusion*

Many pertinent issues raised here are social, that is, they deal with the conflation of spirituality and black marginal positionality. Others concern the ethical questions around the role of a photographer, especially when they are regarded as social insiders.<sup>787</sup> This issue touches on a number of intricate aspects of such power relations between the photographer and the photographed, as Mofokeng has shown both photographically and also in his own words.



When Mofokeng takes landscape photographs invested with social meanings, he looks at how possible it is for spaces that carry certain historical memorial meanings to be reconstructed as sacred objects of religious pilgrimage and meditation. Using South Africa, Robben Island in particular, as his point of departure, Mofokeng turns the world into a global village and tries to identify similarities in atrocities inflicted upon the downtrodden and marginalised. He does this by visiting many sites of torture and

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<sup>787</sup> I regard Santu Mofokeng as a social insider in that whereas he was born and bred within a black society, particularly a township community, he has had the advantage of experiencing most of what he has come to document in one way or another. Being an insider, in this sense, also means that Mofokeng has had to confront ethical issues in situations when his fellow township folks regarded as an advantaged photographer who makes money out of black people. This point should raise questions around the extent to which the camera is either embraced for the convenience of self-imaging among the marginalized or suspected as a tool of asserting and maintaining power imbalances between the photographer and the photographed.

genocide where he documents monuments that imbue these spaces with meanings. Mofokeng's photography, I argue, also imbues such spaces with meaning.

Mofokeng's versatile photographic style is able to complicate the relationship between photography and art in a very subtle manner, asking how landscape, as a visual genre, lends itself to being constructed and reconstructed both religiously and culturally. Looking at Mofokeng's work through the lenses of social, intellectual and cultural histories, it becomes possible to figure out how landscape can be understood as a medium in its own right – across cultures – as has been shown in analyses of the cave series and the image of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The brief analysis and lines of argument presented here lead to Mofokeng's conclusion that the South African black population still needs to take psychic ownership of this landscape. In a spiritual sense, the Zionist congregants and sangomas framed in some photographs analysed here are, I argue, already taking this psychic ownership. In Santu Mofokeng's photographic idiom engaged with here, reclaiming the landscape can occur in both material and spiritual ways inasmuch as human existence may be seen to transcend the material. What I argue stands out in Santu Mofokeng's methodology of transcending the tangible and the visible is his apparent ability to reconcile two seemingly irreconcilable modes of existence – the material and the spiritual.

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## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Subtlety and Irony: Landscape photographs by David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng**

*“Landscape is the mute witness to histories and narratives...”<sup>788</sup>*

#### *Introduction*

Both material and spiritual modes of existence can be explored, if not necessarily depicted in a literal sense, photographically, as has been argued in Chapter Five above. The aim of this chapter is to analyse both David Goldblatt’s and Santu Mofokeng’s photographic works against a broader backdrop of South African social documentary and popular struggle photography. Simply comparing Goldblatt and Mofokeng with the rest is, however, not the primary concern of this chapter; at stake here is the viability of identifying those features in their works that push the boundaries of documentary photography. I intend to identify and explore the highly particular ways in which these two photographers have enlarged the scope of photographic expression within which to ‘document’ South Africa. I also intend to pin down the overarching elements, in their respective practices, that have afforded both Goldblatt and Mofokeng a sustained relevance into the post-Apartheid era. How have they managed to remain integral and significant part of the South African post-Apartheid genealogy of photographic practice without having radically to rethink their career aspects and directions after the demise of Apartheid?

At this stage I wish to clarify the relationship of work by David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng on the one hand and their colleagues in the collective of Afrapix and in the

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<sup>788</sup> See ArtFacts.Net from <http://www.artfacts.net/en/exhibition/david-goldblatt-santu-mofokeng-zwelethu-mthethwa-16000/overview.html> Accessed 15/07/09.

Bang-Bang Club on the other hand. The emphasis on Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's role of taking the idea of the everyday to levels of productive prominence is not aimed at suggesting that they monopolised that space; the study argues for particular ways in which they seem to have expanded the scope within which it should be comprehended. It is also imperative to clarify the fact that Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's idea of focusing on everyday life scenes at the time, including the 1980s, was not unique to them: Lesley Lawson's intention was once to document lives of ordinary people who were affected by the Apartheid social and economic realities.<sup>789</sup> The idea of documenting the everyday was not foreign to Afrapix Collective members, but the visual economy of the day, locally and internationally, impacted upon the direction to be taken by most of them in order to satisfy the demands of the 1980s market. Situating their documentary role within the domain of 'committed photography' in the face of this visual economy, Badsha says: "We are ... in competition with the multi-national news and feature agencies whose main interest in this country is financial."<sup>790</sup> This point seems to have been overemphasised in the dominant, orthodox narrative of 1980s South African photography; a distorted view of neatly partitioned roles among these photographers should be avoided.

Following John Roberts, this chapter advocates the perception of the everyday and realism as categories that seek to validate the idea of realism "as contributing to the

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<sup>789</sup> Hayes, P., 'Iconography of Proximity: Photography in 1980s South Africa'. A paper presented at the Workshop *Transactions of Public Culture*, Cape Town, January 2003, p.2. This paper dismantles, among other things, the apparent dominance of the orthodox narrative of the 1980s photography in South Africa mainly by allowing the voices of a few photographers active at the time to be heard. A few often glossed-over photographers' intentions, anxieties and frequent divisions are revealed in this paper.

<sup>790</sup> Ibid., p.3.

production of an archival knowledge of a particular event or period...”<sup>791</sup> Also at stake here is my attempt to claim benefits yielded by the rejection of the notion of culture as a weapon of the struggle. How can the everyday convey visual messages of struggling without necessarily becoming ‘struggle’ images themselves? In other words, to what extent do Goldblatt’s and Mofokeng’s landscape photographs contribute to the production of an ‘archival knowledge’ of the social aspects of life during the Apartheid ‘transitional’ period and in post-Apartheid South Africa?

The thread that runs through this chapter is the relationship between landscape and the everyday. Landscape, as a constructed space, is often overlooked and regarded merely as a part of the mundane material world against which social, economic and political dramas of life take place. Within the context of South African photography, David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng commenced their careers not necessarily as landscape photographers, nor do they always see themselves as such, but I argue that most of what they documented photographically has ‘landscape’ present in some form. The commonplace character of the landscape theme also manifests itself even in images produced by photographers associated with the Afrapix Collective and the Bang-Bang Club, for example, where sensationalist ‘struggle’ scenes are ‘played out’ against landscape as an intellectually invisible backdrop. On the basis of this argument, I posit that it is when the grand social narratives are replaced by the mundane, but equally significant, aspects in photographic documentation that landscape is seen to occupy its own central space as a concept and representational genre. Seen against the backdrop of the camera that serves the agenda of documenting the popular struggle, landscape is one of the intellectual and

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<sup>791</sup> Roberts, J., *The art of interruption*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998, p.2.

representational outlets that lend themselves to changing the status quo. This point becomes more credible when one looks at the manner in which Santu Mofokeng's landscape photographs are used as 'documents' of social critique, as has been articulated in Chapter Five of this thesis.

Everyday elements do emerge occasionally in the work of members of the Afrapix Collective such as Omar Badsha.<sup>792</sup> This chapter will attempt to argue that David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng have contributed towards a productive reconfiguration of the notion of the everyday, giving it a more archival function in terms of historical and potentially philosophical layers present. This latter claim pertains, especially, to Mofokeng's focus on the apparent conflation of the material and the spiritual in his sacred landscape scenes and Goldblatt's insistence on a dispassionate focus on the complexities of social life in South Africa. Such an insistence on 'dispassion' amounts to an apparent plea for an objective approach to a subject matter and themes already tainted by numerous aspects of social, political and economic inequalities. It is a plea, I contend, that works overtly against the tendency to de-archive<sup>793</sup> knowledge, as is the case with aspects of 'struggle' photography.

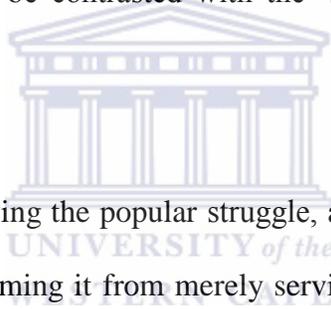
This point on de-archiving knowledge is based on my interpretation of the social function of 'struggle' photography: that it tends claustrophobically to confront the viewer

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<sup>792</sup> Krantz, D. L., 'Politics and Photography in Apartheid South Africa' in *History of Photography*, Volume 32, Number 4, Winter 2008 from [http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/artsmediaculture/protest\\_art/pdf/Krantz\\_revised.pdf](http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/artsmediaculture/protest_art/pdf/Krantz_revised.pdf), p.292 Accessed 09/08/09.

<sup>793</sup> In the context of this thesis and in my own interpretation, de-archiving knowledge is the failure to store and meditate upon any stimulus that has a potential of providing knowledge from which more productive critical engagement could emanate. In the context of Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's methodological approaches, knowledge is produced and archived, as it were, as opposed to what was often done in the context of 'struggle' photography.

more with anxiety-producing images rather than with intellectually empowering images that aim systematically to archive the social history of South Africa. Here I would refer specifically to what I would call Goldblatt's systematic photographic archiving practice – documenting structures and many visual signs that refer to power plays between the coloniser, the Apartheid regimes and the oppressed masses since 1652. Almost all markers of the coloniser's assertion to power, the Apartheid regime's codification of the racial segregation system,<sup>794</sup> the people's attempts to reclaim their humanity in the face of this oppression and the political transition to a supposedly new order are systematically archived in Goldblatt's extensive photographic oeuvre. Broadly speaking, it is this major contribution that, I argue, can be contrasted with the 'struggle' 'reportorial' approach referred to in this chapter.



Freeing the camera from serving the popular struggle, as I interpret Goldblatt's stance, can possibly lead toward redeeming it from merely serving as struggle propaganda. As seen in Goldblatt's work, life in the context of social inequalities and political repression could offer the dispassionate photographer almost endless thematic possibilities to engage with a deep archaeology of knowledge concerning the 'background' contexts of such inequalities. Such a dissenting voice aimed at ensuring an ever-growing thematic field in which photographers could experiment with technical and critical aspects of the art, unbridled by the prescriptions of the political propagandist agenda or urgencies of the day. To try to offer a more compelling argument on the post-Apartheid photographic scene in

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<sup>794</sup>Krantz, D. L., 'Politics and Photography in Apartheid South Africa' in *History of Photography*, Volume 32, Number 4, Winter 2008, from [http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/artsmediaculture/protest\\_pdf/Krantz\\_revised.pdf](http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/artsmediaculture/protest_pdf/Krantz_revised.pdf), p.290 Accessed 19/09/09.

South Africa, textual and landscape visual aspects of the Bang-Bang Club will be explored here as part of an ideological counterpoint for this chapter.

The Bang-Bang Club<sup>795</sup> emerged during the ‘transitional’ years (1990-1994) of South Africa’s political history.<sup>796</sup> This was a critical period in South Africa as ‘black-on-black’ violence was reported almost on a daily basis, with supposedly African National Congress and the Inkatha Cultural Organization (later called Inkatha Freedom Party) supporters involved. Comprising photojournalists such as Greg Marinovich, Joao Silva, Kevin Carter, and Ken Oosterbroek, the Bang-Bang Club’s relationship with the Afrapix Collective was marked by the fact that they both documented ‘newsworthy’ political events within Apartheid South Africa.

This, however, should not be misconstrued as a claim that there was an orthodox principle of documenting the ‘newsworthy’ events within the Afrapix Collective. However, in the dark hours of the dawn of a democratic order, when most political prisoners had been released, the state is reported to have fomented this ‘black-on-black’ violence with a view to setting the Inkatha Cultural Organization and African National Congress supporters against each other. This would hopefully have disrupted the dream of the birth of a united, free society and this particular space, marked by horrendous scenes of naked violence, was photographically covered by the Bang-Bang Club photojournalists. I would argue that since the direction of conflicts had changed

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<sup>795</sup> This nickname, which later became the official name of the Club, refers to the experiences of the photojournalists on the frontline where the ‘bang-bang’ (the fighting) occurred.

<sup>796</sup> Catsam, D. C., *The Bang Bang Club: Snapshots From a Hidden War*. Greg Marinovich and Joao Silva’ from <http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v7/v7i2a20.htm> . Accessed 17/09/09. The whole account contained in this photograph has been extracted from this source.

altogether, where the state was no longer a clearly defined target, the role of the Afrapix Collective had largely been replaced by that of the Bang-Bang Club since the central mandate of the former had been to use the camera to document the popular struggle against the Apartheid regime.<sup>797</sup>

Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's photographic images, when viewed within the context of South African social history, exhibit a tendency towards non-conformity to conventions<sup>798</sup> that seem to inform work produced by other contemporary photographers during and after the Apartheid era.<sup>799</sup> Ozynski, cited in Krantz, records some of the Afrapix Collective's principles and goals, which included the following:

- Photography cannot be divorced from the political, social issues that surround us daily. As photographers we are inextricably caught up in those processes – we are not objective instruments but play a part in the way we choose to make our statements;
- [T]he photographers in this collection do not look at our country through the lens of the rulers. They show South Africa in conflict, in suffering, in happiness and resistance; and

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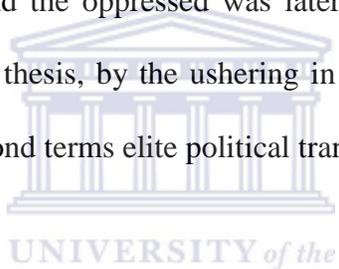
<sup>797</sup> However, it is also more complex than this, given that the Bang-Bang Club was a smaller and more cohesive group of press photographers with direct links to international media, whereas Afrapix Collective was a more heterogeneous collective with a variety of objectives.

<sup>798</sup> Although I mention 'apparent conventions' here I do not necessarily claim that 'struggle' photographers had a specific set of strictly defined precepts that they were expected to follow. One common precept was that their cameras were shooting in order to document the popular struggle. Photography, in this sense, was to serve a particular propaganda of the leftists by exposing the Apartheid state's brutality to the international audience.

<sup>799</sup> Here I am not trying to assume that there were hard and fast rules around the conventions of the genre of documentary photography, as would be the case in the nineteenth-century French academy and the Salon. However, I wish to focus mainly on the tendencies displayed in various photographers' work at the time, giving cognizance to the fact that Afrapix did have a set of principles and objectives which were not necessarily meant to be prescriptive in operational terms. My intention is to highlight apparent parallels and, mainly, differences.

- [...] The images [...] locate these themes [sadness, dignity, power,] in a divided, struggling South Africa. These South African photographers project a vision of the realities that they confront.<sup>800</sup>

I maintain here that one of the most prominent aspects of comparing Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's work with the 'struggle' and, later, with the Bang-Bang Club approach, is their well-calculated ability to evade, to some extent, the cultural crisis nearly imposed by the ushering in of the new political order after the demise of Apartheid, an era in which there would no longer be an overt political power struggle. This emergence of the gray area between the oppressor and the oppressed was later exacerbated, according to my view in the conclusion of this thesis, by the ushering in of class (as opposed to racial) Apartheid after what Patrick Bond terms elite political transition.



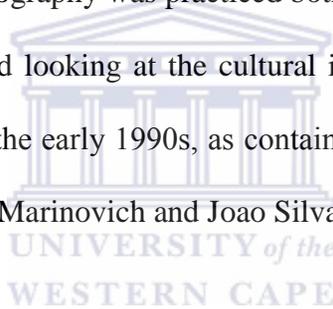
The political dispensation of 1994 seems to have enhanced the blurring of the lines between the erstwhile oppressor, the oppressed and even the collaborator or the onlooker. I wish to show that these two photographers' careers have been positioned in such a way that they have not lost their cultural relevancy and potency within the post-Apartheid South African cultural arena. They owe this mostly to their diligent focus on, among other things, everyday aspects of social life which, in essence, say volumes about South Africa's colonialism, her situation under Apartheid and then under post-Apartheid eras – post colonialism. It is not the intention of this study to engage critically with the social implications of the 'post' in post colonialism in general, but where and when these

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<sup>800</sup> Krantz, D. L., 'Politics and Photography in Apartheid South Africa' in *History of Photography*, Volume 32, Number 4, Winter 2008 from [http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/artsmediaculture/protest\\_art/pdf/Krantz\\_revised.pdf](http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/artsmediaculture/protest_art/pdf/Krantz_revised.pdf), p.293. Accessed 12/10/09.

photographers' works necessitate such an engagement, the study will take cognizance of this.

In order to interrogate aspects of special contributions made by Goldblatt and Mofokeng, this chapter will also use as a backdrop mostly a selection of images and text from *Beyond the Barricades*, a book that contains textual reflections and images produced mainly in the 1980s predominantly by members of the Afrapix Collective, edited by I. T. Hill and A. Harris. It will also be necessary, for the sake of more clarity and direction of this chapter, to highlight the politico-cultural climate within which social and struggle documentary photography was practiced both during and after the Apartheid period. However, I also intend looking at the cultural impact of the documentation of landscape 'struggle' scenes in the early 1990s, as contained in *The Bang-Bang Club*, co-written by photographers Greg Marinovich and Joao Silva.



This chapter will first deal with all the aspects outlined above, but at stake here will be the viability of my contentions on how David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng treat concepts that dominate the prevailing debates around the theory and practice of photography. I will also link my contentions to the task of this study: tracing and engaging with elements of power relations in landscape images. I argue that there are particular ways in which these two photographers have distinguished themselves in terms of how they treat and extend the parameters of the everyday,<sup>801</sup> space and time, and ways of looking. This is not to claim that other photographers who used to form part of the

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<sup>801</sup> I am grateful to my supervisor, Prof. P. Hayes, for her insight into this particular concept and active promotion of its application to research projects that entail power, war and violence in the Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape. I am convinced that most studies that consider the poststructuralist direction within the humanities would benefit from the concept of the everyday.

Afrapix Collective or, later, the Bang-Bang Club, for example, might not have ‘recycled’ their careers in the face of blurred lines of post-Apartheid political power hierarchies. I am using this study to invite attention to more extended ways of looking at the function of the everyday within post-Apartheid landscape photography. Concepts of space and time will be interrogated mostly from the perspective of the analyses of images dealt with in this thesis. Goldblatt’s paired images in *Intersections Intersected* will also be utilized to elaborate on the concepts of space and time particularly insofar as it pertains to landscape visual representation.

This chapter also interrogates the role and the application of photography in redefining black subjectivity on the social margins, and this will be applied particularly, but not exclusively, to aspects of Santu Mofokeng’s work. Subtlety and irony seem to be the overarching hallmarks marking Goldblatt’s and Mofokeng’s work, and I intend to use this as a thread right through the body of the chapter, highlighting its practical advantages or benefits in the photographic medium. The manner in which these photographers have opted to approach their work raises questions around the possibility of seeing photography as another way of ‘writing’ history. How, then, could this history be written?

#### *On the Everyday: Subtlety and Irony*

South African social documentary photography, whose foundations were laid in the 1940s with earlier forerunners such as Leon Levson and Constance Stuart-Larrabee, as articulated in Chapter One of this thesis, has flourished well beyond the Apartheid

period.<sup>802</sup> Fear, anxiety and desire are some of the psychological elements of the Apartheid society that are, in one way or another, subtly dealt with in David Goldblatt's and Santu Mofokeng's examples of photographic images analysed in preceding chapters of this thesis. The concept of space as a production, as articulated with reference to Goldblatt in Chapter Three, can be understood to be psychical, made real, externalised and given visual form.<sup>803</sup> The point here is that Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's subtle and ironical approaches to the treatment of these psychological aspects should be seen as dominant aspects of these two photographers in terms of their tendency to focus on less 'newsworthy' aspects of social documentary photography.

This tendency has manifested itself in a number of ways: David Goldblatt's camera gently evaded his country's political and labour-related turmoil since he started wielding his camera in the 1940s, albeit not professionally until 1963.<sup>804</sup> (This point is not meant to obscure his photographic series of mine shaft-sinking scenes and the *Transported of KwaNdebele* series. They, however, cannot be seen as signifying turmoil that is being referred to here). Goldblatt's camera evaded events such as the March 1960 Sharpeville massacre, the bloody 1976 Soweto Riots, episodes of violent confrontation between the repressive Apartheid state and the defiant United Democratic Front supporters in the 1980s.<sup>805</sup> It also evaded police violent responses to a number of defiance campaigns and labour actions waged by the masses in general and by the working class in particular in

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<sup>802</sup> This point is based on the fact that there are photographers who still photographically explore social aspects of post-Apartheid South Africa. These include David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng on whom this chapter hinges.

<sup>803</sup> Roberts, J., *The art of interruption*, Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1998, p.110.

<sup>804</sup> This point has been mentioned, elaborated on and referenced in Chapter Three. All other points revisited in this chapter, also dealt with in previous chapters, will, to avoid tautology, not be referenced here.

<sup>805</sup> Kate Philip's article, 'NUSAS AND THE UDF' from <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pubs/umrabulo/umrabulo19/nusas.html> Accessed 18/09/11.

various moments of the country's history. This includes the funerals-cum-political rallies of struggle comrades who had been massacred by the Apartheid security forces,<sup>806</sup> violent confrontations between the people and Apartheid-sponsored vigilantes,<sup>807</sup> politically motivated 'black-on-black' violence between the African National Congress and the Inkatha Cultural Organization (now called Inkatha Freedom Party) supporters or sympathisers,<sup>808</sup> several police raids in black and Coloured townships and subsequent popular response,<sup>809</sup> the execution of some Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) members in the former Bophuthatswana in 1994 (Fig. 6.1),<sup>810</sup> and many other blatantly non-banal events.

In probing the everyday, as opposed to eventful situations already highlighted above, Goldblatt sought to point his camera at banal structures that quietly reflected beliefs and values of those who built them. As elaborated on in Chapters One and Three of this thesis, those beliefs and values included constructed racial supremacy on the basis of biblical passages, exclusive rights to land on the basis of this supremacy and a need for social stability dependent upon the idea of parallel development. Goldblatt had to pare down the social, political and economic aspects of the history of South Africa from colonial through postcolonial, Apartheid and post-Apartheid eras, in order to dissect this huge, long social narrative, thus actually 'writing' history with light that reveals

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<sup>806</sup> Hill, I. T. and A. Harris (eds.), *Beyond The Barricades: Popular Resistance in South Africa*, New York: Aperture Foundation, 1989, p.61.

<sup>807</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.58 and 59.

<sup>808</sup> Marinovich, G. and J. Silva, *The Bang-Bang Club*, London: William Heinemann, 2000, p.x.

<sup>809</sup> Hill, I. T. and A. Harris (eds.), *Beyond The Barricades: Popular Resistance in South Africa*, New York: Aperture Foundation, 1989, p.71.

<sup>810</sup> Marinovich, G. and J. Silva, *The Bang-Bang Club*, London: William Heinemann, 2000, p.194 (i). The photograph is attributed to either Kevin Carter or Corbis Sygma.

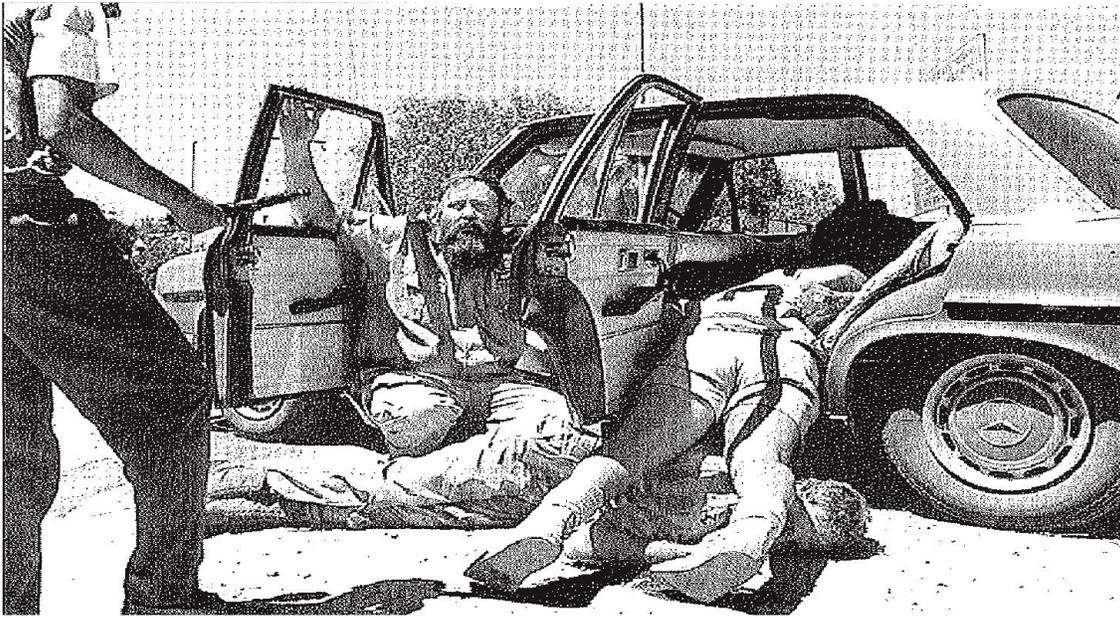
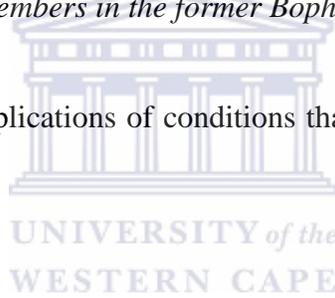


Fig. 6.1 Kevin Carter or Corbis Sygma *The execution of some Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) members in the former Bophuthatswana in 1994.*

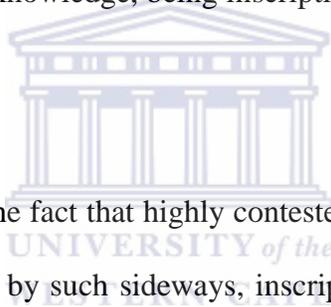
multilayered meanings and implications of conditions that resulted in the realities of the eras considered here.



Standing in the twentieth century, Goldblatt pointed his camera towards a hedge (Fig. 3.4) that the Dutch had planted in the seventeenth century in order to control the movement of the Khoikhoi and it is this restriction of movement in space and subsequent land deprivation that was to cause a long-term series of violent clashes between the foreign powers and the original inhabitants of South Africa over a long period of time. The hedge, as discussed in Chapter Three, has become an integral part of the Kirstenbosch landscape, Cape Town – reduced to the everyday tourist spectacle that many South African photographers would not identify as a photographically relevant scene. As if they would regard focusing their lenses on such scenes as attempts to retrieve what has been ‘lost’ in the distant past, Goldblatt’s contemporaries often

documented recent and immediate socio-political events that, they reckoned, were of urgent necessity in the process of exposing the evils of Apartheid South Africa and in response to the visual economy of the day.

Another seemingly banal space that Goldblatt framed is in Figure 3.2. This seemingly insignificant structure, also built almost in relative antiquity, warrants no special attention from the modernised subject and also calls for no prominent mention in heritage circles. It is obscured among a few visual elements of spatial reorganisation, as highlighted in Chapter Three. In a more critical sense, Goldblatt's photography has, for decades, constituted a form of practical knowledge, being inscriptive of and inventive in a socially divided country.<sup>811</sup>



Of historical significance is the fact that highly contested issues such as the empty land myth are adequately addressed by such sideways, inscriptive photographic focus on the conditions that led to ideological and physical conflicts between the powerful rulers, agency and the powerless subjects. In this way Goldblatt has provided the viewer with more space for intellectual engagement with the image whereas, if one were to contrast this mode of documenting with a few examples of the 1980s 'struggle' images and those by the Bang-Bang Club photojournalists, it would be possible to claim that they are often imbued with a far more limited space for deep analytical scrutiny because they are concerned with, mostly, the very 'present' moment and the climax of a prolonged ideological conflict between two sides of social, economic and political power. (However, it should be remembered that the South African political context cannot be simplistically

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<sup>811</sup> Roberts, J., *The art of interruption*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998, p.4.

perceived as being just in a binary form; other sides, including the vigilantes, have erupted, supporting the agenda of the powerful regime). This limited space for deep analytical scrutiny is also attributable to the fact that these photographers constituted a number of those “who search for contemporary relevance in their images and concentrate on the moment revealed by the photo.”<sup>812</sup>

### *The Everyday and the sensational*

Physical confrontation between the Apartheid police or the South African Defence Force on the one side often left black and Coloured township youths, on the other, with no option but to erect barricades, meant to block provocative access by the former. Dave Hartman’s image, with an extended caption: *Barricades are erected on Belgravia Road, Athlone township, Cape Town, September 1985. As violence spread through the townships, barriers were thrown up on the streets where young people battled with the police. Within two months, the death toll had risen, and many were injured...* (Fig. 6.2),<sup>813</sup> is an example of where the primary reportorial concerns within the context of ‘struggle’ photography are supported by text. Its relevance is confined to the historical moment within which it was taken, but has possibilities, outside the photographic frame, to be linked with some of Goldblatt’s visual comments on racialised spatial reorganisation in the form of forced removals under the Group Areas Act, demolitions of former multi-racial urban spaces such as Sophiatown in Johannesburg and District Six in Cape Town.

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<sup>812</sup> Loock, U., ‘History in Motion’ in Goldblatt, D., *Intersections Intersected*, Porto: Museu de Arte Contemporanea de Serralves, 2008, p.19.

<sup>813</sup> Hill, I. T. and A. Harris, *Beyond The Barricades: Popular Resistance in South Africa*, New York: Aperture Foundation, 1989, pp.32 and 33.

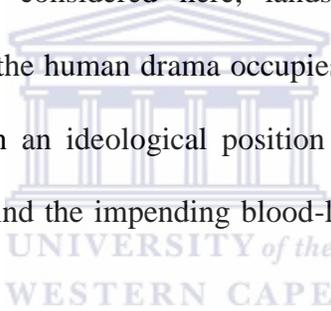


Fig. 6.2 Dave Hartman, *Barricades are erected on Belgravia Road, Athlone township, Cape Town, September 1985. As violence spread through the townships, barriers were thrown up on the streets where young people battled with the police. Within two months, the death toll had risen, and many were injured.*

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Goldblatt framed landscape spaces that served as a prelude to such unrest situations in, for example, Figures 3.4, 3.12, 3.13, 3.14, 3.16 and 3.17 above. These images, already analysed in Chapter Three of this thesis, probe a number of social issues ranging from racial discrimination in all spheres of the then South African life, racially informed spatial marginalisation, displacement or land deprivation, to grossly dehumanising labour exploitation. These are pre-conditions that the 1980s ‘struggle’ photography fails to recognize in most instances, as argued above. I contend that Goldblatt’s documentary approach brings in such an intellectually meaningful aspect of engaging with landscape imagery, showing why township spaces photographically framed by Goldblatt and Mofokeng later became war zones, spaces of brutal confrontation, especially in the 1980s.

Such episodes of confrontation, marked mostly by humiliation of those who dared challenge the authority of the repressive state, which Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng normally probe, were dealt with in 1985 by Omar Badsha and Rashid Lombard. They both covered scenes of the police arresting students following the assassination of United Democratic Front leader and human rights lawyer Victoria Mxenge (Fig. 6.3)<sup>814</sup> and leaders of the United Women's Organization while they were protesting against the massacre of twenty two people in Langa Township (Fig. 6.4),<sup>815</sup> respectively. The shootings occurred on 21 March 1985, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre.<sup>816</sup> In both images considered here, landscape is presented only as a compositional backdrop while the human drama occupies the centre of the photographic frame. The landscape takes on an ideological position of being an invisible, visually marginalised spatial entity behind the impending blood-letting drama of state-sponsored and state-driven violence.



Like Goldblatt, Mofokeng opted for a more analytical and critical photographic approach. In this way his Figure 5.2 clearly exposes a terribly low quality of life to which most township dwellers were unashamedly subjected. Without framing a violent situation that was to later erupt out of this, in one way or another, Mofokeng deals with the subject matter in the context of its quotidian form or everydayness. Again, the image is given an extended cultural longevity in that it is about a condition, not an abrupt event whose relevance as a target of photographic framing solely depends on the sensational

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<sup>814</sup> Ibid., p.36.

<sup>815</sup> Ibid., p.37.

<sup>816</sup> Ibid.

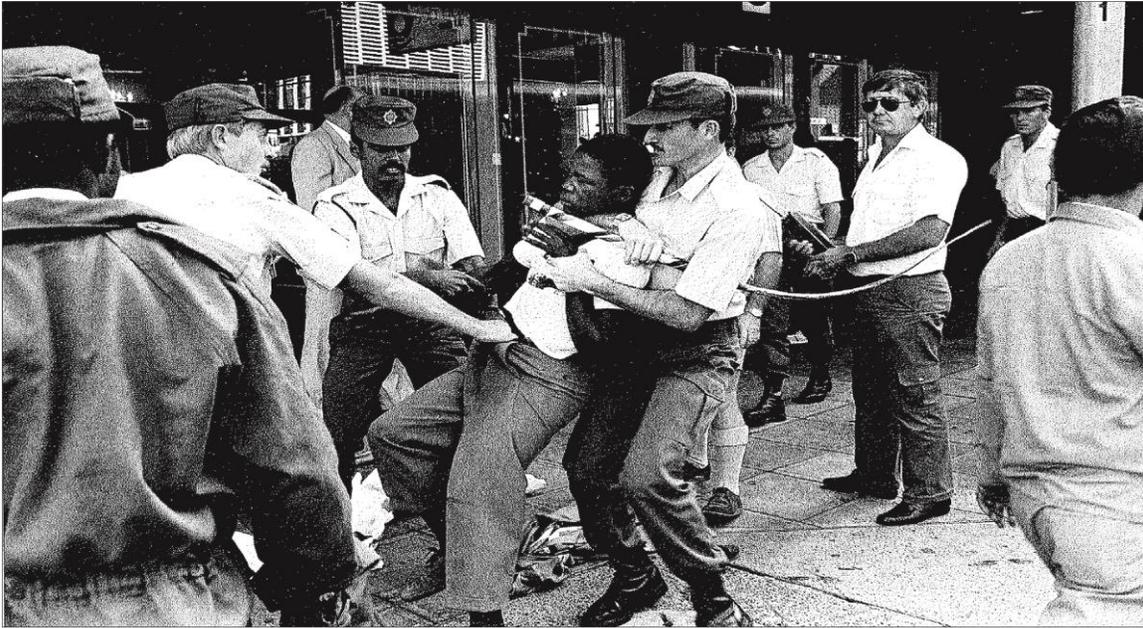


Fig. 6.3 Omar Badsha, *The police arresting students following the assassination of United Democratic Front leader and human rights lawyer Victoria Mxenge.* n.d.

reality of the moment. I therefore argue here that while most drama-laden, sensational images of what was often dubbed the ‘struggle’ project was a socially significant but momentary reality; Goldblatt’s and Mofokeng’s photographically recorded everydayness of social life remains a projected social realist record of a transitive, stratified and differentiated country. These photographers’ mission is not to provide a window into a homogeneous and present or phenomenological [fleeting] reality.<sup>817</sup>

The visually archived conditions linger on, spilling uncontrollably even outside the photographic frame,<sup>818</sup> and allow an extended temporal space within which they can be

<sup>817</sup> This point is built on Roberts, J., *The art of interruption*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989, p.5. Most of what the ‘struggle’ photography feeds the viewer is anxiety-laden, phenomenological, violent drama that ensues in multiple fleeting moments of thickened time.

<sup>818</sup> This could be another way of theorising the relationship of space and time in this particular instance.

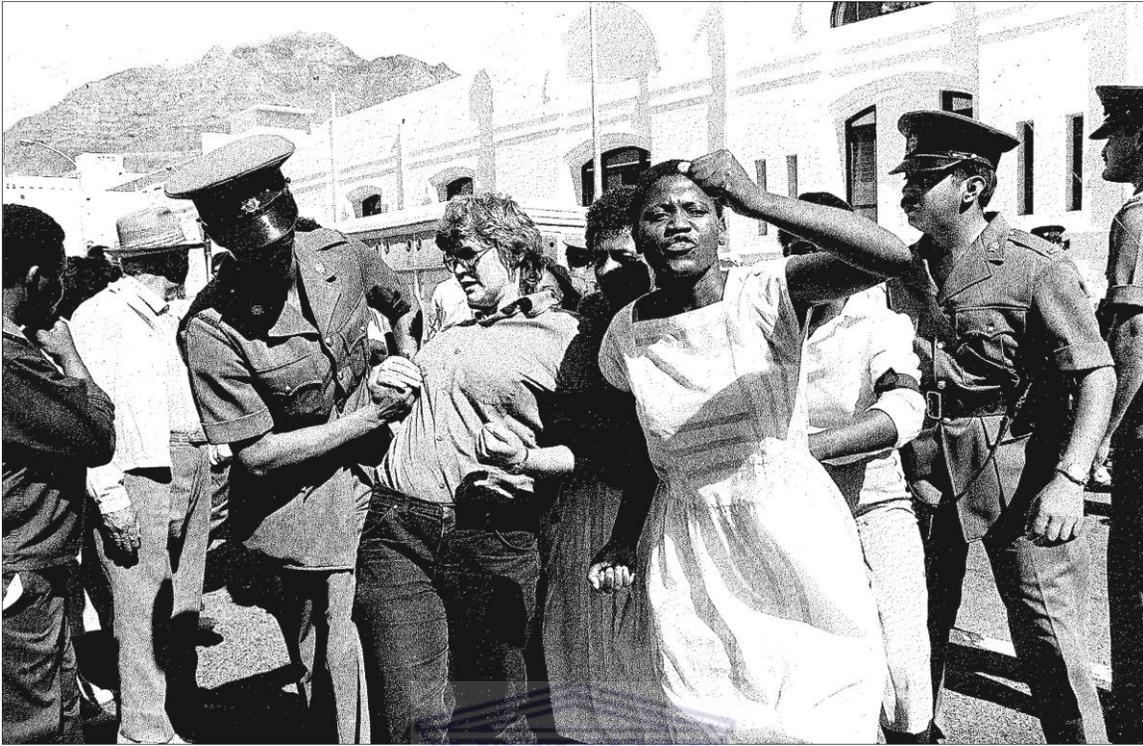


Fig. 6.4 Rashid Lombard, *Leaders of the United Women's Organization while they were protesting against the massacre of twenty two people in Langa Township.* n.d.

subjected to intellectual scrutiny. They are not carried away in a swift, fleeting temporal current. Shifting away from the journalistic or reportorial approach of framing such landscape scenes affords the viewer an opportunity to critically engage with the condition, recalling, perhaps, a constructed past and future around the image.<sup>819</sup> Most 1980s and 1990s 'struggle' photographs lack such an everyday dimension; more time and energy were spent on specific newsworthy, temporally fleeting events.

Both Goldblatt and Mofokeng often shied away from framing what may be seen as 'suspended' moments of a compelling anxiety produced by the imminence of a

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<sup>819</sup> Around this point I propose that we think of photography as being capable of referring to moments as fractions of time, time being an overarching element over a myriad of socially significant historical moments in space.

potentially horrible event such as the one anticipated by Ken Oosterbroek in which *A girl leads her younger sister to safety as an impi, or regiment, of Inkatha-supporting Zulu warriors moves down Khumalo Street, Thokoza, at the start of the Hostel War, August 1990* (Fig. 6.5).<sup>820</sup>



Fig. 6.5 Ken Oosterbroek, *A girl leads her younger sister to safety as an impi, or regiment, of Inkatha-supporting Zulu warriors moves down Khumalo Street, Thokoza, at the start of the Hostel War, August 1990.*

If Mofokeng's reasoning against covering popular 'struggle' scenes would be recalled, being carried away by such momentary violent episodes would have amounted to confining township, and hostel dwellers in this case, to political struggle activism, as quoted and elaborated in Chapter Five of this thesis. In Goldblatt's view (see Chapter Three), pointing the camera almost exclusively at such blood-letting scenes on a daily basis would have confused the fundamental role of the photographer, rendering them servants of a political propaganda. I contend that Goldblatt was concerned about turning a

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<sup>820</sup> Marinovich, G. and J. Silva, *The Bang-Bang Club*, London: William Heinemann, 2000, p.50 (ii).

basically cultural activity (photography) into a grossly politicised occupation with a shallow and narrow scope for intellectual engagement with the viewer.

For Goldblatt and Mofokeng, other violent scenes, in which landscape is also used as a mere intellectually invisible backdrop of human conflict, would have offered no compelling reasons for the need for photographic framing, especially if one considers the atrocious scenes framed in Greg Marinovich's *Inhlazane, Soweto, 15 September, 1990. An ANC supporter hacks at a burning Lindsaye Tshabalala as a young boy flees...*(Fig. 6.6)<sup>821</sup> or Joao Silva's *Khumalo Street, Thokoza, December 1990. A man laughs towards the camera as he passes a group of female Inkatha supporters beating an unidentified woman...*(Fig. 6.7).<sup>822</sup> These are landscape scenes that, while they provide an insight into the evil side of the dehumanised society, comment on the labour pains of the birth of democracy in South Africa. In the same vein, they reflect what Frantz Fanon would see as violent aggression of the oppressed against the fellow oppressed, as pointed out in Chapter Three of this thesis. Articulating the psychoanalytical basis of this phenomenal aggressiveness, Fanon asserts that: "The colonized individual will first manifest this aggressiveness which has been repressed in her muscles against her own people. This is the period when the niggers beat each other up..."<sup>823</sup> A number of prominent political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, had been released<sup>824</sup> and the security forces, through their 'third force' strategy of destabilising and confusing the masses,<sup>825</sup>

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<sup>821</sup> Ibid., p.50 (vii).

<sup>822</sup> Ibid., p.50 (iv).

<sup>823</sup> Jean-Marie, V., *Fanon : Collective Ethics and Humanism*, New York, Washington D.C./Baltimore, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Brussels, Vienna and Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007, pp.41 -42.

<sup>824</sup> Marinovich, G. and J. Silva, *The Bang-Bang Club*, London: William Heinemann, 2000, p.xiv.

<sup>825</sup> Ibid., pp.91-92.



Fig. 6.6 Greg Marinovich, *Inhlazane, Soweto, 15 September, 1990. An ANC supporter hacks at a burning Lindsaye Tshabalala as a young boy flees.*

were working hard to enhance the division within the black community, thus fomenting a highly contested phenomenon called 'black-on-black' violence.<sup>826</sup>

It is important to note here that photographing in such violent scenes exposed the Bang-Bang Club, as well as Afrapix, members to situations of being embroiled in the shootings, necklacing and hackings. Ken Oosterbroek, who photographed the scene in Figure 6.5 in Khumalo Street, Thokoza, was to be killed in the same street four years later while, on the same fatal scene, Greg Marinovich would be wounded as shown in photographs taken

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<sup>826</sup> Ibid., p.x.



Fig. 6.7 Joao Silva, *Khumalo Street, Thokoza, December 1990*. A man laughs towards the camera as he passes a group of female Inkatha supporters beating an unidentified woman.

by Juda Ngwenya/Reuters (Fig. 6.8)<sup>827</sup> and Joao Silva (Fig. 6.9).<sup>828</sup> Furthermore, framing such violent scenes against such a troubled political landscape also raised some moral questions for the Bang-Bang Club members around the ambiguity of being both a photographer and also a citizen who was equally affected by the prevailing reality. This led them to ask questions such as:

...when do you press the shutter release and when do you cease being a photographer? We discovered that the camera was never a filter through which we were protected from the worst of what we witnessed and photographed. Quite

<sup>827</sup> Ibid. p.194 (vii). Also see <https://stillperception.wordpress.com/tag/greg-marinovich/> Accessed 08/03/10.

<sup>828</sup> Ibid. p.194 (viii).

the opposite – it seems like the images have been burned on to our minds as well as our films.<sup>829</sup>

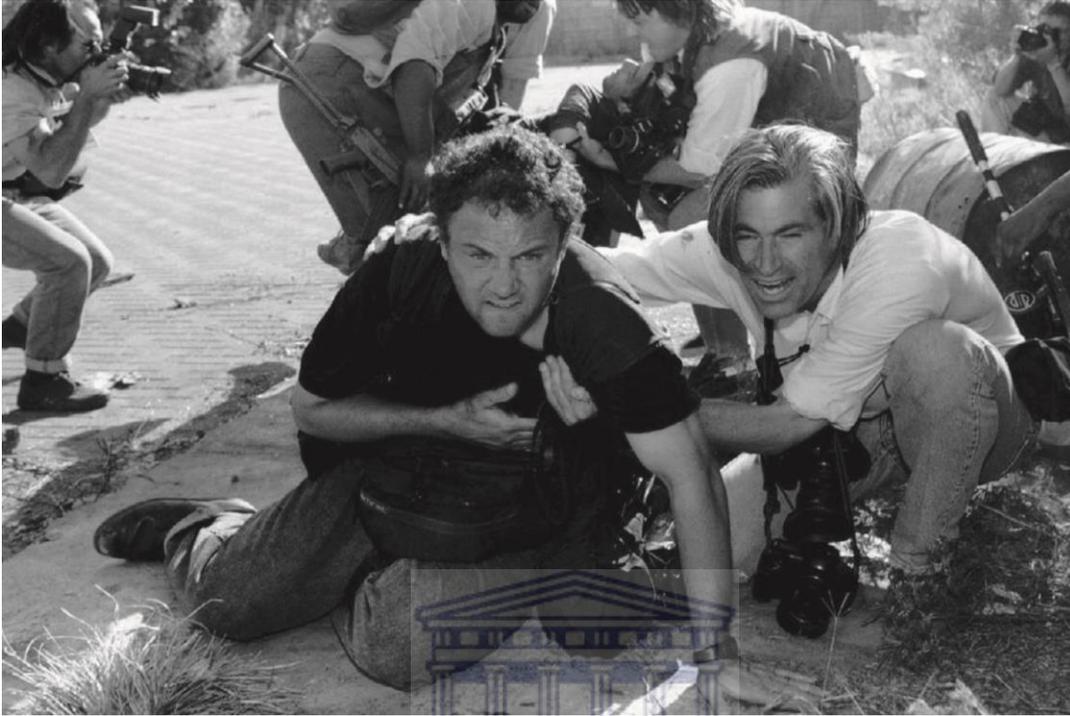


Fig. 6.8 Juda Ngwenya, *A wounded Greg Marinovich* (courtesy of Reuters). 1994.

Trying to articulate or express his own moral thinking around this point after he had been wounded, Marinovich relates: “This was it. I had paid my dues. I had atoned for dozens of close calls that always left someone else injured or dead, while I emerged from the scenes of mayhem unscathed, pictures in hand, having committed the crime of being the lucky voyeur.”<sup>830</sup> In 2012, Joao Silva lost his legs covering the war in Afghanistan.<sup>831</sup>

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<sup>829</sup> Ibid. p.xiv.

<sup>830</sup> Ibid., p.2. Greg Marinovich’s point about being a lucky voyeur is, for the purpose of this thesis, an indication of the extent to which thorough interrogation of landscape photography, or the depiction of human activities against the landscape, can provide opportunities of crossing many disciplinary boundaries, expanding the scope within which the whole question of landscape as a medium of social critique can be tackled.

<sup>831</sup> Power, M., ‘Joao Silva: An unbroken Man’ in *Men’s Journal*, November 2012 (not paginated and undated) in <http://www.iol.co.za/the-star/joao-silva-a-man-torn-apart-by-war-1.1771343> Accessed 19/11/15. Also see The Star, ‘Joao Silva: a man torn apart by war’, 27/10/14 in <http://www.iol.co.za/the-star/joao-silva-a-man-torn-apart-by-war-1.1771343> Accessed 19/11/15.

The statements above serve to raise aspects of complicated relationships between the photographer and his subject in situations where there are guns and cameras shooting at one and the same target in order to effect both a fatal and visual consumption of his body.



Fig. 6.9 Joao Silva, *A wounded Greg Marinovich*.1994.

The idea of seeing guns and cameras as amoral instruments of the exercise of power over their targets of consumption has some useful implications for this study; it is a reconfiguration of the idea of seeing colonial photography as a symbolic way of consumption or claiming the subjugated landscapes<sup>832</sup> and, by extension, races. In

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<sup>832</sup> Newbury, D., *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa*, Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2009, p.17.

defiance of his 'cowardice'<sup>833</sup> for a while, Mofokeng documented *Riot police waiting, 1980s* (Fig. 6.10)<sup>834</sup> in which the tension can be compared to that in Figure 6.5 above.



Fig. 6.10 Santu Mofokeng, *Riot police waiting, 1980s*.

However, what is significant about this photograph, insofar as this argument is concerned, is that it is not only the police that are waiting behind their vans; a photographer is in their midst. He has been compositionally placed in the middle of the front line of the police who wield sjamboks and sticks while he wields his presumably loaded camera. Mofokeng has achieved two main methodological objectives here: he has, again, disrupted the dominant subjective perspectival order articulated in much detail in Chapter Two above by subjecting the state agent (the police photographer) to the viewer's look. Though he holds the camera, he is not the one who bears the look: he is being looked at. Mofokeng has further complicated the moral question here in that the photographer looks

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<sup>833</sup> Here I argue that Santu Mofokeng's claim to fear of violent situations is not to be taken on face value. There should be more to this modest claim. What appears to be more pertinent is, arguably, Mofokeng's choice of a particular direction of focus in his choice of themes and subject matter rather than mere cowardice.

<sup>834</sup> Hayes, P. 'The Violence is in the Knowing: the photographs of Santu Mofokeng' from <http://webservices.its.umich.edu/drupal/vcw/sites/webservices.its.umich.edu.drupal.vcw/files/HayesPoster.pdf> Accessed 24/11/10.

so complacent in the midst of the state's power apparatus – the police. In spite of their claims to cowardice in bloody situations, Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's contribution in terms of considering moral questions around what I would call the act of photographic consumption is very significant. It practically brings in a dimension that might have been considered only in passing without necessarily taking active, practical steps to concretise it within the social documentary photographic genre. This, again, is another area of emphasis that should be attributed to Goldblatt and Mofokeng within the South African photographic context. This should also be reminiscent of Mofokeng's experience of a conversation he overheard from a darkroom, as already mentioned in Chapter Five here, where black skin and blood were seen as aesthetically pleasing and therefore fit for publication in the form of a photograph.

Black deals with this aestheticisation of murder when he refers to a tension between our aesthetic sensibility and our moral sense.<sup>835</sup> He claims that aesthetic sensibility is often subordinated as deceit and illusion to the "truth" of our moral sense.<sup>836</sup> Again, the problematic relationship between photography and art, in the context of moral questions, may come to the fore here if the following claim by Black is considered: "The very activity by which we represent or 'picture' violence to ourselves is an aesthetic operation whereby we habitually transform brutal actions into art. We are greatly assisted in this by the mass media, which expose us, liminally and subliminally, to artistic representations of violence."<sup>837</sup>

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<sup>835</sup> Black, J., *The Aesthetics of Murder*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991, p.4.

<sup>836</sup> Ibid.

<sup>837</sup> Ibid.,p.5.

In considering this argument as well as the earlier comment on the “beauty of blood on black skin” (Chapter Five), the problem with Black’s assertions are that they seem to suggest that there is a normative, universal principle against which an ethical position should be weighed in relation to aesthetic sensibilities. Secondly, we may consider this predicament in the light of the Bang-Bang Club members’ moments of introspective inquiry into when one should press the shutter release and when they should cease being photographers in violent situations.<sup>838</sup> In other words, when should one cease to do ‘evil’ (symbolically consuming victims/participants of violence by photographic means)? In arguing for the fact that putting up a partition between aesthetic sensibilities (‘evil’) and ethical concerns (good morals) would be futile, I propose to use as a point of departure Ranciere’s critique of politics and aesthetics. Deconstructing his grand ideas around the ‘distribution of the sensible’, Ranciere illustrates the unavoidable interconnectedness of things by expanding the notion of aesthetic practices to include forms of visibility that disclose artistic practices, from the standpoint of what is common to the community.<sup>839</sup>

What is common to the ‘communities’ (photographers, warring ANC supporters and Inkatha supporters) here is exposure to danger and imminent death. These commonalities between the photographers and the rest of those involved in killings also invalidate an imagined partition both between ethics and aesthetics and then photographers and the warring communities. So, to claim that aesthetics and ethics are separate would be invalid

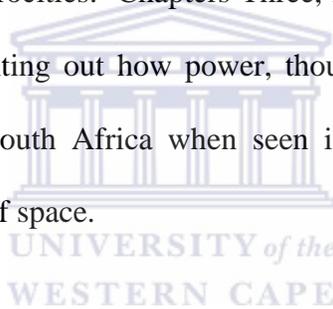
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<sup>838</sup> Here I am using this question in thinking about the moral question around the prevailing visual economy of the day which promoted the production and consumption of images of atrocious events covered by the Bang-Bang Club. This yearning for such images of conflict and murder also refers to the 1980s period of the Afrapix Collective.

<sup>839</sup> Ranciere, J., *The Politics of Aesthetics*, London and New York: Continuum, 2004, p.13.

and even the question of the balance between the two, as in the case of Bang-Bang Club photographers, would be futile.

The point around aestheticising killings begins, in my view, to complicate ways of thinking about the ‘struggle’ photographic practice of the Bang-Bang Club affiliates in the 1990s South Africa. More than anything, this also serves to project Goldblatt’s practice of photographically documenting monuments and memorials of national pride and Mofokeng’s images of marks of atrocities in and outside South Africa, especially in the case of the latter, a morally considered practice through which memory and/or honour are afforded victims of such atrocities. Chapters Three, Four and Five above have dealt in details with this issue, pointing out how power, though subtly, determines multiple subjectivities in a changing South Africa when seen in the perspective of collective memory around contestations of space.



Within the context of contestations around space appropriation and ownership, there are certain nuances of power relations that deserve mentioning here, especially insofar as Goldblatt and Mofokeng are concerned. Such power relations, fuelled mainly by the focus on the everyday, are not just between the photographer and human subjects, but they entail a socially significant landscape. Chapters Three and Five have dealt with Goldblatt’s and Mofokeng’s attitude towards the everyday realities of their social milieu. Goldblatt, given his consciousness of social injustices that were informed by the political situation within the Apartheid context, had a subtly condemning view whenever he documented landscape spaces that were unashamedly and exclusively owned and enjoyed by the white community. He would travel in search of such scenes of white chauvinism

and also document, on the other hand, the impact of such chauvinism on the daily lives of black people.

Mofokeng's photographic critique straddles local and global contexts, dealing with various atrocities which humans have inflicted upon fellow humans. Black poverty, which is basically man-made, in the context of social inequalities, black social and economic inspirations and many other signs of marginalisation, all constitute Mofokeng's object of photographic critique. Being a social and cultural insider, this way of looking may also be an introspective one, marked by instances of close-up interrogation of the significance of blackness in a troubled but changing South Africa. As shown in Chapter Five, most of his landscape images bear such signs of black impoverishment. For Mofokeng, landscape depiction is about such moral questions as how humans treat other humans in economic and social settings and his relentless focus covers scenes that bear witness to his cause for concern, hence such a condemning critique.

Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's contemporaries in the practice rarely, if at all, interrogated such moral questions around landscape depiction, not to mention looking at the cultural-social role played by memorialisation of persons and events. Although Marinovich and Silva are aware of a monument that was later erected a little further down Khumalo Street, Thokoza township,<sup>840</sup> to honour and remember those who died during the darkest hours that preceded the South African political transition, they, in contrast with what Goldblatt and Mofokeng would presumably have contemplated, did not document this memorial as it probably might not have been sensational enough. This, once more, renders landscape

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<sup>840</sup> Marinovich, G. and J. Silva, *The Bang-Bang Club*, London: William Heinemann, 2000, p.213.

a medium through which acts of memorialisation are culturally performed. This, with reference to other Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's contemporaries' photographic approach, says volumes about the subordination of landscape as a medium of commemoration in favour of human dramas that are acted out in it; this point is connected to a moral and aesthetic question around covering conflict.

In addition to such an interrogation of moral questions pertaining to the photographer's role in conflict situations, this point should also be linked to David Goldblatt's photographic probing, in his everyday approach, of the conditions that eventually led to such political-cum-ethnic conflicts. He framed a number of monuments that were meant to arouse feelings of bogus nationalism among 'independent' and 'self-governing' black states under the Apartheid government, as discussed and illustrated in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Figure 3.8 above, with a sculpted bronze memorial to King Shaka, arouses retrospective or nostalgic, rather than progressive or forward-looking, ethnic 'national' consciousness. The 'black-on-black' violence photographically framed above is a volcanic eruption of false national pride based on such nostalgic feelings towards an irretrievable pre-colonial past. Such an element of fruitless Negritude is reminiscent of Fanon's utter rejection of the colonised intellectuals' tendency to evoke a suffocating past instead of assuming revolutionary responsibility,<sup>841</sup> as was the case with privileged chiefs who presided over such Apartheid institutions of black division.

Such culturally embedded signs of ethnically differentiated black population, as was

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<sup>841</sup> Jean-Marie, V., *Fanon : Collective Ethics and Humanism*, New York, Washington, D.C./Baltimore; Bern, Frankfurt am Main; Berlin, Brussels, Vienna and Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007, p.15.

lamented by Stephen Bantu Biko (quoted and discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis), laid foundations for the violence depicted here. It is Goldblatt's longstanding foresight that should be considered here – a foresight that provides, albeit indirectly, an insight into why such fatal conflicts took place at the dawn of democracy. Physical structures such as, *inter alia*, statues erected in honour of Apartheid personalities should suggest that perhaps very few imagined that democracy would ever dawn on the South African political horizon. While Goldblatt made visual comments on the role of landscape as an ideological medium used in sowing seeds of black division, 'struggle' photography attempted to 'freeze' these bloodletting, fleeting scenes of human brutality. This point lends itself also to Thierry de Duve's argument about possibilities of seeing photography "as an event, but then an odd-looking one, a frozen gestalt that conveys very little, if anything at all, of the fluency of things happening in real life..."<sup>842</sup> Considering Mofokeng's Figure 5.16 in relation with de Duve's point, it may be necessary to investigate how the former's tendency of blurring and attenuating outlines and forms of his spiritually possessed figures speak to de Duve's assertion – how he tries to present such figures as existing in frozen but infinitely perpetual moments rather than in still, temporally finite poses.<sup>843</sup>

Seen necessarily as events, rather than conditions, most 'struggle' photographic scenes may easily lend themselves to de Duve's theoretical position about being presented in frozen moments – fractions of a long time period from the unbanning and freeing of political prisoners and the ushering in of democracy in South Africa. Here time manifests

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<sup>842</sup> De Duve, T., 'Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox' in Elkins, J. (ed.), *Photography Theory*, New York and London: Routledge, 2007, p.109.

<sup>843</sup> Ibid.

itself as a fluid concept that refuses to be pinned down in a specific formulaic way. The temporal aspect in the depiction of these two different sets of scenarios (Fig. 5.16 and, for example, Fig. 6.7) lends itself to different ways of the treatment of time as a concept in that Mofokeng's framing attempts to perfect the role of photography as a medium with possibilities of producing a perpetual present as opposed to Marinovich's framing which is surrounded by both a vanished past, that is not conveyable, and an indeterminable future.

I argue that the past, the present and the future are objectively incalculable moments of time as an overarching concept. In fact it often becomes almost impossible to think of time as a concept independent of spatial and social relationships. This point, particularly about spatial and temporal relationships, can be related precisely to Denis Cosgrove's assertion: "The question of space is central here and complex too (and it cannot be disconnected from meanings of time)."<sup>844</sup> His contestation of the Kantian notion of absolute space merely as a container of things, arguing that space is, instead, relative,<sup>845</sup> should recall the point made earlier on in this chapter about the sensationalist superficial practice of treating landscape as an intellectually invisible or unintelligible backdrop against which violent dramas of the 1980s and 1990s South Africa were acted out.

It is, however, pertinent to point out here that among the Afrapix-aligned photographers, Guy Tillim is one of the exceptional cases: he is among those who produce oeuvres that

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<sup>844</sup> DeLue, R. Z. and J. Elkins (eds.), *Landscape Theory*, New York and London: Routledge, 2008, p.95.

<sup>845</sup> Ibid.

are far more than those of orthodox reportage.<sup>846</sup> This is evident in his *Departure* series of photographic images, framing disparate places such as Guyana to Kabul and Transkei to Jerusalem, which spans a period of production from the late 1980s to 2002. Encapsulating the highlights of Tillim's early work, this collection explores a broader context of conflict, not so much through images of bloody violence but rather in the textures and details. His subjects are placed within this broader context but are humanised through their everyday activity. This approach is basically similar to that of Goldblatt and Mofokeng in that they all approach subtlety as their hallmark methodology.

In contrast to this approach to documentation, David Goldblatt seems to have taken most of these philosophical questions into consideration. Without such embedded relationships - those of the Dutch, the Khoikhoi, and the almond hedge at the time (Fig. 3.4) - making a photographic image of the scene in question would have been meaningless; so, even meaning is contextually and subjectively produced, with an image lacking its own intrinsic meaning. At the time of the planting of the hedge, that space carried a meaning of power; it became a dominant space, occupying an ideological centre, while the periphery to which the Khoikhoi were pushed and confined through that spatial organization represented a dominated space. In this case, when the Dutch appropriated the space in question, that act was a race-conscious one, based on physical signs of racial construction.

I would strongly argue that, in South Africa, this appropriation of space could be one of

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<sup>846</sup> See <http://www.artthrob.co.za/05jan/artbio.html> Accessed 22/10/09. The entire material used for the construction of this paragraph is based on this site.

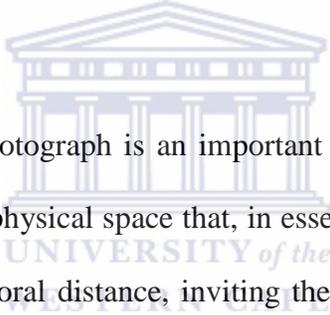
the first colonialist acts of the spatial construction of the powerful ‘*Self*’ and the powerless ‘*Other*’. This situation could be compared to a point made by Henri Lefebvre about power contestations on the basis of class in an urban setting: “The dominant form of space, that of the centres of wealth and power, endeavours to mould the space it dominates (i.e. peripheral spaces), and it seeks, often by violent means, to reduce the obstacles and resistances it encounters there”.<sup>847</sup> The fact that Lefebvre refers to space as an animated element, capable of dominating or being dominated, points to the extent to which space itself should be seen as an ideological, subjectively constructed domain of social power relations. This element emerges prominently in most of landscape images by David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng.

Goldblatt employs a retrospective, re-visionist approach to his practice of documenting aspects of the South African social history. Identifying the landscape’s visual elements that punctuate the colonial, Apartheid and post-Apartheid socio-politically modified space, he employs various ways of dealing with the temporal and spatial relationships that are socially embedded. His black and white photograph (Fig. 3.4), for example, revealing the Dutch’s colonialist desperate endeavours towards achieving exclusive occupation and ownership through spatial zoning, provides an insight into some points that deserve consideration with relation to these concepts. Firstly, it has been argued, on the basis of Goldblatt’s framing of a space that evokes thoughts around a distant past, that here space and time are inextricably linked to each other.

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<sup>847</sup> Roberts, J., *The art of interruption*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998, p.111.

Space is conceptualised as a physical entity whereas time is abstract in that a question arises: "If time were as physical as space, how far would 1660 be from 1993 and on which end of the picture frame or plane would the photographer be standing in order to lead us, symbolically, into such a distant past?" This self-imposed question stems from a detailed analysis of the image in which spatial and temporal elements are considered. Goldblatt is conceptualised as having documented space with persisting colonial remnants, as the caption suggests, dating back from 1660. Of significant philosophical import here is the fact that Goldblatt can also be conceptualised as not just standing in a physical space at the moment of photographing, but as also standing in a particular historical moment, 1993.



The pictorial depth of the photograph is an important illusory element parallel to the physical depth of the depicted physical space that, in essence, has been conceptualised in terms of both spatial and temporal distance, inviting the viewer to travel deep into and through such distant temporal and spatial depths. Here a temporal gap of three hundred and thirty years is imagined to span the planting of the almond hedge and the moment of the photographing. This critically engaging manner of framing time and space is important in that it attempts to cover questions around reality and truth. Is this space the same as the seventeenth-century space in social, political and economic terms? If it has undergone multiple social and cultural changes or modifications for tourist, economic or aesthetic purposes, the notions of reality become complicated. In this manner photography cannot be said to be a medium that objectively presents reality and truth about what is depicted; it may give an idea of what was there at the moment of photographing for Goldblatt's presence at the time of photographing is definitely the

viewer's past that is presented as a technologically 'frozen' present in pictorial, illusory form.

This point illustrates how Goldblatt, including other photographers elsewhere who deal with such ontological constructs, can be seen as a coloniser of the viewer's mental faculties, connected to the exercise of seeing, through photographic means. Seeing, in this particular instance, happens within the great 'space-time' framework according to which we order our experience of the world,<sup>848</sup> but I also propose that most of that experience is, in terms of the foregoing argument and observations, culturally mediated and socially modified. Considering a possible knowledge of histories around the photographically framed space, as in the one under analysis, it is also arguable that this mediated experience therefore produces multiple subjectivities, including that of the photographer and the viewer, depending on disparate temporal thresholds on which each stands to experience the scene. This point is based on all the moments in which the technical processes are employed in order to finalise the production of this mediated three-dimensional experience in the form of an illusory three-dimensional image chemically fixed on a two-dimensional surface – the photographic print.

David Goldblatt's landscape photographic prints, published in pairs of black and white and colour images in *Intersections Intersected*, serve to illustrate another way in which the concept of time can be interrogated. In a much more concretised approach, Goldblatt's black and white images, from the Apartheid period are juxtaposed with the

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<sup>848</sup> Lynch, K., *What Time Is This Place?*, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: The MIT Press, 1972, p.241.

colour ones, from the post-Apartheid period. In this way the concept of time becomes a centre of historical inquiry around how humans engage in claims and contestations around landscape in various historical moments and for various purposes. It is also important to note how Goldblatt treats time as an element that is inextricably linked to what humans do, think or plan: it is conceived of almost entirely subjectively.

His *Monument to Karel Landman, Voortrekker leader. De Kol, Eastern Cape. 10 April 1993* (Fig. 6.11)<sup>849</sup> and *Monument to Karel Landman, Voortrekker leader. De Kol, Eastern Cape. 20 February 2006* (Fig. 6.12)<sup>850</sup> are one and the same subject photographed at different temporal moments. The monument itself, unveiled on 16 December 1939 on a remote *koppie* between Alexandria and Patterson villages,<sup>851</sup> is a tangible sign of how the temporal can be integrated into social narratives. It commemorates the Great Trek of 1834 to 1845 from the Cape colony into the interior of South Africa. It gains more meaning when specific historical narratives are attached to the events and a personality, Karel Landman emerges, who was a famed military leader who settled and farmed in this area until 1837. Again, 885 kilometres is associated with this Trek between the Cape and the then Natal; the temporal is central to all these narratives.

The temporal aspect of this monument becomes interestingly complicated by the manner in which Goldblatt seems to animate it by photographing it, firstly, in April 1993 and then almost thirteen years later, in February 2006. This peculiar way of dealing with

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<sup>849</sup> Goldblatt, D., *Intersections Intersected*, Porto: Museu de Arte Contemporanea de Serralves, 2008, p.26.

<sup>850</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>851</sup> *Ibid.*, p.114.

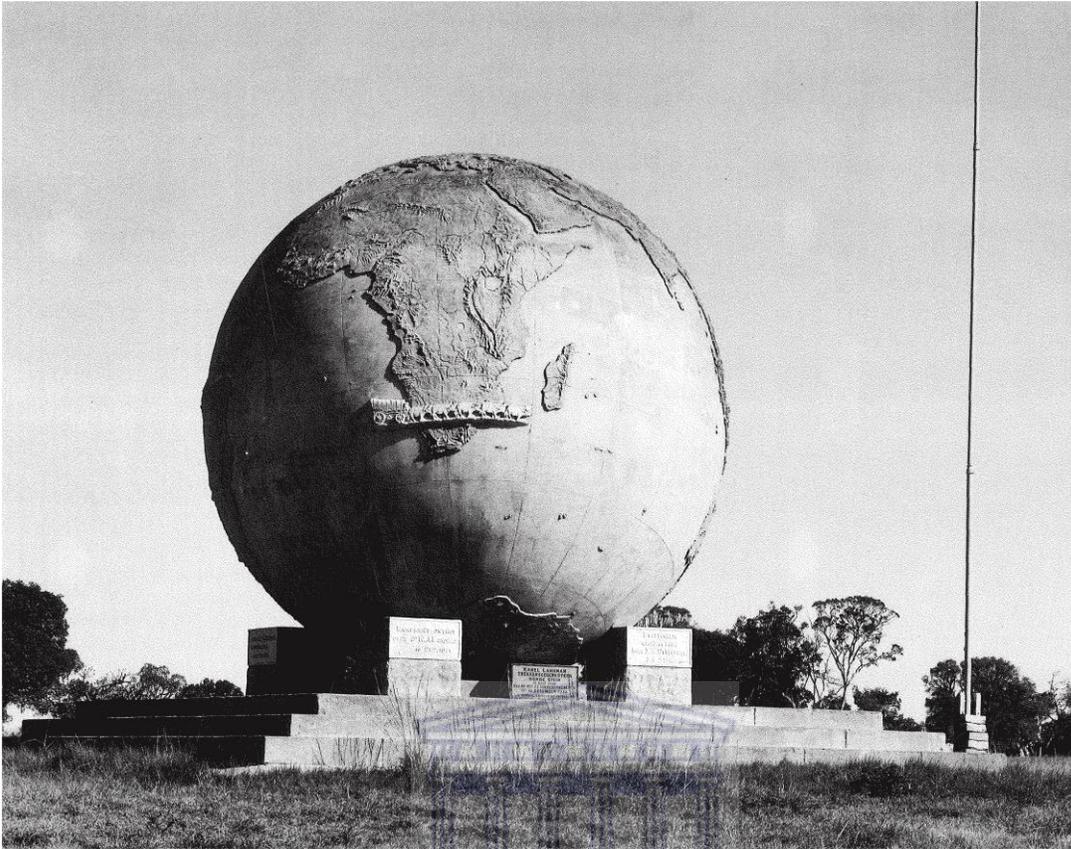


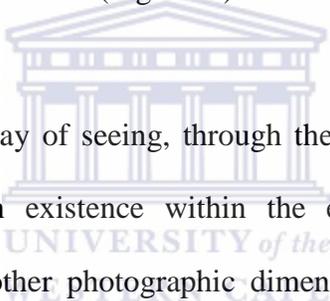
Fig. 6.11 David Goldblatt, *Monument to Karel Landman, Voortrekker leader. De Kol, Eastern Cape. 10 April 1993.*

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time should be seen as yet another manner in which Goldblatt turned the social documentary photographic genre around, investigating various possibilities of documenting South African social story in a more critically engaged manner. It is very significant to note how Goldblatt employs the mechanised way of seeing to make such investigations on what is often neglected within the genre of social documentary photography in South Africa.

It is also pertinent to note how Goldblatt seems to have varied his position from which he documented the same monument during different temporal moments. In 1993, he seems to have approached it from a low position (Fig. 6.11), allowing his subject to

remain at an elevated position, perhaps corresponding with the political position of power at the point in time, unconsciously coercing even the viewer to look at it with the same, corresponding sense of awe, *looking up* to it. The contrast between the two images, in terms of the eye level from which they were framed, also has a potential of leading to an interesting reading: the elevation of white power during the Apartheid period and the demise of the same power after the defeat of Apartheid, with a possibility of *looking out* from the latter image. It seems as if the act of looking up to the monument seamlessly corresponds with the overcast, black and white image whereas, on the other hand, *looking out* from it seems to be reinforced by the gentle sunlight as well as colour to which Goldblatt had switched over after 1994 (Fig. 6.12).



Employing the mechanised way of seeing, through the secular machine, to probe the spiritual dimension of human existence within the economically segregated post-Apartheid South Africa is another photographic dimension that Santu Mofokeng has introduced to the social documentary photographic genre, questioning the extent to which the former politically oppressed masses have a psychic ownership of their landscape. Mofokeng has raised an issue that has never been probed in depth within this genre, and his technical approach and independent view of the social aspects of life have very important implications for the understanding of the South African genealogy of social documentary photographers since the eras of the avant-garde including Leon Levson, Constance Stuart-Larrabee and Ernest Cole.

Up to Mofokeng's day, the spiritual either has been seen as un-photographable, too sacralised or has been utterly neglected by the majority of photographers as a domain that



Fig. 6.12 David Goldblatt, *Monument to Karel Landman, Voortrekker leader. De Kol, Eastern Cape. 20 February 2006.*

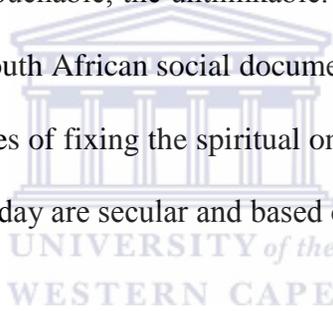
represents the unreal, the ineffable. However, Mofokeng's focus on the spiritual should not be seen as exceptional because Omar Badsha, in *Imperial Ghetto*, published c.2001, partially explores Islamic spirituality in the Grey Street area of Durban.<sup>852</sup> In distinguishing Mofokeng from the rest of his contemporaries, I would point out a thin line dividing the spiritual, probed by Mofokeng in his *Chasing Shadows* photographic series, and the religious, immersed within the quagmire of the political conflict, as depicted in Chris Qwazi's image in which the police are shown confronting "mourners at the funeral of eight people shot by security forces during the 'bottle-store (liquor-store)

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<sup>852</sup> Badsha, O., *Imperial Ghetto: ways of seeing in a South African city*, Maroelana: South African History Online, 2001.

incident' in New Brighton township, Port Elizabeth, April 1986" (Fig. 6.13).<sup>853</sup> Mourners, with pallbearers among them, are led by long-robed Christian priests whose religious role in such gatherings had turned quasi-political.

Mofokeng's practice of straddling the material and the spiritual is a definite way in which he has sought to bring to its logical conclusion Goldblatt's point about trying to document the element of belief systems, as reflected in physical structures, in South African social history. This is evidenced by Goldblatt's articulation of the logic behind his attempts: "The reason is that our religious beliefs are an attempt on our part to approach the ineffable, the untouchable, the unthinkable."<sup>854</sup> Again, Mofokeng should be seen as a pioneer, within the South African social documentary photography genre, of the idea of investigating possibilities of fixing the spiritual on film. Most of the photographic struggle scenes of Mofokeng's day are secular and based on physical reality.



Most of what seems ineffable at times are aspects of meaning that become obscure mainly due to the technical limitations of the camera. Although meaning is constructed, depending on our accumulated life experiences that become re-animated when we view images,<sup>855</sup> Goldblatt has employed text (captions, extended captions, published essays, interview and transcripts) as a very potent way of facilitating this construction of meaning and, very peculiarly, his collaborative exercise with Nadine Gordimer where images are juxtaposed with literature extracts in one book with a view to evoking certain connotations. This is a unique way, at least among Goldblatt's contemporaries, in which

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<sup>853</sup> Hill, I. T. and A. Harris, *Beyond The Barricades: Popular Resistance in South Africa*, New York: Aperture Foundation, 1989, p.90.

<sup>854</sup> See transcript of an interview by the candidate with David Goldblatt, 22/01/08, Cape Town.

<sup>855</sup> Barrett, T., *Criticizing Photographs*, Mountain View: Mayfield, 1990, p.34.



Fig. 6.13 Chris Qwazi, *Mourners at the funeral of eight people shot by security forces during the 'bottle-store (liquor-store) incident' in New Brighton township, Port Elizabeth, April 1986.*

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visual meaning is animated, thus enhancing the effect of archiving this visual knowledge. Most of the chapters in this thesis bear witness to this point, especially when it comes to the viewer's need to determine meaning which is more subjective.<sup>856</sup>

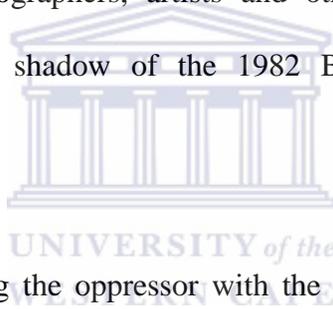
### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, the nuances explored here that point to David Goldblatt's and Santu Mofokeng's unique contributions to the practice of photography draw attention to a number of issues. Given David Goldblatt's refusal to use photography as a weapon of the anti-Apartheid struggle, photography is meant to enjoy its autonomous existence and

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<sup>856</sup> Ibid., pp.5 and 48.

development without necessarily serving political agendas. Instead, photography could still be utilised as an instrument of telling, probing and challenging the viewer, thus becoming a dynamic discipline within visual culture. Goldblatt and Mofokeng have experimented with ideas of using the camera not to tell the obvious and the expected, but to engage the viewer in the process of intellectual appreciation of the depicted subject matter. Owing to Goldblatt's sideways approach to his practice, photography has, over time, continued, in spite of a prevailing notion of culture as a struggle weapon, to probe everyday aspects of life under Apartheid without a need for some modifications necessitated by repressive measures of the Apartheid state. This refers mainly to the Apartheid period, when photographers, artists and other cultural practitioners were working under the imposing shadow of the 1982 Botswana cultural festival and conference.



Taking sides and confronting the oppressor with the camera became analogous to a battle situation in which 'shooting' became both fatal in the case of gunfire and consumptive in that of the camera. The camera consumed and scavenged both live and dead perpetrators and victims of the violent clashes, respectively. Both sides of 'actors' became like cannon fodder in front of the anti-Apartheid camera, the results of which were to be fed to a hungry media sector, mainly abroad, that waited to disseminate this visual information all over the landscape of progressive political thought. In this way, the camera, though not necessarily choreographing all the eventful scenes, also became a disembodied 'eye' of global anti-Apartheid surveillance in the hands of the anti-Apartheid photographer.

While the oppressive system would manifest itself only in visible and tangible, but also in emotional, ways, Santu Mofokeng's lens has probed certain connotations of people's search for spiritual solace even in a politically 'free' but economically exclusive post-Apartheid reality. The photographic 'liquidation' and, finally, 'evaporation' of material form in Mofokeng's work on sacred scenes invokes, in my opinion, the body's ability to straddle both modes of human existence – material and spiritual - thus escaping the suffocating social and economic environment that is still marked largely by secular, material reality.

On the basis of the foregoing arguments, I strongly argue that David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng have, in their respective ways, autonomised the genre of documentary photography, thus freeing it from the operational and intellectual confines of the South African political narratives. In their dispassionate, subtle and ironical ways, they have both thrown a lifeline to a genre that was under the threat of serving some grand social and political narratives of all historical epochs of South Africa. These photographers have been able to expose the underlying realities that interrogate the validity of disparate current claims about South Africa's political state after the demise of Apartheid.

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## GENERAL CONCLUSION

“Studies show that just over 2.3% of the country’s land has changed hands through land reform.”<sup>857</sup>

In her argument as to why the land issue is such a thorny question, Ruth Hall posits:

During the negotiated transition to democracy, many South Africans expected that liberation would bring the return of land of which they had been dispossessed under colonialism and apartheid, but the terms on which the transition was negotiated constrained the parameters of how this could happen.<sup>858</sup>

In concurrence with Hall’s point above, Stephen Green also provide more contextual explanation regarding the question of land reform, alluding to conditions of land ownership and occupation in the post-Apartheid South Africa:

The majority of the South African population are landless, in the sense that they do not have ownership of, or legally secure access to, land in their own name. In most cases, whether urban or rural, the majority are living on land that legally belongs to someone else. Their tenure rights are insecure and constantly open to threat, be it from the state or private landowners. From this perspective, not only farm workers and their dependents are landless, but also workers in the formal economy, informal workers and domestic workers who rent residential property or live in informal settlements, and the millions who reside in communal areas where land is owned and controlled by the state and traditional authorities. That this majority of the population identify themselves politically in ways other than as landless, is a product of the way that resistance to apartheid was shaped and politically channelled.<sup>859</sup>

The overarching question that this study has been addressing is: To what extent do landscape photographs by David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng distinguish *reality* from *idealistic*, post-Apartheid social and economic assumptions about the present political

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<sup>857</sup> Bond, P., *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa*, Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2005, p.272.

<sup>858</sup> Hall, R., ‘Land Restitution in South Africa: Rights, Development, and the Restrained State’ in *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Etudes Africaines*, Vol. 38, No 3 (2004), pp. 654-671, p.654.

<sup>859</sup> Green, S., ‘The Landless People’s Movement and the Failure of Post-apartheid Land Reform’, 2004 in [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Stephen\\_Greenberg2/publication/238499522\\_The\\_Landless\\_People's\\_Movement\\_and\\_the\\_Failure\\_of\\_Post\\_apartheid\\_Land\\_Reform/links/0a85e533d127dc400c000000.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Stephen_Greenberg2/publication/238499522_The_Landless_People's_Movement_and_the_Failure_of_Post_apartheid_Land_Reform/links/0a85e533d127dc400c000000.pdf) Accessed 03/03/2016.

dispensation in South Africa? How can their landscape photographs serve as tools for social critique?

This question has been approached and addressed against an obvious assumption that the political transition from an Apartheid South Africa to a post-Apartheid one would bring *real* and *visible* socio-economic benefits for the previously disenfranchised masses of the land. In this instance, Green alludes to the fact that resistance to Apartheid was shaped and channelled in a way that did not encourage the leadership of the anti-Apartheid struggle movement to put the question of land in the centre. This strategic gap is lamented by Richard Levin who argues, from a socialist perspective, that “land and agrarian struggles are a largely neglected area within our movement.”<sup>860</sup> This point is relevant in relation to what both Green and Hall have articulated above. However, it has not been the task of this study to, in any way, moralise around this question; its central task is to examine the role of Goldblatt’s and Mofokeng’s landscape photographic images in interrogating how culture can help in distinguishing social realism from social idealism.<sup>861</sup> This point should be understood against the notions of time and space on the one hand and those of image and text on the other hand, as will be articulated here.

This study has addressed these notions in various ways, but it should be pertinent to apply them in this conclusion with a view to determining the benefits and limitations of

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<sup>860</sup> Levin, R., ‘Land and agrarian questions in SA – A socialist perspective’, in African Communist Journal Extracts – No 144 – Second Quarter 1996 in <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv02424/04lv02730/05lv03005/06lv03006/07lv03119/08lv03127.htm> Accessed 03/03/2016.

<sup>861</sup> In the light of the arguments advanced in Chapter Two about photography’s limitations when it comes to documenting reality, I treat cautiously this notion of culture distinguishing between social realism from social idealism. I will advance my argument in an appropriate section in order to support this assertion, especially as it pertains to this conclusion.

photography in framing dimensions of social transformation. Visual analysis and arguments that have been pursued in Chapters Three to Five of this thesis have alluded to two basic assertions about the South African society. Firstly, South Africa has, from 1652 to 1994, been a divided and economically exclusive and unequal society mainly on the basis of race. Secondly, the political transition of 1994 (from Apartheid to post-Apartheid) was visibly accompanied by persisting manifestations of social divisions in the sphere of access to mainstream economy. The problem of landlessness among the black people, mainly for whom the transition was supposedly meant, persisted.<sup>862</sup> About this, Patrick Bond asserts:

As for land redistribution, a January 2004 press statement from the Landless People's Movement observed that in nearly a decade since liberation, Pretoria failed to deliver on its promise to 'redistribute 30% of the country's agricultural land from 60,000 white farmers to more than 19 million poor and landless rural black people and more than 7-million poor and landless urban black people within five years.'<sup>863</sup>

I will now expand on these assertions by revisiting what specific images analysed in the main text of this thesis allude to. David Goldblatt's idea of taking landscape photographs "because the landscape itself is in many ways a structure that embodies values"<sup>864</sup> is worth revisiting here. It raises questions such as what values were embodied by the Apartheid South African landscape. What values are embodied by the post-Apartheid South African landscape today? Whose values were those in the past? Whose values are embodied in the present South African landscape and who benefits from these values – the political elite or the black majority? How do some of Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's landscape photographs try to address these questions?

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<sup>862</sup> Bond, P., *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa*, Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2005, p.272.

<sup>863</sup> Ibid.

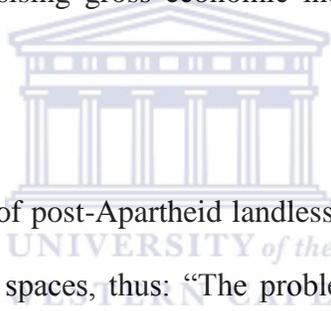
<sup>864</sup> See note 43, Chapter Three of this thesis.

Goldblatt's *Remnant of a hedge planted in 1660 to keep the indigenous Khoikhoi out of the first European settlement in South Africa* (Fig. 3.4) and *The City Hall and the Cenotaph. Durban, Natal. 29 August 1980* (Fig. 3.11) speak to the issue of marginalisation of the indigenous peoples in both rural and urban areas of South Africa in the old political order. Mention has been made in Chapter Three of the legislative reinforcement of the racist practice of marginalising blacks in 1913 and 1936. The direct quotation made in respect of Figure 3.11 also speaks to the image of the colonial city as a space where blacks were not allowed unless they were to offer their cheap labour.

In the post-Apartheid period Goldblatt has framed what I propose to identify as counterpoints of Figures 3.4 and 3.11 referred to above. His *Buffelsjagbaai, Western Cape. 5 October 2004* (Fig. 4.10) has been analysed as an image that bears testimony to black people's 'access' to land, albeit to a limited extent if one considers Bond's argument on the question of land redistribution after 1994. Goldblatt's *Braiding hair on Bree Street, Johannesburg. 7 September 2002* (Fig. 4.5) alludes to the new post-Apartheid image of an African city (Johannesburg) in which spaces are freely dominated by the indigenous people of South Africa as well as those from other African countries.

In terms of black people's economic reliance upon white employers in the past political dispensation, Goldblatt framed *Johannes van der Linde, farmer and major in the local army reserve, with his head labourer 'Ou Sam'* (Fig. 3.12). However, his *Advertisement, Oaklands, Johannesburg. 20 November 1999* (Fig. 4.3) depicts an 'improved' situation where some blacks are shown as independent entrepreneurs in spaces where they were

prohibited to trade in the past. This point, when viewed in conjunction with Goldblatt's *George Nkomo, hawker, Fourways, Johannesburg. 21 August 2002* (Fig. 4.4) and *On Freedom Square, Kliptown, Soweto, Johannesburg. 10 December 2003* (Fig.4.7), is reduced to a level of wishful thinking because dominating these images is the element of the second economy phenomenon that marks both racial and class inequalities of the post-Apartheid South Africa. Again, Goldblatt's *Women singing, Newtown Squatter Camp, Johannesburg. 1 November 2001* (Fig. 4.8) renders the post-Apartheid assumption of 'liberation' questionable, alluding, rather, to a degree of both landlessness and indecent housing policies. Distant city skyscrapers serve as a counterpoint to the foreground shack, thus emphasising gross economic inequalities seven years after the dawn of democracy.



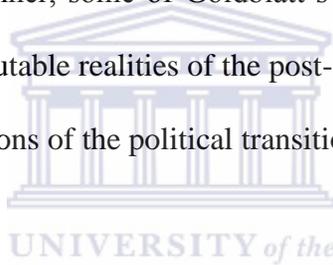
Bond addresses the question of post-Apartheid landlessness, which affected even those who occupied awkward urban spaces, thus: "The problem was that Pretoria adopted a World Bank-inspired, market-oriented, willing-seller/willing-buyer programme that limited the state function to providing a tiny once-off capital subsidy (R15,000), far too small to acquire a decent plot of land."<sup>865</sup> This post-Apartheid reality about landlessness is reminiscent of the idea of the *swerwers* (Chapter Three) who occupied *gangs* (passages between fences around white-owned farms and roads) in their itinerant lifestyle, and this can be compared to virtual landlessness epitomised by the mushrooming of urban slums and in concurrence with Green's observations above (Footnote 836). Read against Bond's assertion, Goldblatt's images referred to here explore South Africa's postcoloniality that

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<sup>865</sup> See Bond, P., *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa*, Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, p.272.

is not congruent with the assumptions and expectations of the former marginalised. They allude to the fact that the transition from the order of racially motivated social segregation was marked by an element of elitism, breeding what Bond calls class Apartheid.<sup>866</sup>

Class Apartheid-induced conditions of impoverishment mentioned above emerged from the capitalist ‘uneven development’ and the ‘commodification of everything’ that is so explicit within the neoliberal project.<sup>867</sup> Here ‘neoliberal philosophy’ refers to the African National Congress government’s conformity to a ‘corporatist’ (that is, elite-pacting) practice which demobilised and disillusioned the base (the voting masses).<sup>868</sup> I posit here that, in a subtle manner, some of Goldblatt’s images (Figs. 4.4, 4.7 and 4.8) revisited here speak to the irrefutable realities of the post-Apartheid era – realities that did not tally with popular expectations of the political transition.



Santu Mofokeng, on the other hand, approaches the question of the post-Apartheid realities in a manner that allows for the transcendent reading of some of his landscape images of this period because of their ethereality. Here I am referring to his cave scenes analysed in Chapter Five of this thesis such as *Temple 1996* (Fig. 5.13) and *Easter Sunday church service 1996* (Fig. 5.14). These are images that are concerned with spirituality, an extension of the *Chasing Shadows* series Mofokeng had started working on (‘Train Churches’) in 1986. Mofokeng’s spirituality in his treatment of landscape contrasts with Goldblatt’s approach in that the latter emphasises on the landscape as a readable, tangible surface that enables us to understand something about the structures

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<sup>866</sup> Ibid., p.256.

<sup>867</sup> Ibid., p.255.

<sup>868</sup> Ibid., p.254.

and values of the society. Mofokeng focuses on the spiritual reading of the landscape, on the other hand, thus denying any easy legibility of its surface.

Questioning the notion of freedom without land ownership,<sup>869</sup> Mofokeng explored a different, spiritual realm of existence, asking, as it were, what made these people resilient.<sup>870</sup> Unlike Goldblatt, Mofokeng focuses on aspects of the spiritual reality of the post-Apartheid era where material gains of freedom are lacking. He likens this situation of an intangible 'freedom' to the act of *chasing shadows*, the phrase that he applies to a number of different situations explored by his camera. He laments this when he says: “*ma uthi siqobile* (if you claim that we have prevailed), I don't know that...we are chasing shadows. That's why we still have no control of all what we imagine we have.”<sup>871</sup> The above arguments testify to ways in which Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's cameras try to critique unfulfilled promises and deferred dreams or expectations of the former oppressed masses of South Africa.

The above remarks suggest that photography has a number of technical limitations when it comes to the framing of historical and contemporary narratives. The stillness of images, thus 'freezing' time in space, renders photography unable to 'speak' for itself or to stand alone as a 'readable' medium. The buttressing role of text in all images revisited here collapses the notion of photography's ability to offer narratives of transforming societies. Social dynamism and photographic stasis require textual intervention, as has been determined in this conclusion. I further suggest that whatever has been argued here

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<sup>869</sup> See transcript of an interview by the candidate with Santu Mofokeng, 30/12/07, Johannesburg.

<sup>870</sup> Ibid.

<sup>871</sup> Ibid.

with reference to what Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's landscape images are supposed to say is based on how we construct as meaning - as already dealt with in Chapter Two - not what images supposedly 'say'.<sup>872</sup>

Here I contend that the above concluding arguments therefore do not necessarily show that David Goldblatt's and Santu Mofokeng's landscape photographs problematise the assumptions about the emergence of a new society from the rubble of historical divisions and inequalities. Instead, they only allude, through illusory shapes and marks on two-dimensional surfaces (pictures), to a society that is continually haunted by socio-economic evils that are supposedly buried with the past. The viewer is made aware of aspects of the past that only appear meaningfully through simultaneous engagement with image and text (captions, extended captions and research notes) which facilitate the interpretive exercise because there are no intrinsic pictorial attributes that can classify images under Apartheid and post-Apartheid categories.

Here it should be noted that in landscape photography in particular there are hardly or no visual devices that can be applied to determine intrinsic temporal aspects of a picture. Only text, in the absence of knowledge through experience or association, can reinforce this subjective construction of meaning on the part of the viewer. This point takes this

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<sup>872</sup> The space of the viewer's engagement with the image, without necessarily depending on text or whatever verbal explanation that the photographer may offer, is not at all meant to signal the proverbial death of the author. This point is especially relevant to the context within which this study has been conducted, given the obvious authorial identities possessed by both David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng. This conclusion was written at an interesting historical moment of the South African culture and politics – a supposedly degrading depiction of the then State President Jacob Zuma by Brett Murray. Though this moment raised emotions within the South African society, it would be interesting to think about how the painting could have 'spoken' for itself without any written or spoken words around it. In my final analysis, what was seen as a piece of art with a specific 'message' or 'meaning' was, in fact, the medium of paint on canvas. The most appropriate way of reading the painting as satire was missed in the midst of emotional reactions from various social walks of life.

study to its logical conclusion that, due to the limitations of photography highlighted here, nothing is either *realistic* or *idealistic* about images alone. I posit that it is only when David Goldblatt's and Santu Mofokeng's landscape photographs are 'read' in conjunction with accompanying text and/or experiential<sup>873</sup> associations that they can *explicitly* tell us how the South African society has constructed its landscape after the colonial/Apartheid moments of its history. More specifically, it is through engagement with critical literature, in this case Patrick Bond's *Elite Transition* that one can pin down the social and economic implications of South Africa's elite transition for the poor masses.

A simultaneous reading of both text and image here brings this study to the conclusion that what these practitioners' landscape images (those with references to persisting elements of Apartheid) suggest is the transition from Apartheid to neoliberalism from which the masses could not benefit: from racial Apartheid to class Apartheid. The transition signifies, among other things, the organisation of class Apartheid landscape according to the dictates of the new ruling elite. The crux of the matter here is that what photography presents as a botched socio-economic transition is based mainly on the fact that capital has always remained in the hands of a small elite. In other words, the transition did not, in any way, change the living conditions of the oppressed masses.

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<sup>873</sup> Here I would like to thank my former colleague at Vaal University of Technology, Dr Avita Sooful for her profound ideas on the question of experience and association as useful thresholds from which we can ask how we 'know' – how we make connections and associations of our previous experience in order to form new knowledges. See also David Hume's formulations around knowledge in <http://www.123helpme.com/view>. Accessed 24/10/10.

John S. Saul asks this about the political transition in South Africa, led by the ANC which capitulated to capitalism:

Is this not what we can see all too clearly to have happened in South Africa as well: a power-grab by a middle class risen from among the recently oppressed population who now, riding the back of ‘liberation struggle’, had thrust themselves forward, both in the state and the private sector, to take the role of well-rewarded junior partners of global capital?<sup>874</sup>

Joe Slovo, cited in Saul, seems to address the question why the South African political transition brought about formal democracy in a colour-blind capitalist order as he states:

We are negotiating because towards the end of the 80s we concluded that as a result of its escalating crisis, the apartheid power bloc was no longer able to continue ruling in the old way and was genuinely seeking some break with the past. At the same time, we were clearly not dealing with a defeated enemy and an early revolutionary seizure of power by the liberation movement could not be realistically posed. This conjuncture of the balance of forces (which continues to reflect current reality) provides a classic scenario which placed the possibility of negotiations on the agenda.<sup>875</sup>

This is what Goldblatt’s and Mofokeng’s post-Apartheid landscape photographs may be seen to be referring to. Slovo’s statement clearly demonstrates, firstly, that the Apartheid power bloc could no longer rule in the old way, secondly, that the liberation movement was not dealing with a defeated enemy during the transition period and, thirdly, that the seizure of power could not be realistically posed. My argument, based on these points, is that the transition, in reality, was political and was never realistically designed to transfer capital to the hands of the masses. It is quite arguable that in South Africa there is gross misunderstanding of notions of ‘democracy’ and ‘liberation’ as if they are similar or interchangeable. I further posit that political power without a meaningful economic transition (transfer of capital from the privileged elite) is one of the reasons why David

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<sup>874</sup> Saul, J.S., ‘The Apartheid Endgame, 1990 – 1994’, in Saul, J.S. and P. Bond, *South Africa - The Present as History: From Mrs Ples to Mandela & Marikana*, Suffolk: James Currey, 2014, pp. 122-123.

<sup>875</sup> *Ibid.*, p.124.

Goldblatt's and Santu Mofokeng's landscape photographs allude to lack of change of oppressed people's living conditions.

But in addition to what one can read in Goldblatt's and Mofokeng's post-Apartheid landscape photographs, Santu clearly provides his views when he makes these observations around the notion of 'winning' the struggle:

...what you say, what you say...you own...your president *umunt'omnyama*, but you don't own the land *wena* (laughs)...this is when *imovement* has nothing to do *ukuthi ubani*...I mean, it doesn't matter, uTony Leon is your boss or whatever, *ipresident yeSouth Africa* or *uHellen Zille*, it doesn't matter, but '*ma uthi singobile, siwinile*', what did you mean...?'<sup>876</sup>

Mofokeng's observation above is obviously attributable to him but my own experience has shown, on several occasions, that there is a growing feeling of disillusionment about what many black South African citizens term a botched transition with empty promises. Many citizens, just like Mofokeng, feel that mass ownership of agricultural and settlement productive land seems like an unreachable dream since the adoption of the negotiated transition to democracy.<sup>877</sup>

The negotiated transition to democracy failed to deliver on the expectations held by many South Africans – the return of land. It only afforded the oppressed masses 'rights' to return to restricted, hallowed spaces, be they urban or rural, but failed to entrench

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<sup>876</sup> See transcript of the interview by the candidate with Santu Mofokeng, 30/12/07, Johannesburg. Here '*umunt'omnyama*' and '*ma uthi singobile, siwinile*' mean '*black person*' and '*if you say we have prevailed, we have won*', respectively.

<sup>877</sup> It is quite possible to 'read' this situation whenever one views affluent settlement areas across the country, where land is not affordable to the poor. Such areas include Hyde Park, in Sandton, Johannesburg, Camps Bay, Kommetjie, Hout Bay and Lunddudno, in Cape Town, and many more pockets of high end market spaces where class plays a significant role in determining who can gain access to such settlement land. Persistent phenomenon of shack dwelling in informal settlement areas is yet another proof of land shortage after Apartheid.

meaningful land ownership rights given a very slow land reform process touched on above. Simply removing movement restrictions across spaces cannot be seen as return of land and other related rights to the people. But why did the return of land to the landless masses fail in the hands of the African National Congress leadership? Why has there always been such a compromise when the question of land had to be addressed? Again, Bond, in dealing with these questions, asserts:

To promote a peaceful transition, the agreement negotiated between the racist white regime and the ANC allowed whites to keep the best land, the mines, manufacturing plants, and financial institutions. There were only two basic paths that the ANC could follow. One was to mobilize the people and all their enthusiasm, energy, and hard work, use a larger share of the economic surplus (through state-directed investments and higher taxes), and stop the flow of capital abroad, including the repayment of illegitimate apartheid-era debt. The other was to adopt a neoliberal capitalist path, with a small reform here or there, while posturing as if social democracy was on the horizon.<sup>878</sup>

Bond also stresses the implications of this compromise on the part of the ANC leadership where he reviews Ronnie Kasrils's autobiography titled *Armed and Dangerous* (published by Heinemann in 1993). Among other points, Kasrils is quoted by Bond as having stated that they, the ANC negotiating team in the early 1990s and first governing party after the demise of the Apartheid system, were absolutely incapable of dealing with the period of 1990 to 1995 and 1996 in which the leftist agenda, which had been strong, simply collapsed in their hands. Kasrils is quoted as having mentioned that Mandela, at the negotiation table, gave way too much to the rich.<sup>879</sup> This is a clear indication of the conditions that served as a prelude to the rise of the class Apartheid.

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<sup>878</sup> Bond, P., 'From Racial to Class Apartheid: South Africa's Frustrating Decade of Freedom' in *Monthly Review*, Volume 55, Issue 10, March 2004 in <http://monthlyreview.org/2004/03/01/south-africas-frustrating-decade-of-freedom-from-racial-to-class-apartheid/> Accessed 03/03/2016.

<sup>879</sup> Bond, P., 'Mandela Led Fight Against Apartheid, But Not Against Extreme Inequality' in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZpv8yTe3bw> Accessed 03/03/2016.

This failure also had a negative impact on many socio-economic aspects, bringing mainly what has come to be known as the second economy. This, I argue, implies that South Africa went through a political transition which failed to create conditions conducive for inclusive participation in the mainstream economy.<sup>880</sup> Given these realities, there is always a perpetual situation that renders David Goldblatt's and Santu Mofokeng's landscape photographs productive and relevant.

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<sup>880</sup> What this thesis is addressing in relation to the connection between landscape and economy is that as long as the masses do not have access to capital, they will remain on the periphery of the South African economy. Those who occupy the space of second economy are perpetually stuck in a lower social class.

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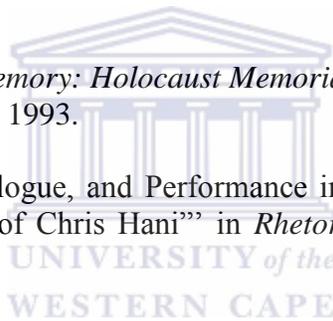
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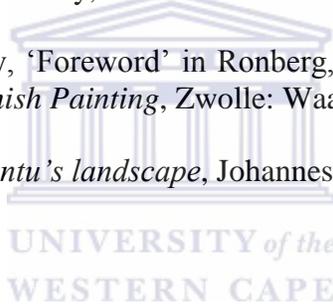
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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

### Interview by Mduduzi Xakaza with David Goldblatt: 15 May 2006: Cape Town

**Mduduzi:** Thank you very much for this opportunity; I hope that this interview is going to be quite a fruitful one. First of all, I have read your...the interview transcript that Patricia and Farzanah did in 2002 and I will try to avoid repetition in terms of ....

**David:** Yeah, it's fine. You know, you must ask the questions that are relevant to what you want to do. Inevitably, we'll go over some of the same ground; you can't help it.

**Mduduzi:** First of all, I would like to get your idea...your own idea as to what you think about Photography as related to Fine Arts, especially painting.

**David:** Okay, well, my relationship...my ideas about this are very crude and quite simple. I'm a photographer; I don't see what I do as being, in any way, related to Fine Arts. Eh, I have very little interest, in fact, in art. Eh, I know very little about painting; in fact, nothing. I enjoy the work of some painters because they have touched me in some way or another, but I cannot claim to have any real knowledge about painting or about the fine arts. My interest as a photographer is exploring and probing the world in which I live, which is South Africa, more specifically the social world of South Africa...and to the extent that this becomes something of interest to people in the fine arts and in art circles and collectors and museums and so on. That to me is a very...completely secondary issue. I regard it as being, in some way, as regrettable that I now have, eh...I earn most of my income from the collectors and the museums. My income as a professional photographer has diminished virtually to nothing, whether this has to do with age or because I'm unpopular or what, I don't know, but I don't earn much money now as a professional photographer which is how I earned my living from 1963 until the last two years, till about 2000, 1999, 1998, thereabout; I earned my ...(not clear)...as a photographer. I earn my living now from the sales of prints and this, to me, is regrettable because it means, then, that these highly artificial ideas relating to scarcity become important in creating the value of what I do. In other words, if I make a photograph and make a print of it, that print is almost worthless until I put my signature on it. When I put my signature on it, it suddenly becomes worth what to me is an obscene amount of money. These prints fetch ridiculous amounts of money. So, this, to me, is a... not a source of great joy...I mean I'm flattered very often by the interest of people in my work ...(not clear)...museums that I respect show my work and the curators are really interested in my work; these things, obviously are... bring me a great deal of pleasure, but the world of Fine Art and scarcity that it imposes...the idea of scarcity that it requires almost as a precondition for value is, to me, something that I have a...

**Mduduzi:** Yes, but that is quite interesting; in fact it shows me how (sic) a sincere photographer you are...and having said that, I'd like to ask you about your...

*(Interrupted by David talking to his wife who is in the kitchen)*

**David:** Sorry, okay...

**Mduduzi:** Eh, I was going to ask you what you mean by personal and professional photographer because I've looked at that as well when I was reading the interview transcript of 2002. I had some...my ideas which might be wrong, but I need to verify those with you.

**David:** Yeah, okay. Well, very simply, my professional work is the work that I do for clients; so, if you owned a magazine and you wanted me to do a photograph of the president, I would regard that as professional work. If, on the other hand, I was doing some work in which I felt that I would like to photograph people in government, which I did recently, I photographed municipal officials; I might one day expand that and say well, I'd like to photograph high officials, not just municipal officials, people in senior positions in government and I was doing that because I wanted to explore this for myself – that is my personal work. So, in other words, the imperatives in professional work are those of the client, the things that make me focus on particular ways of doing the job. Eh, if I get an assignment or commission from a client, then I regard it as my duty to produce photographs that will meet his needs...

**Mduduzi:** It's a profession...it's a professional work; in other words it is the commission in the language of art, etc, etc...

**David:** Yes, yes, it is a commission and so I take a lot of trouble to find out why he wants the photograph...or she..., what they really need it for because very often people, particularly people who are not especially visual...visually literate don't always understand the language of photography and it's my job then to find out why they want the picture; what is it going...what purpose would it serve? They're gonna pay me money to make a picture, but why? What purpose would it serve? And when I've clarified that, I might then come up with a suggestion as to what I would do in order to answer their needs. And then my job is to fulfill that brief...that commission. During the years of Apartheid, I drew some fairly sharp lines about what I was prepared to do and what I was not prepared to do; so, if I got a commission that I felt was politically unacceptable because it was fundamentally in support of Apartheid or an Apartheid institution, I refused the commission. If I feel that what I'm being asked to do is in some way against my moral principles, I will refuse the commission. But provided I can accept the bona fides of the client and I'm prepared to accept that what they want to do is acceptable to me, I'll do it.

**Mduduzi:** So, you are a person who is not governed by emotions, but by intellect...?

**David:** Hmm, I think that's putting it too strongly; emotions become very important part of it...

**Mduduzi:** Yeah, I'm asking this question because I'm thinking of a time when the National Party got...won the elections of 1948 and from that 2002 interview transcript, I realized that you are one of the people who were shocked by that, eh...

**David:** There were...many, many people were shocked...

**Mduduzi:** Many people were shocked...

**David:** Yeah...

**Mduduzi:** That's why I'm asking this kind of a question because emotionally you could be happy to do just an exciting kind of a work, but intellectually you could...

**David:** No, no, no, I don't accept that; emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, if the...if I was asked to do...I mean, I'll give you an example: eh, I had a call from a leading advertising agent...agency, that is, the chief executive officer of this agency. I had done some minor pieces of work for them...commercial work and he said to me: "We would really like you to do something about South Africa for us; we would give you...there is no limit to the budget. There is much money as you need to do it; we just want you to tell the truth." I said: "And whose truth are we talking about?" "Well, it's the government's truth." I said: "Thank you very much, but it's not..."

**Mduduzi:** Was it an Apartheid or a post-Apartheid government...?

**David:** That was during the years of Apartheid...

**Mduduzi:** Ah...

**David:** (Laughs) Now if the government...if our present government were to ask me to do the same thing, I'm not sure that I would accept the brief...the commission, not because I don't agree with many of the things they're doing, but because I regard politicians as fundamentally conservative; they are interested in conserving power. And, eh, I would look very carefully at what they wanted me to do. I might do it; I don't know. Certainly, the National Party, there was no question; I have never done any work, but I had a commission from a hospital in the Free State, during the Apartheid years...the big Bloemfontein Hospital. They wanted a brochure and...about the hospital and I enquired...I mean the people who ran that hospital were Nationalists, I'm sure, but I looked at what they wanted me to do and I did it because it was within a framework that I could work; it was about nursing and about nursing and about conditions and about things that they do. So, that was fine. So, it would depend very much on what I'm asked to do and who's asking me to do it and why, but 'why' is the important thing.

**Mduduzi:** You seem to be a person who is, eh, who listens to his conscience and...

**David:** I suppose so, but you know, in the...during the years of Apartheid, you must understand that it was not a clear cut thing. Eh, we were all complicit in the system – all of us, and I mean all – whites and blacks – because if you lived in South Africa and you

woke up in the morning and you breathed the air, you were immediately compromised because that meant that unless you were going up with the gun or you were prepared to go to prison and fight, if you were prepared to do those things, then that didn't apply to you, but for the rest of us, the millions of South Africans – white and black – if you took a breath, you caught a train, you caught a bus, you sent your child to school, you got married, you got divorced, you f\*\*\*\*d a woman, you...any of these things, you went into a bar and you had drink, you travelled on a train, you complied with the system. You lived in a house, you lived in this place...the title deeds of these properties were specific. You were not allowed to have coloured pers...a person of colour as the...as a lodger in this property. This was in the title deed of my house in Johannesburg. So, we all compromised. So, it was grey; we were not black or white; we were not pure good or pure bad.

**Mduduzi:** But as a photographer you had this idea in your mind that things were not quite good in South Africa...

**David:** Oh, of course, you know, they were very bad...

**Mduduzi:** And I'm quite interested in...in your experience or your knowledge of the history of the suffering of your own people before your ancestors or your parents came into South Africa...

**David:** You mean the Jewish...my...the Jewish...(not clear)...

**Mduduzi:** And how that affected your attitude or your thinking about socio-political realities at the time during the Apartheid period.

**David:** I think that I was probably quite strongly influenced by the fact that Jews had been persecuted for centuries. Eh, I'd never studied it in detail, but I knew it, you know, it was part of my upbringing; I knew about it, I knew what had happened and my father would tell me stories about the...about what...about the conditions under which they lived in eastern Europe when the Jews were severely persecuted.

**Mduduzi:** Was that in Lithuania?

**David:** In Lithuania, yes. So, I'm quite sure that these...this was a very important background, if you like, to my spiritual, emotional make-up. I had a very strong feeling of revulsion against injustice. Eh, it affected me because I experienced anti-Semitism. I was accused of killing Jesus Christ; now, how could I be accused of killing Jesus Christ? I never knew the man...

**Mduduzi:** You were not alive at that time...

**David:** I was a child (laughs). So, how could I be accused of being complicit in the death of Jesus Christ? So, this was, to me, a very deep injustice. And I felt it very strongly as well for my compatriots – my, you know, the people that I lived with in South Africa – eh, my nanny who became almost my mother: that she had to undergo the kind

of indignities that she was subjected to or that I, a young teenager had to write a pass - a piece of paper: 'Please pass mother from our house, 60 Village Street, to her family's home in the location,' in case she was on the street after nine o'clock and the police arrested her. So, you know, you can't grow up with that kind of thing and not be affected by it. Every night in Randfontein, at nine o'clock, the fire engine...the fire siren sounded. That was the curfew; black people had to be off the streets. Any black person on the streets in Randfontein after nine o'clock could be arrested unless they had a pass.

**Mduduzi:** And that actually served as the basis or the foundation for your thinking also as a photographer...?

**David:** Yeah, it was very important, yes, sure...

**Mduduzi:** And, tell me, what ideas did you have, or do you have, about a sense of place both during the Apartheid period and also at this present moment?

**David:** Yeah, to me a sense of place is a very...a fundamental value, almost, very difficult to put into words, but I feel very strongly that my place is here in South Africa. I don't feel a sense of place when I go outside South Africa. If I had been in Australia or born in Argentina, I'm sure I would have had a sense of place that relates to those places, but somehow or other in my growing up...perhaps it has to do with having had quite a happy childhood as well; a very happy childhood. I was not severely punished or anything; I wasn't beaten, I wasn't...my home was stable. I didn't starve - none of these things, perhaps because I had a happy childhood; I grew up with a sense that...there was something almost invisible, something in my guts that related to this place and that became much stronger when I became a photographer. Eh, when I started taking...when I worked in the 1960s, I did two big pieces of photography relating to personal work - the one was on the gold mines, *On the Mines*, and the other one related to Afrikaners. And in both of these I developed that sense of belonging or of place and I that I bring those two together - the sense of place and the sense of belonging - became stronger and stronger until, eventually, I felt I didn't any longer wanted to go and live overseas because my wife and I had thought we can't stay here; it's not a good place to bring up children, you know. There seems to be no end to the National Party rule; they were in power forever and what they were doing was terrible. So, it seemed wrong to try to bring up children in this place. We thought of going overseas...(not clear)...but then as I worked on those two essays, particularly the one on Afrikaners, I developed a much stronger sense that I wanted to be here even if it was, in many ways, terrible, I felt that I was involved here; it was not something that I could turn away...

**Mduduzi:** And... thanks for that explanation. I'm also trying to think mainly about your landscape photographs...

**David:** About my landscape photographs?

**Mduduzi:** Yes, landscape photographs, particularly when you photographed scenes in the Karoo because, obviously, I get tempted when I look at your work because I think too much like an artist myself, not like a photographer, and I look at aspects of your work or

components or elements in your compositions. There is a photograph which I can remember...I can't remember the title of the photograph where in the foreground there's quite clearly visible bush of thorns and it looks very nice, but I know...but we know thorns are dangerous and I get tempted to think seriously whether you consider...whether you consider aesthetics at times when you take photographs. Do you think about such things at all or do you just take a photograph based on a theme that's interesting to you, but what else do you think of?

**David:** Now, that's a very difficult question to answer satisfactorily; I can only give you a very unsatisfactory...**(not clear)**...Eh, photography, I think, is a peculiar medium, very different from painting, as far as I can make out, principally because form and content cannot be separated. You can paint and make a very clear distinction between form and content. In photography that...I'm talking about photography in the real world, not things that you cook up in your head, in the studio or in the darkroom; I'm talking about photography outside real...in real terms. That kind of photography...content and form are so tightly woven together that I find it very difficult to separate; so, when I'm looking at a subject, or a potential subject, I'm initially attracted to it by feeling that there is something here that's interesting to me – it makes me itch – I want to scratch the itch. And then, having looked at it and begun to sense that it is...yes, it is interesting, I then...one of the aspects to it that often makes me feel that I want to photograph it is that there is a certain degree of coherence in it, eh, that there is some kind of visual structure to it. And the visual structure is often part of its meaning; so, that's why I say it's not easy to separate form and content here; they're indissolubly linked and woven together, almost. So, aesthetics as a field of interest is of no interest to me at all. I don't compose my pictures with any idea of a golden means or creed or, call it what you will, division into...**(not clear)**... I compose purely on instinctive basis, but within that instinctive basis, I'm very concerned with, yeah, the coherence of the thing. Does it hang together? Does it work compositionally, yes; it has to work compositionally because if doesn't work compositionally, it's not going to be...its meaning... its content will not become clear; it will become...it will be a less interesting photograph, I suppose, in many prosaic terms. Eh, I was in Fort...in Beaufort West on the way down here and I stopped to photograph. I'm very interested in the AIDS ribbon, you know, the AIDS ribbon?

**Mduduzi:** Oh yeah, when was that, was it quite...?

**David:** This was quite a few days ago, coming down here, yes...

**Mduduzi:** Were you driving?

**David:** Yes, I drove down here; I have a camper that I have... I live in when I'm working in the country so that I can more or less go wherever I want to; I don't have to worry about whether I'm on the road or off the road or on bad roads or good roads; I go wherever. So, I drove down. As I say, I'm interested in the AIDS ribbon in our landscape. I'm interested in it for a number of reasons: First of all, what is this strange symbol? How does it...what does it mean to people? And my own private ...the way of seeing is that we don't see it. It's in our landscape, but we don't see it. It has become so

much a part of our visual furniture that we don't see it anymore. If I said to you: "Where is the nearest AIDS ribbon?" you wouldn't be able to tell me.

**Mduduzi:** It is everywhere...

**David:** Well, it's everywhere, but it's nowhere; you can't tell me there is one on the corner of Orange Street and so and so; you don't know, nor do I. (Laughs) I can tell you now because I happened to see one the other night. It's...I was with Patricia; it's on the provincial building in Wale Street (laughs)...big one, two big ones, two big ones, but we don't see it. It's part of the...it's part of the landscape and yet here's the biggest crisis in our history, possibly, killing millions of people and the symbol for it is just a f\*\*\*-all thing; we don't see it. So, I've been doing a series of photographs in the last year or two years. It started when I was in the Richtersveld in far northern Cape; I was with my wife and we saw...it was very, very rough wild country and there was this huge rock and on it was painted a strange symbol and underneath there were three letters, I think: 'JMB'. So, I looked at...I couldn't understand what it was, but it looked as though it was a potentially something that I would have to unravel...I would have to be...I would have to find it, you know...work on it. Anyway, I took a photograph because it had a certain photographic gravity and then I realized...I don't know whether I realized it as I was doing that or as I was looking at the... the prints. This was an AIDS ribbon and 'JMB' was probably somebody who had died of AIDS... AIDS-related disease. It was a memorial painted by somebody onto that big...(not clear)...and after that I began to see it wherever I was going ...well, not wherever, but often. So, when I see it, I then become itchy and want to look at it more closely and possibly take a photograph, but very often the photograph doesn't work; it doesn't cohere; there is no structure; there's no way of bringing that AIDS ribbon into a photograph that is meaningful for me; so, I don't take it...or I try not to. Sometimes, of course, I...I, you know, I waste a sheet of film or two sheets of film because I photograph and it doesn't really work, but sometimes it does work...

**Mduduzi:** I'm quite interested in what you're saying because it means that you also associate that AIDS ribbon with the environment...

**David:** Oh, absolutely, yes...

**Mduduzi:**...with where people live; it is not just isolated.

**David:** No, it's not isolated at all; it's...well, sometimes it is isolated; if you suddenly see it in the country side whenever ....(not clear)...

**Mduduzi:** And then it becomes useless...

**David:** No, it...well, that's a question, you see, that's a very important question. People spend money...the government is spending money on putting these ribbons up, but who reads it? Who sees it? There's one...there's a...there's a town called ...(not clear)...in what used to be the Western Transvaal and outside the ...(not clear)...on the road to Kimberley, suddenly there's a big billboard, a warning, and it says: 'Prevent Mother-To-

Child Transmission' – PMTCT, whatever it is. Now, who the f\*\*k in that place knows what 'Prevent Mother-To-Child Transmission' is...beside, perhaps only a district nurse and a few other people? It shows...now, it stands at the entrance to the black township there...what used to be the black township, but it's mad, bizarre because I'm perfectly sure that most of the people in that place, if they never looked at that thing, don't know what it means. It's a typical thing: 'Prevent Mother-To-Child Transmission'. If I said that to Zachie Achmat, he would know exactly what you're talking about, but if we said it to the young woman who tickets the motor...(not clear)...parking, I'm sure she won't know what it means. So, there are these things that attach...we attach meanings to things and I'm very interested in this...in the values that we put on things and how they work...and how they express things.

**Mduduzi:** I think that is why your work can work as a work of art as well...

**David:** ...(not clear)... you don't know...(laughs)...

**Mduduzi:** ...to be seen like that. I can see why...why so many museums collect your work. They attach a value of art to your work...

**David:** Well, you know, that's a sort of second...second round effect; it's not a primary object.

**Mduduzi:** And it's not intentional on your part.

**David:** No.

**Mduduzi:** Eh, these are quite interesting ideas. I also looked at your *Transported of KwaNdebele*. I just need to...I just need to ask you to say... to say a few things about that because I have read some of the essays that were published together with that work and I had my own thoughts or ideas...(the phone rings and David attends to it)...

END

## APPENDIX 2

### Interview by Mduduzi Xakaza with Professor Hans Engdahl: 13 December 2007: Rondebosch, Cape Town

**Mduduzi:** Eh, Prof., I'm quite delighted that I've been able to secure this appointment to interview you on the...eh, on your ideas about Afrikaner religion or theology and so, I'm very happy. I would like to ask you about Afrikaner religious ideology – its origins and bases. If you can just clarify that for me...then I will...then we'll take it further.

**Hans:** Yes, and...while I am talking you can also interrupt me or you can ask for clarifications if I go...(not clear)... Can I speak like this?

**Mduduzi:** Yes, you can, yeah...

**Hans:** So, I like to say something about Afrikaner religion. And one can't...one has to become historical immediately, you know, because they have a very particular history and they came to South Africa...1650s and so on and they came from basically that background and they had with them a Reformed faith. They were Christians, most of them, and they belonged to the Reformed Church, Dutch Reformed or various ...(not clear)...Church and that's the faith they came with...and that is ...that is simply the basis of that ideology that later on developed here on African soil. And, also, that is to say that the founding father of the Reformed faith is John Calvin. You could also call it 'Calvinism', but then you are in a way more confining...yeah, it's more confined, and, later on, you could also talk about 'Afrikaner Calvinism' as a particular ideology that believed in the special calling that the people had here on South African soil. But that is...that is basically, eh...and one cannot...the problem here is that Afrikaner...the Afrikaner people were never exactly agreed on everything what is their ideology, but they have the co...they have a common history and I think...I think one has to read that history – eh, people who were, eh...who landed at this part of the world, who struggled to survive and then came into contact with the local populations here. Eh, that created their...their identity and especially therein come...to the, eh, British colonial power later. These...these are formations. Eh...

**Mduduzi:** So, Prof, can we...can, eh, would you agree with me if I say that just for the mere fact that they also have this Calvinist Theology of some kind that they themselves saw themselves as a people involved in Reformation or involved in this faith as Protestants?

**Hans:** Yes, yes, certainly. The Reformation, eh, they always called themselves part of the Protestant faith, definitely, and...yes, very much indeed. Eh, yeah, eh, also I was going to say something more there. Eh, I just forgot it...so, yes, it's, eh...the...Calvin was the father of their faith and...(not clear)...one of the two leading figures in the Reformation – Luther and Calvin, yes.

**Mduduzi:** So, Prof, are there specific doctrines that Calvin had taught after he started engaging in this process of Reformation?

**Hans:** Yes, yes, and I like to come back to that later more specific, eh,...specify it more clearly for you when I had a chance to look at it, but certainly, there are very clear use, you know, in their faith...and also the role of the Bible I think one should emphasize already here because that played a very central role, and that is, in accordance with Calvin...(not clear)...the Reformation was to discover the Bible, translate the Bible into the vernacular and use it for the common people. And here, I think, when you interview me I was with c...very careful to give a balanced view, eh, of course Afrikaner, eh, Afrikaner...neo-Calvinism, as is one expression that one can use – eh, that could be seen as that ideology that support...that formulated Apartheid and also supported the idea that they were a special called to leadership and called to a special life here. But, as I said, Afrikaners in South Africa have always thought differently about this. There is a very strong ...(not clear)...to individual thinking and freedoms. If you think about how the Bible came to be used and this group of people who now came to different land, the Bible became the property of each individual – once you were grown up so that you could read. So, it was actually a kind of a democratic principle that was instilled in people through the Bible and reading of the text; it was not only for the *dominee*, for the pastor, even if he might be the one who was allowed to preach and ordained for that purpose, eh, every member could also read for himself and herself and that created a much more of an equality within that people. And that is also something that came with the Reformation; eh, and one could argue endlessly about that because Afrikaner...the Afrikaner people can be characterized by very strong commitment to themselves...to the people themselves, at the same time a very strong individualism, and one should...one should discuss that more and look at that more...into that more, but it's very clear that from the very early...eh, individual...and there were...(not clear)...hot headed people who wanted to start their own thing – if you think about the Voortrekkers, they were never in agreement where to go. So, there was this Potgieter and there was this Pretorius and whatever name were...they would lead a smaller group and they would go in a particular direction, but individual thinking, which I also think is a very important democratic value, is there in these people. The problem was that they do...at a later stage, ...(not clear)...they would define themselves over against all the others, as a minority – became extremely oppressive. Eh, yeah...

**Mduduzi:** Because, Prof, the reason why this is quite important and quite interesting at the same time is that the relationship between the Afrikaners and the British – I wonder if it triggered some feelings of being a nation and being exclusive and being chosen in a way. I wonder if that triggered some of those feelings because I'm trying to trace the origins of those ideas.

**Hans:** Yes, it's a ...it's a very important factor in the whole development. One could see two movements are parallel, I mean, the Afrikaners came here and they must have felt threatened in many ways by a different culture – different land. So, it was a survival in relation to the local people, but then it was...it became a matter of survival ...(not clear)...the British because the British wanted to streamline and maybe force everybody to... into the same culture, same language, etc. That was not...and you had the wars and of course...historical...then again after the Second World War the blacks again, and the locals, again became the major threat for them and that's why they also instituted

Apartheid, I think, but...but historically speaking I think the British were...had been more ...**(not clear)**...after anybody else and, you are right; they...that conflict... that war...those wars meant...they defined themselves from that and they were a minority and the enemy was definitely the British...it took a very, very long time...**(not clear)**...after the Second World War the whole thing shifted around again and the blacks became the...became the threat as it had been, I think, previous years, well...but there are also religious, eh, of course then you have this other idea that Roman Catholicism was really a threat because Bible was... the Bible was set on an ...and...that talked about...talked about the...**(not clear)**...of the father...the Roman danger, you know, and...**(not clear)**...so that...that's part of , you know, their religious background ...**(not clear)**...very negative towards Roman Catholic Church, but that is also, now history, but...

**Mduduzi:** I'm also thinking, Prof, about the coming of the French Huguenots; eh, I'm also wondering what role that played in the formation of these people...these people as a nation because they themselves, I understand, were persecuted in France for their religious convictions and I'm also thinking about those, but,...eh, obviously, you...you have more knowledge; eh, maybe you can also talk about that a bit...

**Hans:** Well, I can...I can only agree with the other stage that they had been, eh...some of them, at least, had been persecuted for their faith in France because France was Roman Catholic and they were certainly ill-treated and they fled for their lives. So, it was, eh...it was coming to haven...to come here, they came to people of their own faith, more or less and the same time it may even be that...that some of them were very much conditioned by the previous struggles in Europe and therefore were even more convinced, you know, of their identity and defending that identity. At the same time they became very conformed with the local culture here and they adopted Africa...I mean, Dutch language and... actually abandoned French which is strange when you look at it historically, but that was a policy locally that they didn't want these immigrants to maintain their own culture...**(not clear)**...because that would be divisive and so they...when they got farms out there, you know, they put the French-speaking Huguenots; they spread...they spread out so that they couldn't build clans of their own, you know...

**Mduduzi:** Which was quite necessary ...

**Hans:** So, I think there is a...those ways...but I think...some of the backgrounds of these people...very strong characters who came here and they have influenced this country and the Afrikaner identity a lot; the same time in a strange way they became conform...**(not clear)**...I'm not an expert on this at all, but other people...there a lot of people who can say much more this, but they have...they came, you know, in late...late...latter part of the seventeenth century, so they...not much later, but they came later than the others, so...**(not clear)**...very influential, but you have that...**(not clear)**...background in Europe - very, very striking, you know. And religion and politics are also that we could tha...talk more about later on; they are interlinked and intertwined, you know.

**Mduduzi:** I suppose most of them were also following the teachings of John Calvin? I'm just imagining; I don't know if there was another leader...

**Hans:** No, you see, you can...you can roughly talk about...you can talk about more...(not clear)...of the Reformation, but the Lutheran family...that Luther was first in the Reformation development and Calvin came like half...almost a generation after. And what we call...the Lutheran Churches are then going back straight to Luther and Germany, the northern...(not clear)...the Reformed Churches, all of them, they would call Calvin as their founding father, you know...all of them, be it in England, Scotland or Netherlands or...or in the US, of course, in America...there are many...so, and you know, there are a number of Reformed Churches in South Africa – Dutch Reformed Church, Herformerde Kerk, Gereformerde Kerk, whatever they are called, and they all go back to Calvin, oh yeah, but they still differ in their interpretations of Calvin and I don't think...I'm also not an expert on that, but I think those differences are...from outside...they're always difficult to see, you know, exactly what is it all about. Those are all very faithful to the basic principles of Calvin and we're coming to that later...

**Mduduzi:** Eh, Prof, I think this is, eh...what we have discussed now is quite...is quite useful and we ...has already laid a foundation for further interviews that we may...(not clear)...in the future...

**Hans:** Yes, yes...

**Mduduzi:** Yeah...



**Hans:** I think, you know, eh, what is...there are so many things you can...I mean, on the one hand they formed an identity that was very strong; eh, they kept up a level...a standard in terms of education and they kept links with...with Holland...the Netherlands in terms of that, eh, you know, that is quite...that is quite impressive if you were...how they could do this. I think this faith, ending up so far away from home and that strengthened the...their faith content...the faith, eh...identity. They were, I mean, it was...it was like...almost like one man; they all were part of that. The same time, they never talked about a State Church as such, but an Afrikaner, by definition, became a religious person, you know, but they could, as you see...historically, they would form different...(not clear)...different kinds of churches even, but basically the same faith. And an Afrikaner, by definition, would be a believer; I mean, that...that, I think, is very interesting to see in terms of, eh...in terms of Enlightenment a later period, you know, because the Enlightenment was never a reality here, I mean, that was so bypassed, but in Europe, of course, you couldn't talk like that. That was a personal thing - your faith – because if you were a Dutch or Swede you couldn't say that you were a believer. That was really part of the Enlightenment; eh, this became a personal issue. You could not equate a people with faith, never, never, never, but that became, for generations upon generations a very natural thing...(not clear)...in a way natural; of course there would always be people who, eh...who objected to that and took another course of life, but they were...they were...yeah, they were very few. Something like that.

**Mduduzi:** Prof., thanks very much...

**Hans:** Thank you...

**Mduduzi:** I think we'll continue next time and talk a lot about this...these issues and, maybe, look at them quite substantially, but thank you very much...

**Hans:** Thank you, thank you Mdu...

**Mduduzi:** ....for this ...**(not clear)**...; it has been very useful.

END



### APPENDIX 3

#### Interview by Mduduzi Xakaza with Santu Mofokeng: 30 December 2007: Bezuidenhout Valley, Johannesburg

**Mduduzi:** Thank you very much again for allowing me this opportunity to interview you on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December, in the middle of the festive season, and I know I'm taking you away from your normal way of living, actually, at this time of the year. I would like to ask you a few questions which we will discuss, maybe in details, I don't know. The first one is: According to the interview of the 24<sup>th</sup> of July, 2005, with Professor Hayes, Farzanah and I, you were born and bred in Johannesburg, but were always regarded as a Qwaqwa citizen. Can you please elaborate on this point and relate how this affected your daily life and your sense of belonging in particular.

**Santu:** Mdu, you know, what happened is, I was born in Soweto, not Soweto...**(not clear)**...I was born ...**(not clear)**...it's a coloured township, Newclare...

**Mduduzi:** Newclare?

**Santu:** At Newclare, I was born at Newclare, I was born at...(coughs/sneezes)...What happened is, in 1959, the people in Qwaqwa were 25 000; in 1975, the people in Qwaqwa, when they made statistics, there were 250 people...and you just wonder – it didn't take 10 year... 25 years – this Apartheid – it didn't take 25 years and people deterioration ...it multiplied 10 times and you just wonder whether babies were making babies or people were making people...this is Apartheid. Santu, *keMosotho ne*, Santu ...because he's Sotho per...-speaking person, he belongs in Qwaqwa, although he was born in Johannesburg. And, every time...**(not clear)**...when you ask people abo...what Apartheid is, you'll know what it actually meant. I was born here and then I didn't have any rights and rights within the city of Johannesburg...*ma kovalwa*...I remember uncle...**(not clear)**...where he was staying...actually, take him to the police station, whatever, eh, DPY 6, which means *kgore*...**(not clear)**...allowed rights to stay overnight – 72 hours at least, at the most, not at least, at the most, otherwise...**(not clear)**...regarded as Qwaqwa person is be...**(not clear)**...that *ke Mosotho* – I'm a Sotho-speaking person; therefore I belong there.

**Mduduzi:** So, that was a homeland system?

**Santu:** As, eh...that's Apartheid, actually; you have no rights here. You're only as good as a...**(not clear)**...you don't have a job, you go home – whatever that home...**(not clear)**... Santu was never born in Qwaqwa. I wasn't born in Qwaqwa; I was born in Soweto.

**Mduduzi:** But also...you were also made...

**Santu:** By law, by law; I don't belong there. That's reality; that's Apartheid. You don't know it, actually. You don't know it, Mdu, you don't know it; you're a small boy.

You're told that because you are Sotho, you belong to Qwaqwa; you're told...(not clear)...you don't have any rights here...

**Mduduzi:** Ah, thank you for this answer. And, Bro Santu you often come across as an independent thinker on the basis of what you said during the last interview referred to in my first question...

**Santu:** Eh, Mdu, I tell you that...I come from family of eight children...Santu and my father...Santu and my father have six fingers...I was raised to believe that I'm special...'cause I...whenever I tell people I say I cannot afford to f\*\*\* up because people f\*\*\* up. My brother f\*\*\*\*d up and he died of AIDS...(not clear)...he f\*\*\*\*d up. I was raised to believe....

**Mduduzi:** ...(not clear)...Ishmael?

**Santu:** Yeah, Ishmael. I was raised to believe that I am special. My mother used to...my father died when I was three years old and my father, because he had six fingers and I had six fingers, my mother used to look up to me...(not clear)...I remind him of his (sic) boyfriend or husband or whatever, whichever way you look at it. I was raised to believe that I'm special and therefore I cannot afford to f\*\*\* up. My sisters - 'cause they looked up to me - my mother used to look up to me. My father died when I was small, very small, a three years old, but ...(not clear)... When you say I'm an independent thinker, independence comes from fact that I always associate myself with people who are bigger than me and therefore I don't...(not clear)...I'll...I associate myself with people who raised me...*bangikhulisa* - they raised me. ...(not clear)...it's always been like that, that people I have respect for, people that I love or people who do things which I like, I associate myself with them...(not clear)...

**Mduduzi:** Bro Santu, I am actually referring particularly to you as a photographer - that you seem to think independently as a photographer, and I'd like you to tell me briefly how this attitude has impacted upon your career as a photographer.

**Santu:** ...(not clear)...my ancestors...my family...they rely on me, which means if I...okay, my mother raised me to believe ...I was raised to believe that whatever you do Santu, there's meaning, there's purpose and this is old-fashioned; there's no meaning in life; there's no meaning; there's no purpose. People die for no reason; we've got good people, bad people, whatever, but I was raised with these religious feelings - in life there's meaning and there's purpose, then whatever I do...(not clear)...independent, is that independence? I do what I do because I believe in it and I do it because I think it's meaningful. I do it because there's a reason for it. So, this is me. Eh, in time when photography was fashionable...(not clear)...no, no, I took up photography; maybe I could have done maybe other things. I was good at school; I was number one at school. When I took up photography...when I took up photography, it's because I thought 'I can tell little story about South African life'. There's meaning in what I'm doing. Peter Magubane, actually, actually, ...(not clear)...me those things...(not clear)...to be a photographer is not necessarily a lonely job; you can articulate, you can talk, you can show...(not clear)...Santu...Santu is an A student at school, comes from a family that

has no money to send him to school. When Santu decides that ‘I’m going to be a photographer’ it’s because other people have shown me that photography...(not clear)...photography is honourable work – you can articulate, you can be effective, you can...

**Mduduzi:** Yeah, Bro Santu, thanks very much. Now, can you please tell me about your involvement with Afrapix Collective and link that with an impact or impression David Goldblatt made on your outlook as a photographer.

**Santu:** I’ll tell you what, eh, Paul Weinberg once began organization...(not clear)...past, when you talk about photography, you talk about individuals who were probably communists who were probably leftists...(not clear)...people who were socialists, whatever, who felt that life is not right; they want to contribute...correct that and then Goldblatt was doing work that I really, actually, liked, actually...I have respect for him...after...Peter Magubane, after he won his award...I’m not very...Thomas Pringle Award...and then showing that ...in ’76...okay, I’d just left school in ’75...in ’76...showing that Apartheid is bad, children are dying and ...(not clear)...wonderful work. Which meant that I was a photographer ...(not clear)...’76, actually; I was a photographer as a school student and I wanted to be a scientist...(not clear)...and that I worked in a pharmacy; I wanted to be a pharmacist because I was ...Maths ...Maths ...Science ...I was good at and ...(not clear)...but ...(not clear)...I could not go to school; I do not have...my mother was working as a domestic and (cough)... when Peter Magubane showed me that you can talk about what you like – your dilemma, your... Sam Nzima go ahead, become famous because he made this June 16 photograph, but he’s not a photographer...(not clear)...actually, the photography...he did not go further...Peter Magubane went further...

**Mduduzi:** But what happened to Sam Nzima after that?

**Santu:** He went...worked for Apartheid government...KwaZulu...(not clear)...

**Mduduzi:** He went north?

**Santu:** He became an official within Apartheid...ilento, uba...u...(not clear)...Sam Nzima went...worked for Gazankulu – he was an official there.

**Mduduzi:** So, did he stop taking photographs?

**Santu:** Whether he did or did...he just came back now, after 1994, just came back to say ‘I’m a photographer, I give you quality’. Peter Magubane said: ‘...(not clear)...I give you quantity’. Peter Magubane went on to show Apartheid for what it is. And Sam Nzima had to run away to go to work as...in Gazankulu as an official in Apartheid ...ama homeland, whatever, this is what he did. We don’t know Sam Nzima’s work after...he...because he just happened to be there and to make a picture, that was it. He got his bonus which was hundred and...for a photograph which went to make millions of money and therefore you find that...ulento, uMagubane...(not clear)...Peter Magubane, Alf Khumalo who went on to work as photographers and artists, who’s better? What,

you know, what, you know, June 16, *uSam Nzima*, what did Sam do after? He just happened to be there to make this photograph...didn't even recognize his talent; did not even work for it...he went on to work for Apartheid...

**Mduduzi:** Let's come back to David Goldblatt...

**Santu:** Goldblatt... Goldblatt... Goldblatt...(not clear)...when you talk about Peter Magubane. Peter Magubane is the ...(not clear)...best. Maybe you can call me a ...(not clear)..., maybe, whatever...(not clear)...Peter Magubane went on to show us *iJune 16*... what happened because children were dying. He was going...he was followed...he was...he went to...actually, he was take...actually, he was banned...he...that's Peter Magubane. Then, you can talk about other people too. Alf Khumalo goes on to tell you: 'I know Mohammed Ali', whatever...and then, Peter Magubane, actually, is bad news – that's one part; and then, I went to David Goldblatt to learn. Goldblatt, like me or... I'm sorry, I'm sorry if I'm putting his words...that I'm not a fighter; when I see people, I walk away. Peter Magubane was talking about life under Apartheid...no, no, we talking Goldblatt...was doing work which was exciting, which had nothing to do with violence, had noth...colo...I ...(not clear)...I say...(not clear)...can still be a photographer ...sjamboks and police van, whatever, is not necessary, is not everything, is not photography. He can make photographs; he can talk...Goldblatt taught me that...I was working at ...(not clear)...newspapers and Santu, being a scientist, Santu being a Mathematician, Santu, whatever...chemistry of photography, eh, science of photography, I know that. The only thing is, Goldblatt taught me how to talk about it...(not clear)...the skills I already had. That's Goldblatt, he says...it's all about...(not clear)...do you wanna talk? He had the science, he had the skills, he had the technique; the only thing is to have a voice, what do you want to say? That's what Goldblatt actually...(not clear)...

**Mduduzi:** Bro Santu, you have mentioned a number of photographers of that time and I want to come to this idea, or this question, of photography as a weapon, as a cultural weapon. What is your opinion and how did you...how did you...?

**Santu:** May I tell you what, you know what...let's talk. When I joined Afrapix and when I joined this community of people, right, who were saying 'Apartheid is bad'...(not clear)...a meeting, or whatever, all those things which you identify...(not clear)...you realize who you are – Santu...(not clear)...Santu doesn't go to war, he doesn't make pictures of war, like I say...even what I said earlier, you listen to Omar or you listen to the language of the time...(not clear)...says photography is a weapon of struggle...ah, no, no, no, no; Santu doesn't do that – Santu is a ...when he sees a policeman, he wants to walk away, when he sees blood, he walks away, *uSantu lo, e uSantu lo*...at the time when I joined Afrapix, I didn't have a job; what I was looking for, I was looking for a place to work; I was not looking for a struggle...I was not activist...I was looking for a job, say you go out, you make pictures and then we sell your pictures and whatever and ...and when I tell my wife at that time, because I'd been fired before, I was looking for a job, actually, I was looking for a job, to be sure. '*Ma bathi* 'weapon of struggle' and 'we are activists, we are trying to...whatever, do you think my wife was happy? *Angiholi*, I don't get on Friday or month-end...I was looking for a job...

**Mduduzi:** Yeah, that's a reality, that is...

**Santu:** No, that was my reality at the time; I had a boy, *uKanu*, I had a daughter and...I'm looking for a job; I was fired from my job. Eh, tell me this is what we do; *i-Apartheid* is bad...*i-Apartheid* can be bad or whatever. I need food on the table. I need to do things and I could, but I did...my, my...when I joined *i-Afrapix*, I get introduced to people who had a mission, people...

**Mduduzi:** Bro Santu, how did they...how did they ...**(not clear)**...they could somehow achieve that mission, especially those who saw themselves as artists...

**Santu:** Eh, they'd been...no, no...no, no, they were not artists. You're talking...when you talk about Omar Badsha, you talk of Paul ...**(not clear)**...these are people who were believers...say 'we want to change this life; it's wrong'. Santu was looking for a job...**(not clear)**...I...I, well, I had pressure on myself, right. And they chose...there were many things they could have done, but *i-Afrapix*...you talking about visionaries, missionaries, *abantu*; they began *i-organization* whereby they say: 'We gonna push *i-Apartheid*, we gonna push it, we wanna show it up...you talking about...

**Mduduzi:** They wanted to expose it...?

**Santu:** No, no, ...**(not clear)**...one side or one part. Omar is fine *uPaul Weinberg*... they're fine; they come from good families. *USantu* is looking for a job...

**Mduduzi:** But Bro Santu...

**Santu:** They didn't have to do what they did, but they did it...

**Mduduzi:** Yeah, they did it, yeah...

**Santu:** They didn't have to, not because they were suffering, not because they thought...*abantu*...you're talking about people who have a belief *ukuthi*...'we wanna change things; this is wrong, this is...these are people who actually... who helped me. You don't only have to think about you, like *uSantu*... *ngiyangena la*...**(not clear)**...they say we'll give you a card, you work for Afrapix, but you don't get paid until you... we sell your photographs. What do I say when I go home ...go back home? '*Ng'thol' umsebenzi*'? Eh...what do I do? I have children; I have a wife. I was looking for a job. *U-Omar*...Omar, *uPaul*, *uGill*, *abo GZ*...**(not clear)** ...*ba right*...

**Mduduzi:** Who's Gill?

**Santu:** Gill de Vlieg...Omar...*abantu aba right*. They chose...

**Mduduzi:** But, Bro... Bro Santu...

**Santu:** Eh, that's a vision *ye-Afrapix*, ...**(not clear)**... you had people who did not necessarily know what they were doing.

**Mduduzi:** But I'm thinking about...

**Santu:** But, d' you know, *u...i-Afrapix*...like I...when I came in, I was looking for a job, right, and then... and then, it's not a job; I can't explain to my wife, my ex, whatever, but basically, you met people who had a vision, you met people who had a mission, you had people who saw *int'eng'ngayiboni ne*...I don't say ...why don't...*uSantu akanamsebenzi, bona ba alright angithi?* Damn ...**(not clear)**... they drive the cars; they can live...they can live...**(not clear)**...*i-Afrapix*, what it came to represent...*yivision*...**(not clear)**...you want to change things, you want to change life because it's wrong.

**Mduduzi:** Yeah. So, Bro Santu, how did they hope to really use the camera as a weapon, I mean, I'm trying to understand this. Eh, how could...?

**Santu:** You're trying to understand the camera as a weapon...eh, I'm sorry, you know, I wasn't planning on this conversation...*ulento, ulento* ...**(not clear)**...There's a movie...*ngizomkhumbula ma*...as we go forward...there's a movie called *i...kaSteve Biko ne*...**(not clear)**...

**Mduduzi:** *Cry Freedom?*

**Santu:** *Cry Freedom, ne*. There's a movie... *ulento*...**(not clear)**...(Sotho words which I can't write)...what I'm saying...*iCry Freedom*, the guy who was making that movie at that time *akhuluma ngoBiko ne, 'ma ung'buza*, when you ask me... Mdu, when you ask me *kore* 'How did they have a vision ...weapon, whatever, ...**(not clear)**...he made that movie and when you look at that movie...I don't know if you remember it. Everybody who's bad is a white person, *'ngathi abekh*...black policemen were not executing *i-Apartheid* strug...whatever. In that movie, when you look at it, *abelungu*...were only white people as policemen...are fighting, whatever. And then, you begin to believe *ukuthi* white people are oppressing black people, only to find...we were hit by black people too, therefore when you say *iphotography* ...whether it's a movie, whatever, you can propagate *ivision yakho*. After that movie, this is how we ...**(not clear)**...because I was not making photographs of *amaphoyisa* and whatever; I was showing like...*ibiography yami*: where do I live, how, what do we do, whatever. After that movie, white people were beating...in that movie, white people, white policemen...eh, *uyazi*...I'm cr...you know...black peop... policemen were beating you up. *Ak's'abelungu kuphela, nabo darkie bebakhona*, but when you talk about people; when you ...**(not clear)**...if you go *ubhek'i-advertising, abantu bayak'tshel'ukuthi 'our product is better than one'*, but they don't say it in so many words; propaganda...this is where the weapon comes... you look and you'll believe, that's photography, you look, you believe. What you look at...*angithi i-Apartheid beyisitshel'ukuthi 'abant'abamnyama*...we're taking care of them, whatever,...**(not clear)**...but if you don't know, you don't know *ukuthi ipropaganda le iwrong. Siyahlupheka*, but we pretend *ukuthi isharp*. Ma...ma...if you want to use *iphotography*, if you want to use photography as a weapon, basically, within that realm of knowledge, whatever, ...**(not**

**clear)**...no, no, actually, we're not happy, we're not happy...and I was having...**(not clear)**...I forget names, I remember numbers, I forget names...who is a ...*ke mang? Wenz'i Cry Freedom*, right. When he made that movie, he said: 'If I insert black people fighting other people, I'm going to confuse this audience'. Wayenza wathi:'abelungu babi'. That's weapon. Eh, I don't know if you remember, *uDenzel Washington usexy, e, abelungu bayasishaya*, whatever, and you look at that movie, you believe it. Awu ...What you don't realize *kore* your mind, your idea is being manipulated; this is...when you use photograph as a weapon, *uyayigoba, iqiniso*. Photography as a weapon...because you look and you believe, whereas *ireality* is not like that...much more complex. *Ushaywa abelungu...abant'abamnyama ba ho shapa*...today when people talk *bathi* you know we were fighting Apartheid...when...even policemen...we were fighting Apartheid. *Uhlangana nabelungu*, they tell you *ukuthi* we never voted for Apartheid...(laughs)...you ask yourself: 'how come it lasted so long?' (laughs). ...**(not clear)**...

**Mduduzi:** Everybody was against it.

**Santu:** Everybody...

**Mduduzi:** Everybody was against it...

**Santu:** Everybody, *uzibuz'ukuthi* 'how come it lasted so long?' Nobody wanted it, *akekh*...**(not clear – coinciding sentences – not comprehensible)**... I think I answered your question...**(not clear)**...you manipulate...

**Mduduzi:** Bro Santu...you've answered my question very thoroughly, quite thoroughly. So, Bro Santu...this is very interesting. So, now, what is your primary mission as a photographer now that this Apartheid system has ...

**Santu:** Now, no, no, *ayise Apartheid*. Apartheid, actually, when I began...when I began *iChasing Shadows*, whatever, *sesikhuluma*...we're still talking social issues...*ama problem asasekhona*. I find myself in Kuruman, *i-Apartheid isasekhona*. *Abantu* get beaten up...*abantu*...when I begin, after that ...for...say now I'm looking at landscape. I was finishing *ibiography*...my...I was finishing my biography...I'm talking...the issue ye-Apartheid *iphelile ne*...and you realize whenever you travel...you go overseas, whatever, whatever, people say: 'You're a South African, but do you know this land?' *Ekabani*, who owns it?

**Mduduzi:** Who owns the land?

**Santu:** The land...

**Mduduzi:** Surely we don't own it.

**Santu:** Eish, this is...this is mind...I begin to say I'm taking *idirection edifferent*. Has nothing to do *ukuth'uyahlupheka* or whatever. Now we're talking about... I get defined...I've got a definition: 'Santu – South African', but *iSouth Africa angiyazi*.

When I want to enter land, there are places you can't go. You say you're a South African, you own this country, but you don't own it...

**Mduduzi:** So,...

**Santu:** This is when...

**Mduduzi:** So, in other words, you are referring to the restriction of movement within the country, which is still there as it was there...?

**Santu:** *Bhuda, Bhuda*, what you say, what you say...you own...your president *umunt'omnyama*, but you don't own the land *wena* (laughs)...this is when *imovement* has nothing to do *ukuthi ubani*...I mean, it doesn't matter, uTony Leon is your boss or whatever, *ipresident yeSouth Africa* or *u Hellen Zille*, it doesn't matter, but *'ma uthi 'singobile, siwinile'*, what did you mean...?

**Mduduzi:** Nothing...

**Santu:** (laughs) What did you mean? *Ayi*, don't say nothing, *ungakhulumi iqiniso* ...**(not clear)**...I want you to think about, actually what is going down...

**Mduduzi:** So, as a photographer...

**Santu:** ...**(not clear)**...I'm sitting at this place, right, *eKuruman, ne*, ...**(not clear)**...*ke vaya le cherry yangamla*... **(not clear)**...*ke Christmas Eve; abelungu bazojabula. Ba...bamangele hore darkie ebatlang*,...**(not clear)**...*uyang'thuka lomuntu, Mdu... 'ja kaffir'*...**(not clear)**...because, *uyabona* ...**(not clear)**...*baas, manje angithi umuntu... (not clear) ...ngizenza ngathi ke re ja baas*...he doesn't know how to respond because I respect him. *Uyang'thuka, ke kaffir, ne. Manje 'ma kabon'ukuthi akwazi ukuth'ungena kanjani because ke vaya le girlfriend yalekgoa, wabona? Uyabuya kimi* he says: *'Jou moeskond... (not clear) ...jou moeskond kaffir; ngiyambheka futhi ngithi jou moeskond ou baas* (laughs), *manje, akakwazi ukuthi uzokwenzani*...

**Mduduzi:** Can you say it in English because I...

**Santu:** It does...*akunandaba*... *angazi ukuthi* ...**(not clear)** ...*awuyi owni*...

**Mduduzi:** We don't own it.

**Santu:** No, we don't. Hey, this when I begin ...I say I'm doing landscapes, *kore* I want to know....whenever this is Mooidorpie, when you say Kaffirskraal, whatever, who owns it? The politics are still continuing, but you see, what we're doing...*uSantu aka....siya phambili*.

**Mduduzi:** So, in other words, you're still investigating our present...

**Santu:** I'm not investigating, we...Mdu, I'm not investigating; what I'd say is that in this...what...language *yokuthi singama bhoza*, whatever is.... what do you mean? What do you mean? Basically, the struggle still... *isaya phambili* and what I do is not going to change anything, but do you know what is gonna change? My daughter, her daughter ...when I go into *irealm ya knowledge bazothol'ukuthi no uSantu bekakhona... bane option... nepast...* people will tell them...*manje ba...*they'll discover other things. That's my struggle, that's my struggle, Mdu, that's my struggle...we said within *iknowledge...*we began with *iBible ne...iBabele isasi oppressa namhlanje, noma i...*doing wrong things, but *ijustfywa bo Bush*, whatever, whatever *wabona?* And then you know, you know yourself *kore* truth is not necessarily true; I control, *i power, wabona...* what I'm saying is that what I do, I do it for my kids, for... for you ... **(not clear)** ... *ha kona motho ho na ownership...* nobody has *i-ownership, yiqiniso, ne bhuti* and *iqiniso angeke likusize*.

**Mduduzi:** I know, I know, it... I mean, what you are saying there is true... is true. So, let us go back to this question of ownership during the years of the struggle. What was your idea of it?

**Santu:** No, the one thing is that, after 1994... after 1994, when black people say *yi democracy*, that means *kore* ... democracy, that means number of people vote, whatever ... **(not clear)**...it's fair, it's fine, *ifair*. What never happened is that they did not take psychic ownership... **(not clear)** ...they did not do that. And who's gonna do that? ... **(not clear)** ...take you back and answer your questions *njenge tika tika*, but what we're doing, we're having *iconversation ukuthi* after *i ownership*, who owns what. You have to claim what you own.

**Mduduzi:** But then, during the Apartheid era, what was your idea of ownership?

**Santu:** Back, back, back, I was a foreigner in a place I was born at and ...I go further...*khona manje*, I don't comb my hair ...when I go on plane... I go to Sweden, whoever ...I used to do that to be a good boy because I was taught by missionaries *ukuthi uziphathe kahle, uyabona, ube skoon, u...* don't be dirty, whatever, and I realized, actually *kore...isuperstructure, i-infrastructure*, whatever, you don't control it. *Manje*, do you know ... today, you're gonna fly to Durban... *ispatial* difference...you say one hour I'll be in Durban, whatever, ...**(not clear)** ...*besihamba ngama donki*, you take forever *uyovakashela umalume wakho*, whatever ...**(not clear)** ... last night, no, not last night, a day before last night ... I can travel 500 kilometres *ngihamba nale...u...uMthunzi...***(not clear)** ...*lo sisi lo, bebengena, ngiyamuzwa...* **(not clear)** ... when I wake up in the morning, I can wake up in Germany, whatever. *'Ma uth'uyabheka*, you went 7000 kilometres ...**(not clear)**... *ke mang controlla daardie ding?*

**Mduduzi:** But who controls it?

**Santu:** *Ke mang controlla... ke bo darkie* ... **(not clear)** ...We're running the country, *sinemali*; what do we do...**(not clear)** ...what do you do ...**(not clear)**... Apartheid *e felile...***(not clear)** ...we can think, we can talk, what do we do? ...**(not clear)** ...country *ye nice...*

**Mduduzi:** Bro Santu, let's come back to this ...to these, eh, questions...

**Santu:** *Siya... siya phambili.*

**Mduduzi:** Yeah...

**Santu:** I hope, I hope ...(not clear)... for *wena*...

**Mduduzi:** Yes. From what you observe on a daily basis as a photographer, just from what you observe, what is your personal opinion of the current socio-economic conditions of the former oppressed masses of this country?

**Santu:** *Ayi, hey, ngi ...ngi ...I wrote this. ... (not clear) ... Isocial project asiyishebi. Asi question e... because ... (not clear) ... sengi answerile uyabona? Isocial economic, whatever... Today, when you talk about I BEE, there are so many darkies who have a lot of money and then, do they employ, do they produce money? Badlala lotto... (not clear) ... ah, damn, what do you do, what am I gonna do; we've got shares, we've got markets, istocks, ... (not clear) ... ka o fela; that's what you do, but you produce money. Do you know ... (not clear) ... today when people talk ukuthi do you know Portuguese are racist or Greeks are racist or whatever, you're talking about people who are working 24 hours... (not clear) ... the store at the corner...abantu, they wait, they work, they employ and bayakuphusha ukuthi usebenze because we're going to pay you. No, no abodarkie... aboda ...darkie ... (not clear) ... istock market, they play the stork market; they don't employ because 'ma u employa uyi racist; uyi racist; 'ma uthi 'hey you work, you work' ...oh you think baas, whatever, kaffir, you are racist; you're not producing work. They're not producing work. The corner store le evala ngo 12 ebusuku i-employa... (not clear) ... those are people who are producing wealth; they produce it. Laba bastock ...istock market ... idollar... is it going up, is it going down, kao fela, ka... because when you employ, you have to take responsibility. If kumel'uxosh'umuntu ... (not clear) ...toyi toyi kao fela, we shouldn't do that; inyuk'ikhona, but kore is it producing imali? Mina ngiyesaba, Mdu, I'm afraid to employ because uzongitoytoyela or mhlawumbe, whatever, ka o fela; we shouldn't do that. Kore since '94 we say we take over icountry, but what do we do?*

**Mduduzi:** Now, Bro Santu...

**Santu:** ...(not clear)...

**END OF SIDE 'A' OF THE TAPE**

**BEGINNING OF SIDE 'B' OF THE TAPE**

**Santu:** ....As I was saying to you, 1994, 1996, whatever, I was doing a biography, metaphorical biography. Metaphor is the nice word, the metaphor ... because ... (not clear) ... is very fancy. When I was doing uMotouleng Caves, I was saying *abant'abamnyama* ...I began... I actually began this work in 1986; 1996... that was 10

years after... **(not clear)** ...*ukuthi abantu*, what happens is that what makes people, you know... when people talk about *iresilience*, you ask yourself 'kuthi where is the resilience coming from, right. Resilience is coming from ...**(not clear)** ...we believe in our ancestors, we believe in church, we believe in ...**(not clear)** ... In 1986 when I was doing *iMotouleng*, I was trying to say: 'Now, we are done. Santu, just forget...*uSantu*. He had to fold this thing *yebiography*, just fold it; *seyiphelile* ...**(not clear)** ... (laughs). That resilience comes from the fact that you believe in spirituality; you are spiritual as a person – *umuntu, ke Santu*. I go to Motouleng to find out, actually, what is going down: actually, what is going down? Santu ...I did, eh, *Chasing Shadows*, I did the Motouleng Caves...I was trying to find out what makes these people *baphile, oa bona*. Eh, people tell us *sinobuntu*, people tell us we are wonderful, people tell us we are resilient; now, I'm trying to figure out where's that resilience coming from? Who are we?

**Mduduzi:** ...**(not clear)**...

**Santu:** Who are we? ...**(not clear)**... *uSantu* ... Santu is a drunk. *USantu uy'emashibhini*, *uSantu uya ebholeni*, so I'm trying to define *ukuthi ibiography le yini* ...**(not clear)**...*uSantu*. *Ngiyobheka ukuthi amaBhunu*, what do they do? I'm talking about...I'm looking *i...* us. I like... So, *ke a koMotouleng* ...**(not clear)**... for a long time. People say '*ma... isizathu sakho kore* ...**(not clear)**...whether I believe *uSantu*, whether he believes or doesn't believe, that's what people do. *Ke a koMotouleng* to look at shadows...shadows about what...*isithunzi*... When we're talking about ...we're not talking about *umthunzi*. What we're talking about... we're talking about other things. *Umthunzi wa...* in English *umthunzi* is a shadow. *Umthunzi*, as a darkie, is not a shadow; *yi aura*, it's an aura...it's an aura. It depends who you are, whether you have it or you don't have it... **(not clear)** ...**ke batla ho ba nesiriti**, *umthunzi, ke batla...*

**Mduduzi:** Can you explain *seriti* for me, this Sotho word, *seriti*, what is it, what does it mean?

**Santu:** Well, what it means, it means a lot of things ... it's very difficult to put it down. *Ha ore ke na seriti ha ho le mo ...motho ...ng'zokuhlula* because *ke na siriti*; I'm strong as a person or *ke na seriti* because *ke na* ...**(not clear)** ... or *ke na seriti* ...**(not clear)** ... *abothekeni bayang'thanda* or *ke na seriti* ...**(not clear)** ...*ke a pela*. *Ke Sesotho se...*

**Mduduzi:** So, does *seriti* also mean dignity as well...

**Santu:** Dignity, everything...aura, that's a ...aura, ...**(not clear)** ...

**Mduduzi:** Like these guys who are...

**Santu:** Hence dignity... these people who are going around...they say hey, I'm ...**(not clear)** ... what they do, these guys who are going around... they commit crime... *bane* dignity...**(not clear)** ... if somebody comes into your house... if I don't know it...**(not clear)** ... I imagine I'm strong because I have...*eish*, the word *seriti* is very difficult to pin down as a word, but what it signifies ...**(not clear)** ...*ha ke na seriti* I can beat you,

not physically, but ...**(not clear)** ...I'm better than you are ... **(not clear)** ... If you don't have e *seriti*, then you are weak...

**Mduduzi:** Okay, alright. Now, Bro Santu, in the first place, what drew you to that place, to Motouleng Caves, who told you about it, how did you know about the place because it is very far from here; it is in the Free State?

**Santu:** It's 350 km.

**Mduduzi:** Yes. It is also a hidden place; it is not just a place that everyone knows about. Who told you about it...

**Santu:** No, no, ...**(not clear)** ... you listen to me. When you talk about caves, when you talk about... the people who built the Bible ... **(not clear)** ... there are two kinds of Bibles; I'm sorry, I speak like I'm a ...**(not clear)** ...what I'm saying ...*o na le* Old Testament, *o na le* New Testament and the people who are to you in the Old Testament the...the...the ...the... is eh, rural people. Eh, what's the word...what's the word...these are people who believe in the ...**(not clear)**...

**Mduduzi:** Are you referring to traditionalists?

**Santu:** Yeah, when you look at darkies, *abant'abamnyama*...darkies, actually... **(not clear)** ...they can relate to the Old Testament. ... **(not clear)** ...say you beat me...Jesus Christ... **(not clear)** ...an eye for an eye, whatever, ..**(not clear)** ... as I say, I can articulate my thoughts better. *U ...ulento*...the Old Testament...believe in the Old Testament because we believe in ancestors...if you go to the Old Testament *abantu ba believe ku* ...**(not clear)**... when you say: 'I'm a Christian', which is the New Testament... **(not clear)** ... we don't... '*ma sikhuluma*...we don't. ...*(not clear)*... uJesu...eh, Jesus Christ as somebody who gives you ...**(not clear)** ...we don't...

**Mduduzi:** But the place?

**Santu:** The place itself...**(not clear)**... was an accident...when I was looking at television and I looked at this place and I recognized it. Now it has become destination we go to...Motouleng ...**(not clear)**... I didn't go to Motouleng because I was sent there; I went to Motouleng because I was saying: 'Santu...' *uSantu* says life in the township *inje*. *USantu* goes further... says, when I was doing *i* The Black Photo Album, this is who our ancestors are; *siphuma kuphi?* When I was doing *uMotouleng*, *uSantu uthi:* 'This is what we believe in'. But Santu had already begun the work...ten years. The first job...the first ...actually, *iproject uSantu ayenzile*...

**Mduduzi:** *Chasing Shadows?*

**Santu:** Chasing Shadows, it begins in 1986. In 1996, he's stopping the story. 19...ten years down the line, when it's okay that you can speak about your tradition or who you

are, and, eh, it's okay. *USantu wenz'i Chasing Shadows*...and then, this is when *uSantu* begins to say: 'Santu is no longer doing social work...'

**Mduduzi:** Okay, from '96?

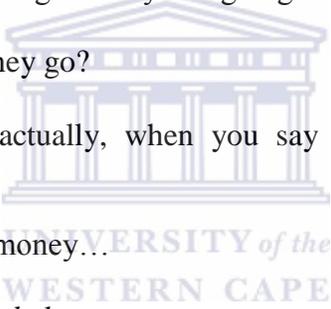
**Santu:** More or less, actually... **(not clear)** ...since '94 and ... when we are losing *ifocus*. Well, '*ma ngikhuluma ngoBadsha* what...*i-Afrapix*, whatever, ...when they say *uMandela se uphumile*, whatever, *uSantu uya mova*, is trying to find his own way. What he does do '*ma u* ...when I go to Motouleng, *uSantu* ...when he goes there, he said: 'I began to look at landscape; who owns this land?'

**Mduduzi:** Yeah, that's what I'm ...

**Santu:** *Abant'abamnyama, abant'abamnyama*, when we say: 'I'm going to the caves, I'm going to do whatever, you go there, you have to pay...we say *siqobile*, we won, ...it's our ...*abelungu basenze kanje*, whatever ...**(not clear)** ...you have to pay and *abantu abamnyama* it's theirs, '*yabona kore* it's your...*ba tho bamnyama*, when they go *eMotouleng bay'ekhaya* because the ancestors *bahlala lapho*, they believe that, but they have to pay. And this is when I begin to say I'm going to look...

**Mduduzi:** Where does the money go?

**Santu:** I'll begin at *ukuthi* actually, when you say you won, what did you win, actually...

**Mduduzi:** So, where does the money...

**Santu:** You don't own it...eh, *abelungu*...

**Mduduzi:** The money goes to...?

**Santu:** It goes to the owner of the place, *umlungu*, white person, whatever, owns what you regard as your own. This is where...

**Mduduzi:** But eh, ...

**Santu:** This is where, this is where you begin to question when you say life has changed; it isn't chang...

**Mduduzi:** But then in what capacity do they take the money?

**Santu:** No, no, no, you have the darkies standing at the gate, you have to pay her or them or whatever. When you say capacity... **(not clear)** ...what I'm saying is that basically, is that in order to have access you have to pay for it and that access... you wonder when they say after colonialism, after whatever ... **(not clear)** ... you tell me... at your life, your life, Mdu, whatever, do you own it? Do you own that place? What is going down?

**Mduduzi:** Yeah. Eh, Bro Santu, when you ...when you make the photographs, some of them...eh, I'm referring to these... to those photographs of Motouleng Caves ... you try to depict that ...**(not clear)** ...

**Santu:** Something, something which is not there, that's why I call it *Chasing Shadows*; these are *Shadows* and people believe in *Shadows*. Whatever those *Shadows* are ...**(not clear)** ...when I said earlier, i-aura, it's strength, it's belief, whatever. When I do it, I actually say this is where photography can go. It can go there, but you try to articulate an idea, a thought which is real, *kwabany'abantu* it's very real, but ...**(not clear)** ...it may not be real for me; it may not be, but I can tell you, I was raised ... *yabona khona* ...my name ...what is my name?

**Mduduzi:** Santu.

**Santu:** *Ke Santu*. I was raised *nge* belief system and then *'kuthi ingiyisaphi*, I don't ...**(not clear)**...

**Mduduzi:** But, eh, your notion of reality...

**Santu:** This is where Santu comes in and says: 'Your technology, your understanding... can you visualize it, can you make it real, can you... this is ...**(not clear)**... That's why I call it *Chasing Shadows*; these are *Shadows* ...**(not clear)**... for you, for anybody...we're chasing shadows. That's why you own what you have, what you...**(not clear)** ... *'ma uthi sinqobile*, I don't know what did you win. I don't know that ...we are chasing shadows. *Abant'abamnyama* ... although we're saying we're in control, but we're chasing shadows. That's why we still have no control of all what we imagine we have. Now, from what I'm saying... I'm saying this to you...I'm saying it to you just so that you think about actually what is going...what are you doing, actually, what are you doing ...*umuntu* ... *uzibuze wena*. Eh, that's why ...the other **day you go** ...*iSowetan* it's *uSantu uyiphilosopher*. Eh, *iphilosopher* ...**(not clear)** ...drunk ...**(not clear)** ...whatever, that means is 'ineffective'. Philosopher because *ireality*...they going around with big cars...**(not clear)** ...that means he's not effective.

**Mduduzi:** Bro Santu, what then prompted you to photograph eh, *Concentration Camp for Natives* and *Concentration Camp graves for Boers* in 1999?

**Santu:** In 1999 Thabo Mbeki ...Thabo Mbeki goes to celebrate hundred years... says the Anglo-Boer War and I say: 'Don't be an idiot Thabo Mbeki.' The only time we arrive is when the war progresses, 2001 ... no, no, no, 2001 or 2002 ... and that would be hundred years since black people were actually incarcerated in concentration camps. Only...the war was begun in 1899...1899 and then later on, when they realized, when they begin... black people were not fighting ...darkies were not fighting, that's why ... do you know what the difference is between a prison and a concentration camp? Concentration ...*iconcetrated* people who were not fighting, not soldiers, not... and then people... and this is where we begin because you provide infrastructure for *amaBhunu* or *ma* ...whatever. This begins circa 19... 1901 ...1902 and if you want to celebrate *une*

anniversary *eyabant'abamnyama* because ...they call the war 'Anglo-Boer War' that means ...**(not clear)** ...English and the Boer were fighting ...we were victims here ...*thina singama passenger lana* ...

**Mduduzi:** So, the two big...**(not clear)** ...were fighting...

**Santu:** What I'm saying ...**(not clear)** ...big guys were fighting, but ...and then *thina* how we become involved in the war... that's when ...*amaBhunu la 'bethi ya* ...when the English they thought they're going to solve this war in six months or ten months or whatever. ...**(not clear)** ...infrastructure...**(not clear)** ...darkies who were looking after your cows or your wives while you were fighting, whatever, when they begin to say actually we are losing this war because it's not ending. *Abo* darkie, when black people become involved, *babangalwi*...it's Anglo-Boer War, you want...what do you want? ...**(not clear)** ...1902 ...*uMbeki* ...**(not clear)** ...when I begin ... when I ...*mamela*, when I begin ...**(not clear)** ...*ke etsa iconcentration* camps. I want to say, actually, whatever you call them ...Germans, whatever, *amasimb'aqale la*... and ... **(not clear)** ...*siyaqala* ... **(not clear)** ...*ukuthi* you ask to pay us for making us suffer, but you know *maJuda ha Hitler*, thirty nine years later, ...**(not clear)**... *bodarkie* ...1904 *maGermany* ...**(not clear)** ...whatever trials and tribulations we went through, nobody knows them. When I go to Poland, look at concentration camps, right, I say actually when you looking at parallel lines, ne ...am I gonna ...this is around what ...1990 ...**(not clear)** ...I can remember because it's written. 19 ...when I go to Poland, this is around the time when South Africa is trying to deal with its own problems. *Ngike ngizibuz'ukuthi*...we have concentration camps. What are we going to do with them? We have *iRobben Island*. What are we going to do with it? Eh, these are questions that I try to find out ...in a ...**(not clear)** ...basically, we look up to white people in the world, wherever, *ngiyazibuz'ukuthi* how did they deal with those problems which we are going through? ...**(not clear)** ... not a debate, actually; it was not debated. Mdu, do you know *ukuthi iRobben Island khona manje sekuyilento* ...

**Mduduzi:** World Heritage Site...

**Santu:** Eh, for what? What does it mean?

**Mduduzi:** And who declares ...who declares ...?

**Santu:** Who decided ... **(not clear)** ...this is where we begin ...

**Mduduzi:** We don't decide; they decide...

**Santu:** This is where my work actually begins...

**Mduduzi:** Yeah...

**Santu:** How did other people deal *ne'yindab'ezinjalo*?

**Mduduzi:** Who gives them authority to decide? Why can't we decide?

**Santu:** Yeah, you're not...you're not even doing it...you're not even doing it ...you're not even thinking it, actually...you 're not ... Eh, this is where I begin ...(not clear) ...you're asking me, actually; you're not... I was... (not clear) ...Goldblatt...Goldblatt ...David Goldblatt, damn... (not clear) ... Charles van Onselen ... (not clear) ...is a historian ...(not clear) ...*ke outie, ke darkie* ...(not clear) ...people who make you think...*ho re* actually, what is going down? You want to be trendy, you want to be nice? Be trendy and nice...(not clear) ...like, *uzibuze*, as we were saying earlier *ho re* why *Biko ba mbulaile*, why Mandela *basambulaile*, why...it's funny you begin to ask these questions...actually, *ho re i'ndaba zime kanjani*?

**Mduduzi:** So, .... so, your work as a photographer ... is still very much ...

**Santu:** I'm sorry, I'm sorry, ...(not clear) ...no, it's informed, no, no, it's actually informed by bigger people who are better than me; they're not necessarily photographers. Eh, today ...today ...I was ...what, what ...wait for me, wait for me ...we have a show, I can show you the book ...as I say, I don't think for myself, *oa bona*, but ...(not clear) ...because...David Goldblatt ...I don't think for my...they say...they tell me; I don't think for myself. They write ...in a book, I'll show you now... they write: 'this is one is intelligent, this one is this, this is doing that... because *ke darkie* ...you know , what I do ...

**Mduduzi:** In other words, in other words ...

**Santu:** No, what I do... no, what I ...what I do, no, I ...I was fighting with Goldblatt the other day, you know, don't tell me, I do what I do and ...they tell me *ho re* I just think for myself ...(not clear) ...they write about me without even asking about it ...

**Mduduzi:** But why do they do that?

**Santu:** Who f\*\*\*\*n' cares? Who cares? Do you care? You don't care. But ... they write: 'Santu is doing this work because *uGoldblatt* told him or, whatever,... he's doing ...' and I say: 'when did this happen? ...(not clear) ... where were you wean ... (not clear) ...Goldblatt or whatever. What I do, what I'm saying... unless he can begin to work on that ...*unyile, re nyile, unyile* ...(not clear) ...today, do you know in the past, *i-Apartheid, yi Apartheid* and then later on we say *i-AIDS yi-AIDS*. *Khona manje sikhuluma nge climate change* ...(not clear) ...nobody is responsible for ...*uyabona ho re* ...(not clear) ...Santu ...(not clear) ...I don't think like that...you don't send me, *uyabona* ...(not clear) ...and they tell me: 'go to ...(not clear) ...go wherever'. They send me around; they say: 'people are suffering because of climate change' and I say: 'no, no, people are not suffering because of climate change ...'

**Mduduzi:** Were you commissioned?

**Santu:** Yeah, I was, ...no, no, no, this is where you abuse *ilento*, what you call ...*ilento*, ifellowship. They give me a fellowship, but basically ...(not clear) ... I'm confused

about ... was this a commission or was this a fellowship? *Ifellowship*...that means *ho re* I recognize you, you're doing good work, continue, whatever, and what happens...

**Mduduzi:** Is this the Ruth First Fellowship?

**Santu:** *Yifellowship, ya ... (not clear)* ...and then, when I go back... *'ma kuyi* commission, I go back, right, and I say: 'You gave me R40 000; I spent R70 000; are you going to pay me the difference? *... (not clear)* ...and what do you do? *Ngiyasho Mdu*, I tell myself, ...damn, I can show you the work, *... (not clear)* ...

**Mduduzi:** So, in other words, ...

**Santu:** In other words, we're not in control, in other words *aboSantu ... (not clear)* ...*li kaffir*, in other words, what I do ...maybe *umntwana wakho*, maybe *ngoana oa hao o tla e* appreciate, *oa o tloa?*

**Mduduzi:** Yeah...

**Santu:** *Ke tla o etsa obe strong, oa o tloa? Ke tla o e tsa ube* proud because I ...*a ke kaffir, awung* ...you don't push me, *uyabona*... and then you have to think...*uyabona ko re* if *ngiyakhuluma nawe ho na nou ko re* if *ungenanyuku, ke tla ho gaya yona, but ko re ke goiia*; I'm throwing it because I really...*thina sesihlulekile*... **(not clear)** ...

**Mduduzi:** Bro Santu, thanks very much. Eh, we have come to the end of this session, but I'm very, very thankful about all the ideas and the thinking behind whatever ... **(not clear)** ... you have shared with me today and I wish you good luck with your work. And I...I ... I personally admire ...**(not clear)** ...I think that you've done a lot. You are not just operating on the margins; I think you are ...you are operating very much successfully ...**(not clear)**...centre. Thank you, thank you very much.

END

## APPENDIX 4

### Interview by Mduduzi Xakaza with David Goldblatt: 22 January 2008: Cape Town

**Mduduzi:** David, once more, thank you very much for your time again. Eh, I know that I last saw you in 2006.

**David:** Is it two years ago?

**Mduduzi:** I think so, yes, that's when I saw you. And it's a pleasure to be able to see you again today. When we had our last interview you had just started talking about church buildings that you photographed in *The Structures of Things* and then technology disappointed us. Can you please briefly explain what these buildings mean to you and how they attracted your attention in the first place?

**David:** My interest...let me start at the beginning; my interest is in values – what do people value, how do they express the values? And the things that we build are expressions of values and this is...this is almost tautology because when I...when I buy something...I buy this cell phone, I have a special value. I prefer this cell phone to that one and that one to that one. Eh, I prefer a cell phone that is water proofed when that isn't; eh, I prefer a cell phone that does certain things to one that doesn't. So, I'm expressing my preferences; my preferences are values and expressions of my values and values very quickly become mixed up with ethics and with beliefs, belief systems. So, if we look around us and ask ourselves about buildings that we erect – structures – then, among the most expressive structures that you can think of are those in which we express our religious beliefs. The reason is that our religious beliefs are an attempt on our part to approach the ineffable, the untouchable, the unthinkable. And, in building something to express our religion we thereby make very clear statements about some of the things that we believe and that we value. Now, this is more so in South Africa and, I think, in most other countries, the reason being that religion has played a very important role in our brief history...and it has been a very strong force among Afrikaners. Eh, they have been, at the same time, the most active and energetic settlers of early South Africa among the Europeans. The English were there, but the Afrikaners were among the most energetic; they pushed into the interior, and as they went they would build churches and these churches became very, very important expressions of their values. So, I thought that my...I would...I was interested in photographing structures of many kinds, of all kinds, but I was particularly interested in structures and expressions ...religious...(not clear)...

**Mduduzi:** That's interesting. Eh, thanks very much, David, and having heard all that, I know that you are not necessarily a landscape photographer. You do take photographs of landscape, but you don't particularly see yourself only as a landscape photographer. But can you briefly explain to me what keeps on drawing you to this particular subject or theme?

**David:** To landscape?

**Mduduzi:** Yes, because it does.

**David:** Well, I'm interested in everything that I see. I try to be interested in everything that I see around me; I'm interested in the world in which I live, South Africa. And, I can't possibly be actively interested in everything that I see, but in something that interests me more and for the last few years in particular I've become interested in, for the lack of a better word, landscape. By the landscape I mean the way in which we have shaped the places that we live in – the land that we live on, the land that we farm, the land that we turn into townships, the land that we turn into suburban homes. I'm interested in this phenomenon. Just as, over the years, I've become interested in various aspects of this...of South African society, I have become, in the last few years, particularly interested in this aspect.

**Mduduzi:** So, that's obviously why I never see you having taken the photograph of an empty space?

**David:** I don't know.

**Mduduzi:** I assume that is why, because you want to see what people have done on...  
(not clear).

**David:** Oh, I see. It depends what you mean by an 'empty space', if you mean by an 'empty space'... if you mean by an 'empty space' a space that has not been occupied by man, by mankind, ...

**Mduduzi:** Or affected by mankind...?

**David:** Or affected by mankind, then, what you're really saying is that I'm not interested...I don't photograph pure nature, if I... (not clear).

**Mduduzi:** Never. I've never seen that.

**David:** Right. Well, there is one photograph at the moment in Michael Stevenson's gallery that comes very close to that; actually I ... (not clear due to traffic noise). And, as far as I can see, there is no evidence of man in that picture at all.

**Mduduzi:** But then, what attracted you to that particular landscape because I know that you are interested in structures, in human beings, etc, etc and you have been looking at social values for quite a long time...

**David:** Well, I suppose in this particular case I became interested in it because it was almost a structured landscape, but I ... no, it's not a photograph that I particularly like, I have to say. Michael likes it very much, I mean the man who runs that gallery; eh, and people seem to like it. It's not one that I would especially like. Eh, largely because, to me, it doesn't speak eloquently enough about people who occupy the land.

**Mduduzi:** Yeah, that is interesting... (not clear)... because I always try to look at you in comparison with early photographers, like James Chapman and others, who came ...

(not clear) and I see that you are very different, ... and many other photographers who are your contemporaries; you are very different from those early photographers because I'm trying to think ... to trace... the history of photography in this country. That is quite important for me to understand.

**David:** Now, ... (not clear) is an exception, but, for the most part, when I photograph a landscape it is one that bears the marks, if you like, of human habitation.

**Mduduzi:** David, I have been wanting to ask you this question for a long time, but I remembered when I thought about questions that I want to ask you. Can you, please, highlight briefly what impression the 1982 Festival of Culture and Resistance in Gaborone, Botswana, made upon your mind.

**David:** Upon me?

**Mduduzi:** Yes, I keep on reading about it and I wish I were there, but I just want to get a little bit of an insight, especially what impression it made on you as a person.

**David:** Well, it made a very deep impression on me; it was a first time that I had been to such an event. In fact I don't think that we'd had such an event before. There was a night of marvelous music, Dollar Brand, Abdullah Ebrahim, and, I think, Hugh Masekela was there, Kipie Moeketsi. That was a fantastic evening; so, it was a great occasion, but from the point of view of, what should I say, photographic philosophy in this country, it marked a very important divide, I suppose, for me, in that it was agreed among the photographers there ... (not clear)... that the ... if you wanted to support the struggle and you were a photographer, then the camera was a weapon in the struggle and it was your duty to use it to further the struggle and this was not my view. So, I felt quite estranged, if you like, ... (not clear) ... my colleagues, eh... yeah.

**Mduduzi:** But of course, as an individual, you had a right to express your opinions.

**David:** Oh yes, sure, nobody's preventing me from expressing my opinions.

**Mduduzi:** I'm just trying to get to know if they managed... did they manage to define this notion quite properly to everyone or did they just say it in passing and then ... were they overwhelmed by emotion when they said that the camera should be seen as a weapon ...

**David:** I don't think they were overwhelmed by emotion, no, but there certainly was very strongly expressed and agreed view that photographers were an important ... photography was an important weapon in the struggle and photographers who supported the struggle should use their cameras to support the struggle. It was a very ... (not clear) expressed view. It also, for a while, I think, oh, for a while or for a very long time, divided, very sadly, white and black photographers. They... I think that the... the black guys felt very strongly that they needed to develop on their own and, if I'm not mistaken, when they got back... when we all got back into South Africa, there was, for a time, at

any rate, quite a strong move to ... for the black photographers to form a group (**not clear**).

**Mduduzi:** Because I know about Afrapix Collective...

**David:** Yes, and then others formed Afrapix which was not based on black or white consciousness, if you like, and they were a mixed batch of people...

**Mduduzi:** Was there any other collective other than the Afrapix ...(**not clear**) ...?

**David:** Well, I think that the black guys, when they got back to South Africa, formed a group for a time; I forget what it was called and I don't even remember who was in it, but, yeah, it was ...eh,...yeah...

**Mduduzi:** Thanks very much. I think I wanted to get clarity on this because I've always been thinking about it and I've also been looking at your photographs, seeing how powerful they are, eh ...

**David:** Yes, but, you know, you mustn't accept my view on this as being an authoritative view; eh, I don't know if there has ever been a paper published about the conference or if anybody has kept notes, but, you know, you ... (**not clear**) ...my view of what I experienced there, but it's a very personal view...

**Mduduzi:** Okay, I'll take it as a personal view, but I really think it's very important because you are a very important South African photographer. Now, David, is there a particular reason why you never photograph crisis or volatile situations? I have in mind examples of other South African photographers who tended to document political conflict between the apartheid state and the people in the 1980s ... (**not clear**) ...but I have looked at your photographs; I don't see you photographing crisis or any dramatic situation.

**David:** Yeah, there're basically two reasons for this; the first reason: I'm a coward, I don't ... (**noisy siren sound in the street**) ...I'm afraid of physical violence and when I'm in a situation which there is ...violence, I avoid it; I run away from it. So, I found that I was not suited to photographing situations of confrontation, physical confrontation. But, secondly, in my own way of wanting to relate to the world around me, I'm not particularly interested, as a photographer, in events. I'm interested in the conditions that led to the events. Do you understand?

**Mduduzi:** Yes...

**David:** So, if there was, eh, I don't know, ...there was a fight on the city hall steps in Johannesburg between the supporters of the National Party and the...I don't know ... the Young Communist League before it was banned, eh, I avoided it because I avoided situations of conflict. But secondly, to me, that event was the outcome of conditions which, as a photographer, I became interested in trying to probe. I wanted to know what were the beliefs and the values of these two groups of people that led them to ... (**not**

**clear)** ...and so, that was the trend, if you like, or the tendency, of my work to look, if possible, at the conditions leading to the events.

**Mduduzi:** Wow, and ...then this brings me to this question that I hope ... I hope it will be possible to do justice to this question. Then, what are your own concepts of justice and injustice in the South African apartheid and post-apartheid contexts...because I don't want to separate the two... **(not clear)**...Apartheid and post-Apartheid in terms of justice and injustice. I just feel that I don't want to pretend that there is a clear line between those, and I would like to hear from you as a photographer because you go around and look very, very keenly at what you see around you...around yourself.

**David:** Well, I suppose my understanding of justice is quite simply...eh, fairness ...is a particular action as it affects other people, eh, is it going to affect their well-being, their happiness, security and is it...and if it's going to affect them adversely, is that fair, is it just? Eh, and we had a huge amount of injustice in this country before the end of Apartheid; it is...the whole system was based on a fundamental injustice which was the disempowerment and the oppression of black people. That was fundamentally unjust – it cried up to the heavens, and yet, paradoxically, within that whole framework of injustice, it was possible for people of sufficient integrity to perform acts that were just. So, we had, for example, people on the bench, in the courts, who were remarkably independent of the system and made decisions very often that were quite brave and which were certainly based on a notion of justice, but they could never escape the overriding, the overarching injustice of the system. We now have a democratic state which is based on a constitution which is, on a whole, remarkable for its balance and its justice, if you like, based on concepts of justice. And what we're seeing, in fact, is a great deal of injustice. So, we are still a long way from living out the ideals of the constitution and the justice that it proclaims. Eh, I don't want to go into details, but I think it is extremely unjust that some people are treated differently in the law from other people. Eh, and, you know, I think that this kind of ...this notion of justice permeates a great deal of our society and I suppose that in my photography it's always been a major concern of mine. Eh, but exactly how one deals with it, I don't know; you might just have to look at my photographs and analyze them, I suppose, I'm not sure.

**Mduduzi:** I think what you're saying is quite clear because we still have those aspects of injustice...**(not clear)**...they don't want to die with the system. And, from what you have observed during your long journey, eh, in your photographic career, what role is, or has been, played by nationalisms in and outside South Africa?

**David:** Just repeat that question please.

**Mduduzi:** Eh, from what you have observed during your long journey in your photographic career, what role is, or has been, played by nationalisms in and outside South Africa. Here I'm trying to think about all sorts of nationalisms which have tended to drive people very, very crazy. I'm trying to think about Afrikaner nationalism. I'm trying to think about Nazism – all those kinds of nationalisms which close people's eyes so that they don't really see injustice.

**David:** Well, I think it's quite clear, you know, that in the course of ...**(not clear)**...nationalism has been a hugely important phenomenon in this country and in Europe; particularly, nationalism has played a very, very big part in the events of last fifty or sixty years. Eh, I don't know that I can say much more than that; I mean, it's obvious that nationalism has been a very important force in these years. I personally find nationalism a negative force; I don't think that there's a ...there's hardly any good that comes out of nationalism. It's not quite the same thing... it's not at all the same thing as patriotism, for example, loyalty to a particular place. Eh, I can be a loyal South African, but I don't have to be a South African nationalist. And, in my photography I've been very much concerned with nationalism as a ...**(not clear)**...by the Afrikaners. I can't claim to be...to have been involved in photographing anything to do with nationalism outside of South Africa.

**Mduduzi:** And, after hearing about nationalism, I just thought...

**David:** After hearing about...?

**Mduduzi:** Nationalism. Because I thought about so many, so many aspects of nationalism and I thought something could have ...**(not clear)**...structures and social values...**(not clear)**... Now, David, after the end of Apartheid as we know it, your focus has not lost direction; that's what I've noticed. Rather, you have intensified your long established reflective and analytic mode. What keeps you going like this? You haven't lost your direction; you're still...you still know exactly what you are all about as a photographer.

**David:** Well, I think that you're exaggerating. It's not as clear as all that, I ...it's not as clear as that, at least not for me. Eh, but essentially, I think that I'm a very boring person. I'm much the same today as I was fifty years ago; I'm the same. I'm interested in the same things; I'm interested in doing the same thing. My photography has developed a little bit here and there, but it's fundamentally the same. Eh, it's ...**(not clear)**...change; eh...

**Mduduzi:** But I still believe if it would change, you would ...**(not clear)**...and I don't ...**(not clear)**...

**David:** I have to be honest with you. I'm not at all concerned with an audience; I don't care about an audience. I mean, it's very nice when people are delighted about what I do; I'm delighted; I'm very pleased, but I happen...I've never been much concerned with an audience and I hope I never will be because if you start worrying about your audience, eh,...I think...

**Mduduzi:** You lose direction...

**David:** It's not that you lose direction, but you become corrupt...

**Mduduzi:** Yes, that is true, that is true. David, I'm going to ask a rather difficult question. But if it is too difficult we can skip...**(not clear)**... What parallels would you draw between the South African and European situations during eras of Apartheid and anti-Semitism, respectively, in terms of questions around ownership and human dignity?

**David:** Let's ...**(not clear)**...that again, sorry.

**Mduduzi:** Eh, what parallels would you draw between the South African and European situations during eras of Apartheid and anti-Semitism in terms of questions around ownership and human dignity?

**David:** I'm sorry, but what is ownership...**(not clear)**...?

**Mduduzi:** Eh, the question of who owns...who owns, eh...who owns the means of production – who owns everything that sustains people economically. Eh, for me that is very crucial and I've been trying to think about this question...

**David:** But, I mean, I'm trying to understand the question. You're drawing a parallel or a relationship between Apartheid and anti-Semitism, it seems to me.

**Mduduzi:** Yeah, I'm trying to...I'm trying to hear from you what parallels you would draw, if any, if there are parallels. If there are no parallels, then...

**David:** Well, I think that both Apartheid and anti-Semitism are based on racism...**(not clear)**...Eh, 'I don't like you because I don't like black skin; black skin is inferior. Black people are much closer to baboons than white people. White people have got superior intellect; white people are pure; black people are impure'. These are the thoughts of race...of racism. And I cannot for the life of me ever subscribe to those thoughts and similarly Jewish...anti-Jewish feelings...not so much anti-Jewish but anti-Semitic...

**Mduduzi:** Anti-Semitic...

**David:** 'Jews are dirty – Jews are greedy – Jews are money grabbers – Jews, eh, Jews are planning the... a take over of the world'; all kinds of theories and ideas about Jews. Eh, 'Jews killed Jesus Christ'. Now, when I was at school I was...I'll never forget an afternoon when some boys attacked me physically and their reason for doing so, they said, was because the Jews had killed Jesus Christ. Now this to me was unjust (sic)...unjust; there was a huge injustice (sic) here and injustice because I had as much to do with the killing of Jesus Christ as I've had to do with the creation of the world. Eh, you understand? So, these crazy ideas are the ideas of racist thinking and ... I think that you can draw a number of parallels between Apartheid and anti-Semitism. Eh, there's quite a lot in common, eh, but eh ...the fundamental reasoning ... **(not clear)**...'reasoning' is a wrong word. The fundamental thinking behind them is somewhat different because you must understand that the anti-Semitism that spread through Europe in the 1920s, 30s, was a very different phenomenon from the racism that was endemic in South African society from very early on. Eh, the Jews were not a majority in Europe ...**(not clear)**...minority. The blacks in South Africa were a majority and so the power relations were very different

and so the, I guess, the feelings or the thoughts of the people who were engaged in Apartheid were very much based on the idea of ...on the fear of blacks as an overwhelming majority. At the end of the day whites numbered, perhaps, 10 or 13 or 15% of our population in the 1930s; eh, blacks were the rest. In Europe in 1940...or in Germany in 1930s, I don't know what percentage there, but I doubt that the Jews were more than two, three percent of the total population. So, it was a different scene and the anti-Semitic thinkers in Europe used the Jews as a political weapon to divert the attention from the failure of their economic and political policies. So, it was a different scene; I mean, there are obvious relationships between Apartheid and anti-Semitism, but they're very different and Apartheid became a much more sophisticated set of ideals and ideas as it went along because it was based on the idea that there was a Christian solution to the problem, the native problem in South Africa. And that was the rationalization for it. 'It's true that the Jew... that the Africans ... the blacks are getting a bad deal in South Africa; we can give them a good deal provided that they do it in their...that we do it in their homelands. They mustn't come out of their homelands except to come and work in the white cities, and so they developed this crazy idea that 87% of the population would then live in 13% of the land and we whites would be in possession of the rest.

**Mduduzi:** And that is what comes out clearly in your book, *The Transported of KwaNdebele*.

**David:** Hm, yeah...

**Mduduzi:** Okay. Yes. David, I see you as a person who has ... **(not clear)**...many people and I am curious to know what these people ...how these people have somehow influenced your thinking or inspired you or how ...**(not clear)**...and I would like to know if there are any friends or acquaintances who have, in one way or another, inspired you as a person and also as a photographer.

**David:** Eh, I think that as a photographer in South Africa the people who have influenced me the most have been writers, not photographers. There was one photographer who was a very important influence upon me and that was Sam Haskins. He's a very fine photographer; he lives now in Australia and he was very influential on me and he taught me a great deal; I learnt a great deal from him. But aside from Sam, I don't think that I was influenced by any South African photographers, not in a fundamental way, but I was influenced by writers – by people like Nadine Gordimer, Elvyn Charles Bosman, Barney Simon, Athol Fugard, John Coetzee, Lionel Abrams. All of these people, in their own way, in their writings were very influential for me...on me.

**Mduduzi:** And then I looked also, after thinking about this question of influences, I also looked at this notion of documentary photography. What do you think about it and would you relate it to the notion of photography as a witness? I'm trying to understand these very difficult but very important, eh...

**David:** Look, I don't think they are difficult at all. I think that photography, by its very nature, is a witness. You always can't help being a witness if you're taking photographs...look; photographs become forensic evidence – the evidence of what was in

front of the camera. Eh, this is an inevitable consequence of taking photographs, except in the case of highly creative work that you might do with computers and cameras, studios... **(not clear)**...eh, and for the rest, if you're concerned with photographing a world around you, your camera is a witness. I don't find the term 'documentary photography' very useful. I avoid these terms because to me there's either photography or there's no photography. And almost any photograph that you can think of is a document; it's evidence of something that was in front of the camera, so, eh, so, you know, what is a documentary photograph? I don't know. Is a fashion photograph a documentary photograph? Can be, why not? It's evidence of a girl standing in front of a camera, wearing a particular kind of clothes, eh, at a particular place, at a particular time, eh, and, indeed, twenty, thirty, forty years later people dig up these old fashion photographs because they are evidence of what was believed in then or what... **(not clear)** ...values by then. So, there is almost no photograph that you can think of that isn't documentary. So, I don't find it a very useful term; I prefer to think of photographs as photographs...

**Mduduzi:** Just as a photograph? Something came to my mind one day when I was discussing my symposium paper last year ...**(not clear)**...Something came up from fellow students and ...what came up was that what really makes us think of photography as documentary photography was perhaps the fact that there is this combination of text and image – text in the form of captions. Then, when I looked...look at your photograph like this one, if I don't look at the caption, I see a photograph, which is already a document ...**(not clear)**...but when I look at your caption as well, then I get to know when this was taken and where and by who. And that, together, forms part of what we call documentary work and ...**(not clear)**...but I don't know; this is just my humble...

**David:** Ah, I think that's perfectly correct.

**Mduduzi:** Eh, David, I then thought about what prompted you to document, for example, *Iron-age corbelled hut*. There is that photograph which you took...

**David:** Hmm, I know, I know...

**Mduduzi:** Yes, and I've always wondered what prompted you to take that photograph.

**David:** Eh, you know, I was putting together an essay. An essay is, for me, a photographic essay ...**(not clear)**...a coherent set of photographs that tell about a certain phenomenon. And a phenomenon that I was looking at was structures in South Africa, and I needed to show or to speak about ...possibility that long before colonialists settled the interior of this country, there were people living there and they were not uncivilized; they had, in fact, a very high level of sophistication and civilization. And, looking around, I came upon the idea of photographing corbelled hut and...**(not clear)**...there. And in the Free State there are still some of these corbelled dwellings ...leaving...eh, left and ...**(not clear)**...that have been done on the people who live there indicates that these are pretty sophisticated farmers.

**Mduduzi:** So, actually, what came out strongly for me when I looked at it is that that photograph seems to me an indication of ...**(not clear)**...

**David:** Absolutely...

**Mduduzi:** And it fascinated me a lot...**(not clear)**... When I saw a photograph which is actually a document of that fact – the fact that there has always been ...**(not clear)**...I became quite fascinated. And, eh, thanks very much for this explanation. David, how did you position yourself when you photographed *Swerwers, nomadic farm workers, on trek in the Karoo*? Eh, that photograph, to me, looks very, very different from many, many photographs that you have taken before. And, what was your intention in terms of the relationship between the human figures and the landscape? I can see that the landscape takes quite a big portion of the format and those nomadic people take a very small ...but they are very important, I think they are very, very important...**(not clear)**...Eh, I just thought I need to ask you about this.

**David:** Okay, sorry...**(not clear)**...okay; that photograph is different in important respect from others in that collection because it was taken from a height. Eh, I visited ...I was travelling through the Karoo, taking photographs; I saw this farm. I ...**(not clear)**... in and asked permission to walk around and take some photographs which I got. I climbed a little hill and there I saw the national highway, the N1, and I saw these people trekking along the side and then there was this vast landscape and shall I ask... I asked...I shouted down to...**(not clear)**...and I asked them if they would stop and allow me to take a photograph, which they did. And eh, this photograph, to me, tells about a very important basic fact of South African history, that is, the Khoi and the San, the people who originally occupied those lands and were free to roam everywhere are now restricted to the *gang*, the space between the fences. That huge landscape was theirs; their great, great, great, great grandfathers and mothers hunted and gathered ...**(not clear)**... there and lived there, wherever they wanted to live, but today they...their descendents trek donkey carts along the side of the road and if you'd come to them in the evening they'd camp at the side of the road, the *gang*, the space between fences.

**Mduduzi:** Yeah...

**David:** That's the... that's all that they could enjoy. So, for me, this is about the relationship of land to these people. And, if you like, they're symbolic in some ways...**(not clear)**...to black people in general.

**Mduduzi:** It's also about deprivation...

**David:** Sure, very much so; yes, they have been deprived.

**Mduduzi:** Wow, I'm very glad that I have been able to ask you this question because I have always been attracted to that particular photograph because of how it looks. Eh, thanks very much...

**David:** Because for me it was an important photograph. When I saw that, I knew that this was going to be...well, I hoped that it would be a good photograph that worked visually, and I knew it would be important...(not clear)...

**Mduduzi:** Eh, David, I also looked, very closely, at your *Feathers and a child's schoolbook*, and I'm particularly interested in this schoolbook, and I would like to know what attracted you to this schoolbook and I would like you to contextualize the photograph for me because...

**David:** Well, the...at that time there was a lot of conflict in Natal between the farm workers and the white farmers. Eh, they were being ruthlessly pushed off the land. Eh, the government was enforcing regulations of the farms ...(not clear)...and so, many, many people were being pushed off the land and were told to get off...

**Mduduzi:** Was it the time of de Klerk?

**David:** It was, eh, I'm not too sure. I think you'd have to go back to the history books to tell that, I'm not too sure. I think it was, but it might well have been...it might well have been John Vorster, but it was...I mean, this was happening for a long time. And there was a place in Natal called Weenen, a town of Weenen where many cases of the ...in which farmers, eh, in which farmers had pushed their ten...their labourers off the land; and, well, some of them...many of those cases went to court. There were organizations that...(not clear)... the Transvaal, the Transvaal Rural Action Committee and in Natal there was an organization; I don't remember the name. They were trying to help these workers, but anyway, to cut a long story short, many, eh, in a particular area near Weenen farm workers were pushed off the farms in that area or of a particular farm, I don't remember, and they had camped on the side of the road, in a *gang*. They had camped on the side of the main road and they said 'we're not moving here, we're fed up, *ons is gatvol* and we're not moving.' Eh, and the Red Cross came and gave them some tents...(not clear)...to help them. And then there was a camp set up, eh, a tent camp here in Weenen, or just outside the town. And I was very much interested in this whole situation because to me it was typical of a whole lot of things that had been happening on farms, and so I spent some time photographing these people and then, I think my wife was with me on the trip and we went up into the northern part of Natal, into KwaZulu-Natal, and when we came back the people were gone because they had been pushed off even that part; they weren't allowed to stay on the side of the road, in the *gang*, and what was left at the side of the road were feathers and bits (not clear)...scrap, and among them I found that exercise book. And that exercise book, to me, was very eloquent of the lives people because here for a little while this child was able to go to the school after...(not clear)...if you look at the back you'll find a story...(not clear)... That child...his name is on that book; he was able to go a school nearby. Every morning she would walk up to the...up the hill to that school. Now, she would be...she can't... she'd been taken to a resettlement camp and her school career was bugged up and...yeah, she would have to start life again, if you like. Eh, this exercise book ...(not clear)...first of all because of the very name of the...what is it called again? *Freedom Stationery*. I mean, it's so ironic, you know (laughs) and then...

**Mduduzi:** *Education for the Nation...*

**David:** *Education for the Nation*, you know, ...**(not clear)**...eh, and then, the way the child had put her name down here or a parent or a teacher, ...**(not clear)**...and this was to me very, very eloquent in what was happening, and then feathers lying around from the chickens that these people had managed to save and bring with them.

**Mduduzi:** Wow, this is a sad story; it's a very sad story...

**David:** Yeah, but you must read it at the back; eh, I don't remember all the details.

**Mduduzi:** I will skip this one because you've answered it already. Eh, and again, I'm coming up with this rather difficult question ...**(not clear)**...What is your concept of reality as related to your career as a photographer? Because I'm trying to think also, at the same time, about what Santu Mofokeng has done, and how he has moved away from the traditional way of photographing physical reality as we see it, but also at the same time you are very different from other photographers ...**(not clear)**...Omar Badsha and others. You are very different...I am so curious to know what your concept is of reality ...and I'm also thinking here about the notion of 'truth' ...**(not clear)**...

**David:** Well, reality...eh, this is quite difficult for me to explain; it's quite a complex idea, but for me, the reality that I'm concerned with in photography is quite a complex reality and it is actually not one that I can photograph; it's philosophically, and in practice, impossible, but I try, and the reason for that...for me saying that is that I'm a ...**(not clear)**... I can look at this glass and while I'm looking at this glass, the water is waving...is moving up and down; so, I'm thinking in terms of 'oh, yesterday I was at a swimming pool. There was a lovely girl at that pool and, eh, I must ask...I must ask the servant to clean this glass and properly; this glass is dirty!' And at the same time I can see my phone there and I'm thinking 'oh, I must check up and see if this phone is fully charged; so, all these thoughts can be in my mind simultaneously; simultaneously I can have...I'm limited in time and in space to one point. It's very important to understand this. I can't be where you're sitting; I can't be at ...**(not clear)**...in the table; I'm here, but I can, in my imagination, be there or there or I can be outside or I can be thinking about Deborah Poynton and her children going home and did they reach home safely? All these things can be p...

## **END OF SIDE A OF THE TAPE**

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## **BEGINNING OF SIDE B OF THE TAPE**

**David (continuation):** All of these things can be in my mind at the same time, but I, personally, physically, am only in one point of space and time. I'm in this space and I can only see it at this instant, right? Now, the camera is not able to imagine all of these other things that I can, in my mind, see; it can only see one point in space and time. It's even more limited than I am. I'm limited to one point in space and time, but my mind, and in my mind's eye, I can see a whole lot of others. So, my reality, as a living human being, is very complex. I can be talking to you and at the same time wondering how my

wife is – and all sorts of things can be going through my mind and in my eye I can see things that aren't present at the moment, but the camera can only see what's in front of it. So, my job, as a photographer, is to try to make my photographs come as close as possible to the complex vision of reality that I have as a person.

**Mduduzi:** That's very clear...

**David:** Do you understand?

**Mduduzi:** That is very clear. Eh, thank you very much. And, I'm skipping this particular question for now because I can come to this one... Eh, I'd like to know how and when...I mean, how and when did you meet Santu Mofokeng and what exchanges or interactions have taken place between the two of you?

**David:** I think I first met Santu ...I don't remember...it must've been in the early 1980s, late 70s. If I remember rightly, ...I don't know where I met him. But I do know that at that time he was working as a darkroom assistant somewhere and I offered to try ...he seemed to be a person who had great potential and I offered to try to help him improve his photography and....yeah, to break out of that situation. So, we developed that friendship and, occasionally, he would come to me and at times I was able to help him, perhaps technically, in some respects, but very quickly, I mean, he went far beyond that; I mean, I think he's a very gifted man. And, I think at one stage I lent him my camera and then I spoke to Charles van Onselen who was the head of the African Studies Department at Wits University and I...and they were beginning to realize that photographs were very important in the work they were doing and so I introduced the idea to them that they needed a good photographer to...who would do that, and so they created a post for Santu and he ...(not clear)...So, we've kept up a very ...I think, for me, a very good friendship and I hope for Santu.

**Mduduzi:** Yeah, as you are mentioning Charles van Onselen I'm also thinking about...I think it's a book called *The seed is mine*.

**David:** Yes, yes, that's right. Santu did some photographs for that; I also did some photographs for special...eh...

**Mduduzi:** I need to see that...

**David:** ...but Santu did a lot of work for Charles around that subject, yes, eh; they worked very closely for a time.

**Mduduzi:** And, David, before I come to the last question for today, eh, I think we have gone on for a very long, long time. If you have...in fact you have that symposium paper which I forwarded to you...

**David:** I have to say I haven't read the whole; I read part of it...

**Mduduzi:** But just a bit of it?

**David:** Yes...

**Mduduzi:** And I would like your...to get your opinions on some of the aspects that you've read, eh, because I don't want to write and say things which are not quite true. I want to try by all means to come very close to the truth...(not clear)...

**David:** Well, as I mentioned right from the beginning of this discussion, I think that from what I read you're, eh, you're fictionalizing, to some extent, what you're seeing in those pictures. I have to say I went through a lot of trouble to get a lot of facts for you; I mean, there's the most extraordinary story about Tlong; it's, it's ...(not clear)...the whole history of South Africa is contained in there and, eh, yeah, I think that you need to be careful, in my opinion, when you're looking at photographs of, eh, of seeing things that are possibly there or possibly, eh, that are possibly potential there...in there, but which are not facts...and then writing about them as though they are facts.

**Mduduzi:** Yes, in fact...

**David:** There you're, there you're, sorry, there's ...there's a picture...there's a picture...(not clear)...you just need to find a page...(not clear)...and...what page is that?

**Mduduzi:** This is seventy one...seventy...

**David:** Right; so, all you need to do is to get at the back and here you'll see the page numbers and find page seventy, seventy one and then you can read the story...(not clear)...the exercise book and the story, eh, and there's Tlong, and this is a fascinating story.

**Mduduzi:** Wow, I'm very happy that I've seen this. Eh, why that particular paper looks like fictionalized work is only because at that stage I was still just looking at what the camera has done...even before I look at the historical facts behind it, but when I write my thesis I'm going to do all that...I'm going to combine the two so that it can make a bit of sense, but for the purposes of that particular paper, at that stage, I was still doing that, yeah. Eh, but David, I really appreciate your time... Maybe the last question: I've been looking at monuments, not just buildings, but monuments which commemorate this and that, like that, for example, monument which commemorates the...the freeing of slaves, for example; it's just one monument which comes to my mind ...and, eh, what else, in your opinion, I mean, what other role do they play, eh, in addition to expression...to the expression of collective memory, etc, what other role do they play in the collective psyche of our society?

**David:** I don't know what the collective psyche is; I only know the individual people. I don't believe there's such a thing as a collective psyche. Eh, there may be, but my experience doesn't allow me to believe it; I believe that you've got a psyche, I've got a psyche, but we don't have a psyche together. So, I have to challenge that concept to start with. Eh, to me, monuments and memorials ...we've got all kinds of them in this

country...well, most countries have, but I'm interested in this country... are important because they're markers of somebody's beliefs, somebody's values. So, whether it's a monument to the *Afrikaans taal* in Paarl or a monument to the black...Xhosa leaders in Ciskei that President Lennox Sebe forced the people to pay for, or whether it's a little cross at the side of the road that somebody's put there because the wife was killed in a motor accident there...a son, the father or whatever it was...to me these are all related as the markers of our presence on the earth and of our beliefs and values. And, and yeah, I think they often contain a great deal of ...almost of the juices of the people who put them there. Eh, they're very ...**(not clear)**...they're very eloquent of the people who put them there, very often – not all of them ...of course, but many of them, yeah.

**Mduduzi:** Wow, David, thank you very much for your time and I think today we have covered quite a lot of ...yeah...and I hope that you will still give me your time if and when I need to come back to you for more information next time. So, today, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January, 2008, we have achieved a lot. Eh, thanks to you, thank you very much.

END



## APPENDIX 5

### Interview by Mduduzi Xakaza with Prof. Hans Engdahl: 09/04/08: Rondebosch

**Mduduzi:** ...y much again for this opportunity. I'm glad I can ask you... ask you some more questions as I did in the past. Eh, we are going to be revisiting some of the first questions that we dealt with, eh, in passing but we'll deal with maybe thoroughly now, but then I've got more questions for you today. Eh, the theology of the Afrikaner religion...eh, I'd like to know its origins and foundations if you can briefly discuss that for me, please.

**Hans:** Thank you very much. Yes, I would prefer saying ... **(not clear)** ... about Afrikaner theology as that is ...**(not clear)** ...and I think I have to make a few preliminary remarks regarding all the questions here because, eh, it is something you can call Afrikaner theology from a specific time in the years after the Second World War, eh, especially since Apartheid was instituted in 1948. Eh, throughout the decades you can say there was a strong movement within the Afrikaner people to support Apartheid and they did that as Christians. Eh, nevertheless, that was never the whole truth and that is why this is such a contested area; it's...it's ...the truth is that all the way there people who also disagreed with this standpoint still being Afrikaners...Eh...

**Mduduzi:** Just like eh...eh, Beyers Naude?

**Hans:** Yes, yes, yes, others as well. Eh, and this Afrikaner religion is based on ...is reformed theology and it is going back to...to John Calvin, I can say that. That is ... that is true. I think in my... the other questions...I think as...I want you to look also into my dissertation...there are three, I wonder ...you see examples of how Afrikaners have reacted on these questions and the first one could be seen as, eh, really experiment of Afrikaner theology in that traditional... in that sense from the First...Second World War and that is Potgieter...Potgieter whom I have studied ... he certainly supported Apartheid as a part of his faith all along because he thought that God had assigned each people in its own place... in its own way and it was actually against the will of God to mix peoples even in South Africa. Then I studied Ben Marais; he's a contemporary. These people...all these people are roughly contemporaries and active in the First...Second World War...Ben Marais was not supporting Apartheid in principle. He thought there was no theological...biblical support of Apartheid at all, but he said... 1950 for example, but also later, that Apartheid is necessary for practical reasons. If you take it away it will be chaos...it will be total disaster for everybody. That was his understanding but ...and he was also an Afrikaner, but he was not part of that Afrikaner theology in that sense. And thirdly you have Beyers Naude who goes much later in the...in the sixties, you must say, he, eh ...yeah, what year was it...? But he had a conversion expe...conversion experience, actually, having been a staunch Afrikaner...yes, after the Sharpeville...the Sharpeville massacre...the shootings...1960; after that he...he was involved in meetings...ecumenical meetings and he actually changed his mind, having been a church leader, basically supporting, at least indirectly, Apartheid. He was converted and from that time he ...**(not clear)**...a staunch appointment and he remained an Afrikaner and a reformed Christian, a Dutch Reformed Christian; so, you see that there I've given you

three different examples and I think I will have to refer to these people in, eh, various questions, you know, otherwise the whole interview will become a stereotype interview, giving the impression that all the Afrikaner were the same. But it is the true that Potgieter, the first one, he represented a collective, a group of...a strong group of Afrikaners who claimed some type of Afrikaner theology which supported that policy of the day and also the contingency of the people...of the Afrikaner people as eh...somehow as leaders of the nation and as...as a civilization in, eh...souther...on the southern tip of Christia...civilization on the southern tip of Africa, basically.

**Mduduzi:** Oh, that is good. So, definitely, you...you would connect John Calvin and Calvinism of the Dutch Reformed Church...those two are connect...I mean...are connected...

**Hans:** Yes, yes. So, question two...I'll answer very briefly. Eh, Calvin is the founding theologian, you can say, for the reformed church the same way as Luther was founding theologian of...of the Lutheran churches, but that, eh...put...Luther and Calvin together were the main reformers in the sixteenth century and...and...and they are mutually depen...I mean, Calvin was very much dependent on Luther because he was early, a little bit earlier. Calvin formed his own way forward also theologically and also in terms of ecclesiology; the kind of church that he established in Geneva was very, very important for the future... **(not clear)** ...soon enough, there are two different branches of reformation, Lutheran and Calvinist kind ...**(not clear)** ...yes, yes...

**Mduduzi:** So, Prof., did, eh, did the members of the Dutch Reformed Church use some of the teachings of John Calvin to...to make such claims in South Africa at all?

**Hans:** Yes, but it's typically, eh, impossible to say that Calvin supported Apartheid. Eh, he simply had a theology of the Word of God and he wanted to break away from the Catholic Church. And it's true that he formed his own church, but, I mean, he could just as well argue that he was against... it's not possible, you know, and of course some exponents of the Afrikaner theology they would say that...that he would be on their side, but it's not possible to say, eh, that he was on that or the other side; it's really not possible and that is contested because in the heat of the debate about Apartheid and the church – the churches in the fifties and the sixties and so on ... and the seventies, there are quite a number of people, less than not Reformed themselves, who blamed the Calvinist tradition for Apartheid. Now, people like Tander Gruschi who was at UCT, an eminent theologian of South Africa...he has written books about that, trying to demonstrate that...that Calvin rather was a liberation theologian if you read him properly and that his ... **(not clear)** ...was much more true than ... **(not clear)** ...

**Mduduzi:** So, the Afrikaners who claimed to be Calvinists, in a way, if I can put it like that, eh, did they perhaps use the doctrine of predestination...did they think it was from the teachings of John Calvin himself?

**Hans:** Yes, but there's a ... **(not clear)** ...that is very strongly with Calvin already and is still ... it's there in the reform tradition; it's true. We'll come to that later, but ...yes, yes, yes, definitely...

**Mduduzi:** Eh, I'm coming to this point now, Prof., about exclusive claims to the right to land and how do they base this on the Bible? It's rather a difficult question, but maybe ...

**Hans:** Yes, yes, yes, you see you are now...you can just give ... I can just give examples how...how the thinking was going. You see, you must see ... you must realize that the reflection on these things came lot...great deal...later than the events themselves, I mean, here you have a group of, eh, Dutch people, eh...settled down in the Cape and they would claim land, you know, successively and you know how that was done and all that, and that was not basically a theological thinking behind that at all. Eh, what I can say is that, eh...and I come in...also the next question, what is so evident is that there was a common understanding of civilisation. But...I mean, there was a practical question. They felt that God had called them to something greater on...in this part of the world and they had to make a living and they saw a vast unused land in front of them, as they understood it, and of course even in the 1970s, in the Apartheid government, they would...they would support the fact that majority...the vast majority of land in South Africa was white because they came and they ...they...it was vacant, they said... because that is fantastic because of the nomadic understanding of the people who were here; they didn't think in terms of ownership at all. So, you have a clash between two cultures; it's a clash between two cultures and I think from day one ...1652...it was as ...another civilization that dawned upon South Africa...Africa and from that day ... There are contested use of these things; I think it's very much relevant for your study...yes, yes....

**Mduduzi:** Yes. In fact I've been looking at other sources of knowledge about that myth of empty land and I've discovered a lot of knowledge from various, eh., books...

**Hans:** But you see, what is lagging behind, of course, is the...the plight... the Exodus of Israel from Egypt.

**Mduduzi:** That's it...

**Hans:** But you see, you can't claim...you can say it is a strand like this...it's a movement or a strand or a current in Afrikaner thinking, but you cannot claim that for the whole, I mean...there are different...a number of different ways of supporting the own identity of Afrikanerdom...yes, for sure, but when you ask this question about exclusive right to land...of course there was, again, not so much ... **(not clear)** ...Voortrekkers themselves ... **(not clear)** ... the Voortrekkers.... That was a movement that could be likened to the Exodus of Israel...

**Mduduzi:** Yes, yes...

**Hans:** Similar ...thing and of course they were aware of that but much more later, like in the early twentieth century, when they had ...when they had been defeated so terribly by the British, they started to rationalise, I think:... 'Who are we and why did this happen to us' and...and then they saw the whole Voortrekker movement as...then they started reflecting on this, going back to the Bible. So, of course, it is there...and they had,

eh...they could easily find ultimately in the Bible for ... **(not clear)** ...land; just as easy ...I mean, God is saying to Israel: 'Just conquer these people; I will be with you....

**Mduduzi:** (*laughing*) The Amalekites....

**Hans:** (*laughs*)...

**Mduduzi:** Destroy them...

**Hans:** So...and that is, eh, that is a difficult thing even for a Christian who...whatever kind ...I mean, just to accept that, I mean, as an Old Testament thing...it's okay, but ah, you see...

**Mduduzi:** Yes, yes. Now, Prof., this will lead us to the next one which is about, eh, claims to racial superiority which I believe was, eh...were based on...on the Bible. Eh, I'm also thinking here about this notion of the white man's burden. Can you say something around that point?

**Hans:** Yes I can. I would like to speak about civilization, eh, notions of civilizations, eh, on this and offer...stating the positions of these three, eh, church leaders, eh, because there was a...there was, eh...there was a ti...there was...there were people who supported racial superiority so that the whites were the guardians of the others, definitely, and some of them were very embarrassed by those in between who were of mixed race...as a misnomer, you know, while others... (not clear) ...'okay, you can't avoid it', you know, but it's very clear...and you can...but you can see a shift also politically how that was much more, eh, a tendency earlier or later on one started to talk about separate development ...separate...separate...separation on an equal level and that whole ideology was just an attempt to appease people, to show that we are not superior; we are equal, but we are different, so we must stay separately. But that's very nonsensical of course; in reality it ... (not clear) ... still a superior ...superiority structure and it has very much to do with civilization; we must understand that, as it happened, these people came from far away. They looked very differently; they had... they were all Christians and they come into place where this is more or less unheard of. So, the notion of civilization, coming from Europe at that time, I mean, the whole period...but let's go into nineteenth century and ...and until some time in the twentieth. It was absolutely striking that they were exponents of ... they represented Civilization with a big 'C' on the southern tip of Africa and that's how they saw themselves; they couldn't be but superior; there is no other choice. I don't think it was only going back to the Bible and looking for...for that. It was much more of a common notion and it didn't matter...the British settlers ... 1830 (sic)...I mean, their attitude must have been virtually the same...if more pronounced because they were British and they were hegemonic, you know, they were world leaders. So, eh, then I would like to end off this question by saying that Potgieter and his theology and I have....you can actually follow in my ...in my dissertation how he, at last stage, talks about whites as guardians of the Africans ... the later stage he talks about separation...separate development as the key and he's even writing romantically about how the blacks will also develop their church, their culture, eh, beautifully, but on the sideline and even mention the colours in a positive note where ... **(not clear)** ... he says

something very devastating to think about them, so you know, there is a development there. If you take Marais, he...he rejects the notion of racial superiority completely; he never defends it, but he is...he is talking about civilization, just as I did now a while ago, saying that it's inevitable; if we mix now, it will be a disaster. He's having the idea, you know, that while we're civilized in manners, in culture, in development, in sp...in education, in everything, in morals. And now then you have a ...then you have a mass...massive group of people who have nothing of this. If you mix them, the ones on the level would be pulled down, as it were, they will be pulled down and everybody will be in the mess...th...so, that kind of philosophy and that was...that was typical for the time, you know, even if you go back to 1950, for example, you can go to England or ... **(not clear)** ... in Europe and you will find very much the same thing. So, it's not an exclusively Afrikaner understanding. **(not clear)** ...eh, Beyers Naude, after his conversion, he would totally reject all this, but he would stay an Afrikaner and a Dutch Reformed, of course, yes.

**Mduduzi:** Well, this is so enlightening. Eh, Prof., the next one is, eh: what role does church architecture play in piety within Afrikaner religious ideology, or should I say theological ideology....?

**Hans:** That's fine...

**Mduduzi:** Now, I'm thinking particularly of those magnificent church buildings with architectural features that seem to reach up to heaven and why was this ...I mean, why was there such an emphasis on verticality?

**Hans:** Yes, I'm not an expert on this question; you could easily go to people who are Dutch Reformed and into architecture and so forth and ask and... so I can...well, I'll just mention in brief my point of view...there're actually two...two things, eh, that I want to say and, eh, and that is, first of all Calvin...yeah, I'll ... **(not clear)** ...first one is about the centre ...point of faith of the Reformed faith and the second one is about the images of God ...you're not allow...you're not allowed to make an image of God and that is reflected in architecture ...**(not clear)** ...

**Mduduzi:** Yeah, that point is very, very important...

**Hans:** To start with, there is even a similarity between Islam and Reformed thinking ...**(not clear)** ... if you go back, not today so much because... is a ...everything is blurred today. You can read in my dissertation where I, through Potgieter's theology, who was an authority on Calvin ...so he studied Calvinism like ...he's trying to say 'what is a centre of Calvin's theology?' and he comes up with an answer namely that you cannot say that it's only one thing; there are several things because he was biblical and he followed the Bible and in the Bible you can't say there's only one thing that is important; there is a plurality of truths about God, about life and so forth. But still, if you look at Calvin, there are certain things that are sticking as very decisive and important. Eh, it is a talk about the Trinitarian God, ... **(not clear)** ... by God himself, that's how he said it, eh, you could express that in different ways, like the glory of God, the transcendence of God, for example that ... the idea that God, through Christ, ... **(not clear)** ... saved us ... **(not**

**clear**) ...it doesn't say more than may be a fraction who God is; God wanted to save us. He criticizes Luther, for example, who stressed salvation very much and how you can be saved in this world and how you could do that through ... through the work of Christ... any person can be saved; it's justification by faith and all that. That... that teaching is correct, but he says Luther emphasizes that too much at the expense of God. ... **(not clear)** ...because Calvin says that salvation history is important, but that's only a fraction. What God is, more so that we don't see, we know nothing about it ...beyond. So, this transcendent aspect, this ... **(not clear)** ... *deus*, the unknown God ... very strong in Calvin. So, one could say that ... so, what the aim was, was the glory of God and ... **(not clear)** ... God and what we are doing, what...in what we are doing is saying we should show forth the greatness of God, the diff...the difference of God from us. That is not the only, again, tried in Calvinist theology or Reformed theology, but you can see that it's expressed in architecture ... talk about verticality...is in a way of saying that the difference between man and ... **(not clear)** ...the pointing up is the difference in relation to us and then is combined with, eh ... **(not clear)** ...pictures or images ...so, you have symbols of various kinds. Even the cross as a symbol is contested and, absolutely, not the crucifix. You will not find a crucifix in a Reformed church while you would find it in Lutheran church; it's ... **(not clear)** ... because of the prohibition of images. And that is a contested area again, theologically, because the last part of Christianity that has no problem whatsoever with images of Christ; we worship in ... in front of them because Christ was the son of God, but the son of Man as well, so you have that... well, if you go back to the first Commandment in, eh, in the Old Testament: 'You shall have no images'. So, ... **(not clear)** ... how heavily the Old Testament come...comes through in...in Reformed theology once in a while, not so seldom.

**Mduduzi:** This is a very, very strong explanation...and I ...

**Hans:** (*laughing*) I'm just hinting at it; you should, if you have time, talk to others about it ...

**Mduduzi:** Yes, yes. Prof., this is very good. Now what is the basis of the notion of the Promised Land in the context of the Afrikaner nationalism and theology, if you can ...

**Hans:** Yes, I have already touched upon it because the only way to do that is to see the parallel between the Afrikaner people and Israel and, as I say, you cannot overplay...overemphasize it; I think it is there, especially when people reflect it on the Voortrekkers and the plight of the Afrikaners in relation to two enemies: the blacks in general and the British and don't forget that the worst enemies, historically, were the British, but it was before...I mean, at a very early stage before the Voortrekkers and after the Second World War when the blacks became a threat again. But the British has...the British had been the forma...forming factor in a...yeah, it's been a factor of formation for the Afrikaners...**(not clear)** ... I think the, eh, Promised Land, eh...I mean, that thinking can still be there even though it has to be shed right now, but Afrikaners have the liberty to feel that God has wanted them to come here and stay ...**(not clear)** ...but now it's a different dispensation.

**Mduduzi:** Yes...

**Hans:** I have no idea if anybody is playing around with those thoughts today; I've no idea.

**Mduduzi:** Maybe they think the Amalekites have taken over the land...

**Hans:** Yes, yes, yes...

**Mduduzi:** Maybe they think so, yeah. Prof., eh, Prof., what can you say about the Afrikaner doctrine of predestination and power hierarchy based on race? Did Afrikaners believe that God predestines along racial lines and that some races were meant to serve other races? Here I also...I'm also thinking about the narrative of Noah and his sons after the Flood, especially Ham and grandson, Canaan.

**Hans:** Yes, I must agree that there have been a suggestion to that effect that blacks should be, eh, hewers of wood and be helpers to the superior race. Of course that has been flying around, but that's not an exclusively Afrikaner notion; it's a racist notion that has been prevalent in Europe... **(not clear)** ... Germany, Belgium, eh, all over and the superiority complex and idea is well known, I mean, ... **(not clear)** ... I mean, all colonialists had that with them ... **(not clear)** ...and, of course, you can see that, eh ... you can see that has a very serious trace in ... **(not clear)** ...South African society where blacks still are struggling to get out of that kind of servanthood in terms of work, so this is a very serious question you're putting, but, I mean, that is not ...I wouldn't blame, you know, Afrikaners specifically for this. I wouldn't do that, but of course, eh, again do Afrikaners believe that God predestines along racial lines? Well, in the sense that that they were predestined to play the role here and at the period of history as ...**(not clear)** ... of civilization. Yes, you may say that, but, I mean, it ... predestination is more, eh, is more a theological understanding...a faith understanding of life in general and they of course saw themselves as a people and that they were predestined to play a role, yes, for sure, but I would even more stress a person as an individual understanding of it and here is something very interesting, maybe I may come back to it, about how predest...how that...the whole ide...predestination is the thought that God has already decided your fate and ... **(not clear)** ... inevitable; if God is the all-knowing, he would know where you will end up. But it's a thought construction that is very inhibiting; it could be because that people say: 'Oh, he's already made up where I'm gonna end ... what's the use that I'm struggling? What's the use of my faith?' and so on. Of course that is not ... **(not clear)** ...the intention, but the intention was to say...talk seriously about our destiny and what could happen to us. But there are a number of problems with this whole notion; that's for sure. What it led to, according to this famous sociologic...eh, sociologist, Marx Weber, writing in the early twentieth century, is that in a strange way, this uncertainty...you as the human being wouldn't know whether you'd end up being with the saved or the unsaved...created, eh...and the fact that you could have your sins forgiven and everything was out of grace...the grace of God through Christ and all that general Christian understandings of life. It was all there, but the fact that there was no point where somebody would say to you: 'Your sins are forgiven; you will now forget everything of that, you'll just start from scratch'. There wasn't, eh, Catholic father where you could go and confess your sins and your sins were deliberately taken away from

you...you start from scratch. Reformed Christian ... (not clear) ...option, but in his or her faith she or he...or she ...were saved and it was her faith; so what you did, in a sense, you accumulated a guilt, your whole life, you accumulated a guilt that was never resolved completely in you as a person. The only way to resolve it was through faith in Christ and that faith, that's according to Weber now, who was not even a theologian, but he theologizes here, and I'm not saying even that he's right, but he's very interesting ...Weber, and to ...(not clear) ...aspect. He says that due to the fact you are amassing this kind of uncertainty in your life, the only way to counter that would be an enormous activity of good works and so...

**Mduduzi:** Salvation through works...

**Hans:** And so there is this enormous proactive Christian...Reformed Christian; you find them in the United States...you find them on the forerunners of the ones coming...what do you call it...the...those who are...uh...you know the word, I mean...

**Mduduzi:** Are you not referring to Watchtowers?

**Hans:** No, no, no...those who are on the forefront...like, eh, in a new society; what's the word you use for that?

**Mduduzi:** Oh, the avant-garde?

**Hans:** Yeah, anyway, that's not the word I'm looking for...you find them...

**Mduduzi:** Pioneers?

**Hans:** Yes, yes, pioneers, pioneers. So, that is...that is, eh, where you can see that predestination has played a role in...in very, very active formation of a society, but a Reformed Christian would never rest with his or her personal faith and the ordinary thing...it's a development...it's a very interesting thing...it's a development...it's a progressive society where you have been proved, where you have to achieve things, yes. So, there's a pos...I can even mention that there's a positive side where it is enormous how they have achieved such a lot. What's the intention of a democracy for example, the way they develop their own understanding of power in themsel...in themselves was...democracy was a very early for ... **(not clear)** ... then.

**Mduduzi:** Wow, that is wonderful. Now, Prof., how is the concept of equality in Christ treated and implemented within the Afrikaner theology. Eh, does this transcend race and class?

**Hans:** Yes, we have mentioned also this already. Eh, Afrikaner theology wouldn't talk that much of equality in Christ in terms of salvation; yes, that was there all the time, eh, regardless of which of kind of group you belonged to, eh, but it was...and in that sense it would transcend race and class, but at the same time they could easily speak about inequality as well and that was also not so unusual fifty years ago in Europe, for example, where a theologian like Emile Bruno was clear that an equal society would become a

hopeless society...the fact that we need each other; we have different roles and there's more talk about the classes, you know. That was...that went handy, of course, with racial thinking. So it was...you had to answer both ways and, as I say, if you take these three people, Potgieter would argue strongly for that at a long...at a period later on he would talk more about...actually when the homelands, the Bantustans were taking shape, that whole idea was built on an idea...on, eh, separate development. When they said that they are [sic] equal, it was another equality but separate. And of course, as Christians in those...(not clear)...there would be absolutely...but it was racially conditioned

**Mduduzi:** Would a typical Reformed Christian - Afrikaner Christian - think about the narrative of Apostle Paul and the whole story between Philemon and his runaway slave, Onesimus? Would they think about that as well? I'm interested in what...in how they could look at that narrative and... how would they interpret it...?

**Hans:** Yes, yes, yes...I only have...I only have Ben Marais who writes about these things, but he's...he is writing from a point of view of equality. He means that the church undermined slavery. They didn't reject it immediately but as human beings, relationally, they...they didn't buy into slavery. Onesimus was accepted as a brother and was taken into the fellowship; he was part of the church and he was even so highly regarded that Paul said that 'you treat him as you treat me'. And that is the proof, I think, in the biblical text that the slavery was undermined by the Christian Church and that is Marias's standpoint. I have no word from any other person about that, so I cannot answer that question, honestly.

**Mduduzi:** Thank you very much. Can you ...can you briefly comment on the concept of God's justice within Afrikaner theological thinking. Does this justice try to bring racial equality at all? I know that, somehow, you have dealt with it, but I'm just interested in the word 'justice' because justice talks...I mean God talks a lot about justice through His Old Testament prophets.

**Hans:** Yes, this is interesting because God's justice is for...is prevalent in the thinking of Afrikaner thinking and of course that must have troubled those who supported Apartheid to great extent because many of them still wanted to seek out justice for all but just couldn't get it together...I mean as a separation of course...in effect also...in operation. I effect it was...I mean...that was too obvious for all to see, but I can only say that in the Reform tradition and the Afrikaner theology as well justice is an important notion and it has got social and political implications and I think that's a strength...eh...for a fairly short period they would argue, of course, that...eh...that it was...eh...yeah...it was not on...it was under Apartheid...Apartheid was the best way to...to...to achieve justice. And I think...I just want to bring in here...I was going to do it earlier. I want to bring in Hendriek Verwoerd. Verwoerd...he was the architect of all these things and he had a very advanced thinking as a sociologist that he was...very advanced thinking about all these things that we've been talking about. Even he could...and I have text that can be produced to the effect...and he also talked about justice. The only way to achieve justice is to do it in the way of Apartheid or in the way of allowing each people to develop on its own - separately. That's the only way to achieve justice because that was 'God's way of

justice'. If you mix it up it would be...not only a mix...it would be...eh...it would be a disaster...(not clear).

**Mduduzi:** Wow. Prof., can you...can you briefly...eh...say something about the concepts of the wilderness and the garden from the Afrikaner theological perspective...if, it all, they thought about that because I'm thinking here about their emotional attachment to the land and their mystical attitude towards the land as Afrikaner people?

**Hans:** Yes, I can't say much, really, I just can say that as exponents of European culture and tradition coming here, they had their mindset, and you know what has happened: the farming...how it has extended over the surface of Africa and they shaped it as taken. Their architecture...how they developed from the Dutch to the Cape Dutch...typical farmstead...all these things are through these people and they have 'cultivated the wilderness' and at the same time there is an acute awareness of God's creation, positively, but also the call to the human being to build not only a farm but the vineyard, you know, and the biblical references to that as well, you know, how you must do that. That's all...what I can say...and again there, I think, they felt they had a very important mission and, again, there was no understanding of what's...I think that the people who were here before them...that they also had an idea about...formation and building this...and cult...culti...garden and...of course the notion of the garden is biblical but it's also very European, you know, it's something that...(not clear)...and it's very important for your studies to look at this and I think I might come back to that question or suggest other people who can come in...(not clear)...

**Mduduzi:** Prof., I don't know if this next question is relevant to your field of knowledge. If it is not, we can skip it a bit and go to the next one...because here I'm also extending my thinking a little bit beyond the biblical parameters. I would like to know in what way could these concepts of wilderness and garden be linked to the state of Western European modernity. I'm also thinking here about the Dutch being initially foreign to Africa and then trying to adapt in this new environment...

**Hans:** I have one point...one thing to say on this and that is about European modernity and the Afrikaner start coming here in 1652 and then they stream through slowly, slowly but steadily, but as a people here they were...they were in isolation and I think one shouldn't...I mean they took up contacts later on and more in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, of course, people were educated on the other side and so forth...but what has been said, and I think it's true to quite an extent, the whole Enlightenment period somehow was...eh...bypassed, you know, the French Revolution and the Enlightenment period and rationality and all these things...bases...which are bases for modernity. And that whole phase was not...eh...did it happen in that way? I mean they were outside that. At least, to some extent, I can only say to...to what extent but, you know, that has played a role because it is as if...it is as if...eh...biblical model could remain undisturbed, you know, with the cultural understanding of their role as...as guardians and defenders of...(unclear)...of people and all these things and notions like equality, brotherhood, freedom. Eh, I think there was a very hostile view from the Afrikaners...(unclear)...of this development but that was the case in many other parts of Europe...they didn't like it. So, I think there's a mix...I think one is...yes, it's...eh...it's complicated...it's problematic...it's

problematic...what does it really mean and what do you do today...what do you do today? Because I think there is an ambiguity or...I mean...as an Afrikaner you wanted to be European...you wanted...that was a great thing because you were part of that culture and you were here. At the same time they were isolated, so they couldn't keep up. It must have created a kind of...eh...kind of...eh...trauma or unsolved problem. Because you must feel...and I can even today feel...people from here with that background – how they thrived in coming to Europe and being in that local culture as they feel that it's theirs as well. That's more or less what I can say now.

**Mduduzi:** Yes, I think that's quite...quite...quite...quite important; it's quite useful. Eh, what is the concept of labour and leisure within the context of Afrikaner theological thought? I'm thinking here particularly about, eh...you know...eh some of the photographs I have looked at – by David Goldblatt – and this question came up in my mind and I thought there was...maybe it was based on a certain theological thought within the Afrikaner community and I thought of asking you this question...

**Hans:** Yeah, there is a work ethic and there is...eh...Old Testament reference to the Sabbath...very important...the Sunday. You know the Sunday...the...the...the South African legislation was like that as well...to...not so long ago. Sunday was supposed to be a day of rest...I think **...(not clear) more or less...(a loud background noise)**. As I was saying, there is...eh...there is an interesting relationship between labour and leisure. Your question...but I don't know...because there is a conception of the Sabbath as very important and it's time for rest and there's time for work and those two are activating each other. But, of course, the rest of the week is work and there's a very high moral...a very high work ethic in this...and that should be acknowledged and it has to do with your faith. It has to do to some extent also with this predestination thing that I talked about, if you remember, that there is...eh...if...yeah...there is a kind of a tension build up in you as a Christian where you have no other way...you know everything is after the grace...so in a way you know you could just sit down...do nothing but at the same time you know that's not good enough. God expects something from you. That grace should...should be converted to a good work and that's what's happening. In that sense...very interesting example...I think...you see...one of the problems in South Africa is that now in the new South Africa we don't have role models. We don't have a work ethic, we don't know what to go by. Christianity is just one of many religions...you can do just what you like but you should remember...and now it's too early to look to the Afrikaners and say 'look, what they was right'. I mean...you can't do that; most people would be absolutely shocked, but the truth is: in terms of work ethic, they are role models...

**Mduduzi:** Yes they are...yes they are. Well, wonderful. Prof., I'm asking you a very controversial question here, the last one, and I hope you'll be able to say something about it. Finally, eh, which God is being served by the Afrikaners...or was being served at that time by the Afrikaners? Old Testament God or the New Testament God and why?

**Hans:** Well, I can only answer in terms of a theological...eh...very brief exploration because you read the Old and the New Testament the different ways and I do it by making a brief comparison, just not to give a proper answer, actually, but just to show how these things influence exactly how you see God in the Old or in the New Testament.

Eh, well, I will say a few things. It's quite obvious that Jesus agreed to the text, to the Old Testament; He said not even one dot should be changed, talking about the Law or God and all that. But in doing that He didn't say that you literally had to obey everything that is stated there...there was that...in terms of truth, it was...it was more than...(unclear)...but He's...the whole role in life and death was in itself a reinterpretation of everything that has ever happened before and...(unclear)...this problem exactly how to deal with it. I feel now, from a Lutheran point of view, for example, it is much more focusing on Christ in how He understood the Old Testament. In a way, liberating yourself, as a Christian, from all the laws and prescriptions that are there but interpret it through Christ...you're not running away from it but you're doing it through Christ. And Luther typically said: "Man mus Christus treiben". That means: "You must drive Christ; you must use Christ as the point of reference when you read the Bible – even the Old Testament.

**Mduduzi:** Yeah. Because Prof., as you are continuing, before I forget, in my mind I always believe that what we could correctly call the Bible, even today, is the Old Testament and the New Testament is, perhaps, the...is part of apologetics by apostles and this and that, but the actual text of the Bible, I believe, should be the Old Testament and...which takes us to the point that the New Testament was actually a proof that this is how the Old Testament prophecies and writings have been received. I don't know, but you should continue with the...

**Hans:** Yes, yes, yes. Well, it's a discussion on its own. It's interesting what you're saying. Eh, I think...I don't want to...eh...be unfair in anyway but I think it's not easy to say how you interpret the Bible. I can only say that from the Reformed thinking as being...based on the emphasis on the Old Testament as well as the New Testament and it is part of it is also in the shape of a direct reading of the Old Testament independently from the New Testament. Eh, and you can do this in so many ways but, again, Reformed thinking, of course, would also have Christ as the centre point and His understanding of God would be central: How do you reconcile that with the God of the Old Testament? That is a good question; there is no easy answer to that. I find, just now, giving you a...defending a different theological standpoint, perhaps, but if you drive Christ...if Christ is a model that you...against whom you judge everything, then you have actually kind of an answer. If you say: "Just read anything and see what you come up with" and then Christ at the end is...(unclear)...slightly different...slightly different...but it's also...there's also...eh...you see, here you can easily end up in a different school. There is also a school that continues to disregard the Old Testament and then loses out. And that's against the will of Christ because he said not even an iota should be changed; not even a dot should be changed. It is still valid...everything that is said there, but exactly how, he doesn't say; it's a matter of interpretation. So, there is no easy answer to that.

**Mduduzi:** Yeah. So, could we say that Afrikaners serve an Old Testament God or a New Testament God, in closing?

**Hans:** No, you can't answer either or; it's definitely impossible because ...because Christ is the centre, is the Saviour, and Christ's understanding of God would be decisive. Nevertheless, there is a strong emphasis on the Old Testament God. I would

say...eh...possibly agree to say that there is some tension between these two understandings, but it would hardly ever be a matter of either or. That's my answer.

Mduduzi: Yeah, Prof., before I finally say we stop here, I must just say this...(not clear)...this last question. I was thinking about violence that is involved in the Old Testament and also the violence that was involved during the...in the history of the Afrikaner people against Africans and also against the British, but not to say that the British were innocent. Eh, yeah, just one word before we close.

Hans: Eh, yes, that's true that violence has never been...it's been accepted as a reality that is there; it has been used also and I'm not estranged to the idea that the Old Testament has played a role there. I think Jesus reinterpreted it very, very strongly, but depending on which phase and so on...

END OF SIDE 'A'

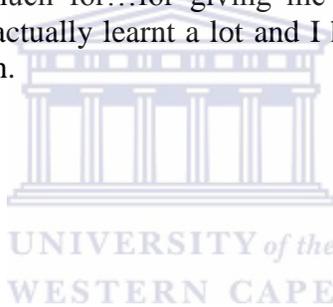
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BEGINNING OF SIDE 'B'

Mduduzi: Thank you very much for...for giving me this opportunity to be able to interview you. I think I have actually learnt a lot and I have a lot that I can use for my research. Thank you very much.

Hans: Thank you. Thank you.

END



## APPENDIX 6

### Interview by Mduduzi Xakaza with David Goldblatt: 17/11/08: Cape Town

**Mduduzi:** Again, I know that you are rushing, eh, you are quite busy, trying to get back to Joburg. But, as I said, I have been looking at your work, eh, and...trying...trying very hard to understand what it means...what it is saying, etcetera. And what actually probed me to come to you today is the fact that most of the photographs before *Intersections* series are in black and white. And I don't want to assume too much; I'd like to hear from you why such a major change from black and white to colour and we'll take other questions as we continue...(not clear)...

**David:** Okay, first of all let me say that to me that's not a great change – from black and white to colour; it's simply another medium to say much the same sort of thing that I've said all along. I'm simply using colour now instead of black and white. During the years of Apartheid...black and white was for me the medium that best suited what I wanted to say, eh, because colour was too pretty. I used colour extensively in my professional work – for magazines, in advertising agencies and so on, but for my personal work there were no questions (sic) in my mind; I needed to work in black and white. (not clear)...eh, technical question that, eh, needed...that needs to be mentioned. Eh, colour photography, during those years, that is, in the...more or less from the fifties...the sixties onwards, right through until the early nineties...colour work was almost always in transparency form. We photographed on transparencies rather than on colour negative and transparencies need to be exactly right in the ... (not clear) ...of the exposure; if you don't get it right, you can throw it away, more or less. There is very little latitude. And I didn't, then, want to show prints particularly, but if I ever did want to make prints it was very, very difficult in those days to have them made and I didn't make my own colour prints. I didn't have the darkroom setup or the experience to make my own prints; so, I would have to go to the laboratory and I found it very difficult to get prints that I liked. Eh, the medium, in other words, had very little flexibility. Then two things happened: on the one hand democracy came to South Africa and that was obviously a major shift, a major change and I felt that ... (not clear) ...to ... (not clear) ... more expensive, more, I suppose, more celebratory in my work and so colour seemed to me to be the medium that I would work in, certainly for some of the work, but, secondly, there was a major technical development; it was digital reproduction of photography – not digital photography itself because I don't, so far, use much of that. I have a digital camera, but I really seldom use it, but the reproduction of photographs by digital means has made a revolution of ... (not clear) ... in my way of working. Eh, because it is now possible, working with the computer, to control and produce colour prints... (not clear) ... to my liking...and I can do this simply working with a very highly skilled person who knows the actual computer work ... eh, without having to go into the darkroom.

**Mduduzi:** Okay. So, in other words, eh, there is no involvement of the darkroom work in this ...

**David:** There is darkroom work in the processing of the colour ... of the colour film, but that's done in a professional laboratory; I have nothing to do with that except to watch the

quality, but assuming that the quality is okay we then scan the pictures ... the negatives that I want to use and then put the scanned images up on the screen, on the computer and, working in photoshop, I am able to exercise the controls that I would use if I were in the darkroom, but I can use them, first of all, on the computer with immediate feedback; I can see exactly what happens if we ... if we make it a bit darker or a bit lighter or we change the contrast or we change the colour balance, I can see immediately on the computer screen what the effect is going to be and we can make test prints of these quite quickly and they cost me money but they're not extremely expensive. So, I can get almost immediate feedback on what I'm doing and this has been a revolution in my work because I can now spend much more of my time taking photographs than work in the darkroom, although, it must be said, I spend a lot of time here in Cape Town working on the computer with Tony Meintjes who does this work for me. So, yes I don't spend time in the darkroom anymore, but I do spend a lot of time behind the computer with Tony. Eh, on balance I guess it takes me less time to do that than it could have done in the darkroom, but the main thing is that I can control the process very precisely eh on the computer and reproduce prints that I like.

**Mduduzi:** And...eh...I'm asking a very ...I think it's a very unclear question now. What visual effects do you normally expect to find, I mean, when you are busy working with your computer, on your photographs before you say this is the final product – the finished product?

**David:** Eh, I'm not quite sure what you mean by 'what visual effects'; eh, I'll just describe the process briefly. Eh, for me, colour photographs, as they come off the ... off ...out of the laboratory, are still too pretty; there's too much colour. I don't see the world with so much colour...

**Mduduzi:** Okay, yes, that's what I mean...

**David:** ...Eh, so, generally speaking, not always, but very often, when you put that image up on the computer screen, we take out a certain amount of colour and we also increase the contrast, usually, not always, but usually. So, this immediately changes the feeling of the photograph for me...

**Mduduzi:** Emotional impact...?

**David:** Emotional effect, if you like, the aesthetic ... the aesthetic quality of the photograph. Eh, I see our light here in this country has been very sharp, quite hard...very hard, very often, and ...and, except in certain circumstances, I don't see, eh, the world that I'm interested in as being highly coloured and if I were to be working in a more conventional way, I suppose, I would confine my colour photography to the first two or three hours of the day and the last two or three hours of the day because that's what the textbook says is the best time for colour photography and the reason they say that is that there's a lot more warmth in the light because the sun is lower and so we get a much warmer and more ...pretty effects...I'm not interested in that; I'm interested in those hours of the day, basically, that most of us live in. We don't often get up to look at the

dawn; we don't often stop at the sunset, but, generally speaking, we are around during the hours of daylight, more or less, in summer from about, eh, ...

**Mduduzi:** We are busy working during the day...

**David:** Yes, from about eight...eight o'clock, nine o'clock in the morning until about four or four thirty in the afternoon; these are the hours that we normally see our world. It doesn't mean that I don't ever work in the early hours or the later hours, but most of my photography in colour has been in those hours which the textbooks say we should not be using. Eh, I use them very deliberately because that to me is the light that I ...and the colour that I see in my world ... and so I seek to make photographs that echo that.

**Mduduzi:** In other words now, eh, this ...eh, this statement that you have just put now actually concurs with my idea that you are one of those photographers who work out ...almost outside the conventional parameters...

**David:** I ...I suppose so, I mean, I don't know what the conventional parameters are now, frankly, because ... **(not clear)** ... but the old textbooks used to say, you know, if you gonna be doing colour photography, then avoid ... avoid midday light whatever ...**(not clear)** ...don't take photographs under ... under mid ... noon sun; now, I love the noon sun, it's okay...

**Mduduzi:** Yes, in fact ...David, thank you very much. Eh, in this book, from the beginning, eh, I notice that you have the city and a lot of people doing what they are supposed to be doing in order to survive economically, which, I suppose, was not really happening during the Apartheid times because, eh, people ... black people were not allowed to do all these things right in the city. Yeah, can you say anything about that...?

**David:** Yeah, yeah, to me, this is a fundamental aspect of the democratic revolution in this country. Eh, in the years of Apartheid black people, in the city of Johannesburg, and then... **(not clear)** ...in the cities of the country, black people were only there by permit; they had to have a permit to be there. They were not allowed to be there ... **(not clear)** ... and they could be arrested and thrown into jail if they didn't have the necessary papers. And that meant that eh, they were not allowed to trade on the streets of the cities; eh, black people, eh, in Johannesburg were strictly prohibited from trading in the so-called white areas, which meant that if you wanted to buy yellow mealies on the street, you couldn't; if you wanted to buy food on the street, you couldn't, eh, if you wanted to hire a painter, you couldn't. Suddenly, in ... in ... post 1990, more or less, eh, things changed dramatically, or from about 1996, '97, really, but it became a huge wave in the early nineties when hundreds of thousands of people came into our cities from rural South Africa and from all over Africa. And this, to me, represented a very, very important change; the move of people who had very little but who had somehow to make a way of making a living and they found that by ... **(not clear)** ... informal economy on the streets of our cities. And, so, JAG ... Johannesburg streets changed out of all recognition because, previously, I think it could be said that the streets of Johannesburg were the streets of a colonial city – strictly controlled, mainly white; blacks were there by permit. After those times blacks took ... **(not clear)** ... on the streets; they inhabited the streets;

they relaxed in the streets; they worked in the streets; they walked in the streets and some of our streets in Johannesburg became ... well, Johannesburg became, for the first time, an African city, no longer a colonial city...

**Mduduzi:** A fully cosmopolitan city ...

**David:** Yes, so it's a very, very big change, but to me, the exciting thing in this, if you like, is that people had to find ways of earning a living; so, they found every little gap in the economy that they could, so, suddenly, you would see little advertisements appearing on our pavements – painter, electrician, eh, tennis court repairs, whatever it was. And ... and these represented very, very important changes because these people were now in business and you didn't need a bank account; you didn't need a secretary; you didn't need an office. All you needed was a paint brush or a roller and a cell phone and some advertisements and you could be in business. So, this ... you want to take your phone...?

**Mduduzi:** No, no, no, let's leave it...

**David:** So, this represented to me a terribly important thing because this is how my ancestors started – they were... **(not clear)** ...; they were small traders; they would sell things on the streets. Eh, and I imagined that the time would come when the children or the grandchildren of a man like that, Tymon, would benefit from the money that he has saved by becoming a painter in Johannesburg and would become university graduates.

**Mduduzi:** Yes, yes, in fact, David, what you're saying is very ...is very interesting and powerful because it also makes me look back into your own biography as well when you talk about your parents – how they started – and actually .. they actually built life for all of you in your family, but they started by doing ... I mean, what they had to do in order to make it in life. Now, the question that comes to my mind is the question of, eh, identification because I've always debated this with some of my colleagues that in fact David Goldblatt, eh, there is something ... like identification with the situation in the ...during the Apartheid period ... **(not clear)** ... people who were suffering because of the Apartheid period. That is my understanding when I look at your photographs and I look at the essays that have been written around those photographs. That takes me back me back, but I need to confirm it with you because it is ...

**David:** What's your question ...what's your question Mdu?

**Mduduzi:** Is there identification that you feel ...do you identify yourself, in a way, not directly, with the suffering of the people, even though yourself you never suffered like that, but do you ... I don't know how to put this ...do you feel a certain kind of identification with that condition that people found themselves in ...

**David:** Yeah, yes, yeah, sure, of course I do, but it went much further than that. It wasn't enough for me ... **(not clear)**... to say: Ag shame, look at those poor black people, how they're suffering; that's...that's...you know, that was a standard white response to the situation if you were more or less progressive. I ...I was... my concern was the concern that arose out of my anger at what they were doing. Eh, it seemed to me to be completely

counter productive. They were going to build up a huge resentment and hatred among black people, for whites. We were debasing ourselves; our own humanity was being debased. So, it went much deeper than simply identifying with the suffering of the ... of the people who were oppressed. It was a concern with the system that we were ...that we were enforcing.

**Mduduzi:** That is quite, eh, interesting ... and I've just ...I've just been looking at a very intriguing photograph here which I ... I feel drawn to it, but I don't have words because I've been reading an essay written by, eh, by Michael Stevenson, about how difficult it is to actually put words to describe your work especially in this series of photographs and he says a lot about how ...how possible it is to feel something specific about the photographs ...about the subject that you are dealing with but also very difficult to articulate those in words. But I've been looking at this one: *Women singing: Newtown Squatter Camp, Johannesburg*...this particular photograph, because I'm looking at ...at how space has been defined here and I don't want to ask too much about space and all those things. Can you say something about this: what really attracted you to this because I can see part of the interior of this ... I think this is a shack ...and these women singing here and there is something intriguing about this and even though, I mean, as I've said, it is difficult to express it in words.

**David:** Well, I don't know why it's particularly difficult to express it in words; I can only speak about why I...you know, what I saw when I took this photograph. This was a squatter camp of shacks within two kilometers of the city centre in Johannesburg, behind the Market Theatre, the place that I know very, very well and, eh, I wanted to do some photographs in there that would express my, again, my anger, I suppose, at what was happening, eh, and the fact that people were living...having to live like this. At the same time I wanted to... to relate this to the city and to the life that was being led, so if you look at the photograph it's actually more complicated than you... It's ...it's an interior of a shack; it's an exterior beyond the shack; it's also just a hint of the city ...of the city skyline. Now, the fact that these women were singing while they were washing in this place, to me, is that complexity of life that we get in South Africa. They weren't sit ... standing there and crying and saying it's terrible how we're suffering; they were singing. So, that, to me, is very interesting, eh, but there was a technical problem; I wanted to show the interior of the shack; I wanted to show the ... **(not clear)** ... of the city and I wanted to show the women singing. Now, it would have been impossible before to do that photograph in colour as I've done it because the ...the colour films in earlier ...earlier days simply didn't have enough latitude and it was an extremely difficult job to make a print that embraced such a very wide range of contrast. Technically speaking, the contrast here is almost impossible to imagine in earlier days; you couldn't do it, but with modern technology and working on computer, we were able to hold the detail within the shack very, very precisely ...**(not clear)** ... the detail and, at the same time, we could show clearly what was happening on the outside. So for me, this was a ...like a technical...technically interesting problem, but it was also ... **(not clear)** ... of information that I wanted to convey.

**Mduduzi:** Wow, this is ... this is interesting. Now, I know this was demolished during the Apartheid period and now this is ...we're now in 2003 – *The Docrats' Lavatory in*

*Fietas, Johannesburg*, but I know that you also photographed part of this problem during the Apartheid period in black and white, but then you came back again in 2003 and now it looks like a really abandoned place, but ...eh, things are growing on this deserted, old building...things are growing. Did you think about the passing of time ...does something happen in your mind about what the passing of time does to such spaces ... **(not clear)**?

**David:** I'm not interested particularly in the passing of time in general; I'm very interested in the passing of time in relation to the Docrats' lavatory because I knew that lavatory when it was part of their house. I photographed in their house. I knew Mr Docrat and his family and I photographed in his shop and in his house. And, eh, when the bulldozers came to Fietas, which is what this place is called, eh, they couldn't knock down this little building because it was built out of concrete and they were building ... they were smashing down shacks ...not shacks, but little houses that were built in bricks and corrugated iron and this probably held a water tank of a Docrat house, so...and so, it was in reinforced concrete and the machines that they brought to the job in Fietas weren't equal to the task. So, by accident, if you like, this monument to the monstrosity of Apartheid was left. Now, I photographed in this particular way because for me there was about the structure a kind of grandeur, eh, a ridiculous grandeur ... **(not clear)** ... somebody shoot out which has suddenly acquired historic importance and, at the same time, it's a piece of sculpture. So, for me, this is a very complex picture. This is a simple structure, but it's got a lot of ideas wrapped up in there and this was confirmed when I spoke to Mr Docrat himself. Eh, Mr Docrat was a man who had a little shop in Fietas and he told me about how he used to... how he was ... he was very much a member of that community and how bitter he felt about the forced removal under the Group Areas Act that he was required to undergo. And I said to him: "Mr Docrat, have you ever been back to Fietas?" because he now had to live in Lenasia which was a group area for Indians outside Johannesburg, and he said: "Mr Goldblatt, I can't, I can't go back there and it's... I'm too...I'm too full of hatred." But he said: "One day I was traveling in a double-decker bus and I, sort of, peeped out of the side of my ...out of the side of the bus and there I saw our lavatory and I thought to myself that all that they left us is sh\*t. Now, I thought that was pure poetry.

**Mduduzi:** Wow, that is also because, David, you are strongly influenced by literature...

**David:** Yeah, I suppose so ...

**Mduduzi:** Because the way you think about what you photograph is not just an ordinary, boring way of looking at things; there's a lot that happens within your mind before you photograph anything because I've been reading about, eh, who actually influenced your work – people like Nadine Gordimer and the other one who also wrote a lot of interesting literature which actually influenced you a lot. And, I then... I also looked at something which really interested me, eh, which I connect with a work by Santu Mofokeng, in my mind, but I'm not saying that there is any relationship, but when I start looking at it, I know that Santu worked for a project, eh, by Charles van Onselen, and then I presume that one of the photographs he took was the one called *Sunflower Harvest*, that one in Bloemhof. And then, I look at this mealies which is ready for harvesting as well and I realize that there is something about... about the usage of the land, about labour that

always happens in your mind and I'm now curious to know what you have to say about that because they look very powerful to me as they are and I actually think about how possibly connected they are in terms of just relating them to each other in the way they look, but not ...**(not clear)** ... connected in terms of when and how...

**David:** Are you talking about connected between Santu and me or between...

**Mduduzi:** No, I'm talking specifically about this one because I just want to know what you have to say about this one and then I have my ideas at the back of my mind about Santu's work also because I'm trying to see how to think about the issues of labour, labour relations, land ownership, profits and all those things...

**David:** Alright, well, I think that this is a bad example to choose because the history of this photograph relates to that period when I was photographing *Intersections*, eh, and it happens to be at the intersection of a latitude and longitude and that was, to me, the reason for doing it, but I was interested... I'm interested in the land, you're quite right, and I'm interested in the crops and I'm interested in how they come to be there than, you know, what has happened ... and I... I don't think I can say a lot about, eh, labour and profits and things like that. Eh, if you were to ask me where I stand on these matters, I'm a nineteenth-century liberal; I'm hopelessly out of date with the world. I'm a ...I'm a capitalist; I think that capitalism, in many ways, is a terrible system, but it's the best one that we've got, like democracy. Democracy only works quite well; it doesn't work perfectly, but it's the best system that we know...

**Mduduzi:** Yes, of course, yeah...

**David:** Eh, there was a famous British writer by the name of Ian Forester; he wrote a short essay called 'Two cheers for democracy', not three because it's not worth three, but two cheers...

**Mduduzi:** Two cheers only...

**David:** And I think two cheers for capitalism. It's ...yeah, it's got many faults, but it's the best system that we know. And, eh, personally, I think that labour in this country is ...eh, working in a way that is counterproductive to many things. Eh, we have a... almost now an overreaction to the years when black people were not allowed to form trade unions; we have an overreaction now where the trade union movement is extremely powerful and is, eh, concerned with monopolizing its position. Now, this makes it extremely difficult for all the people who are not in the labour movement and who can't have jobs because if ...I know if I come from ...from Transkei and I've got a bit of skill, maybe I'm a ...eh, I'm a reasonably good electrician, I can't get a job because I don't...for one reason or another the COSATU union that applies to me won't allow me to... you know...has, eh, raised a level of wages in that particular branch or industry to such an extent that it doesn't pay the bosses to hire outside of that; they can't hire more people at that rate...**(not clear)** ... if the rate were lower or if it were flexible, they could. Now, this is a very old problem in labour relations, but I think that it's making it much more difficult in this country to solve some of the unemployment problems. So, I'm

going off at a tangent, but these are important things and I'm aware of them when I'm photographing; I don't ...I haven't particularly concerned myself with photographing issues around labour, but I have been concerned with the land. Eh, and to me, the question of who owns the land, how it's divided up, is a very important one. Eh, and there's no question about it in this country if you drive around thousands and thousands of kilometers like I do, most of the land is in the white ...in the hands of whites; it has been in the hands of whites, to be ridiculous, since 1652, eh, or since whites moved into the interior and they conquered the land and, eh, and the land is now divided up very rigidly with fences and so on and, eh, this makes it extremely ...extremely difficult for, eh, black peasant farmers, for example, to move in, but, on the other hand we also have the problem of ... of water and so, it's ... it simply doesn't pay in this country to have small farms in most areas; you have to have very big farms if you're going to farm economically. So, this magnifies the problem of transferring land to... to more people, to more black farmers. I'm sure in the long run we'll solve...we want to solve this problem, but we will approach a better situation, but in the meantime I think it's a very tricky one.

**Mduduzi:** Yeah, because what you are saying about your interest in taking photographs of the land, eh, is, eh, what comes to my mind as we are talking now is that black-and-white photograph where there is a head servant with his boss, Ou Sam, and other servants working in the foreground ... in the background, yeah.. And that one also, I think that one corresponds exactly with what you are saying now, in a way, but I don't know if I'm...

**David:** Yes, sure, absolutely, I mean, that was the boss and he ...**(not clear)** ...

END OF SIDE B OF THE TAPE<sup>881</sup>

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BEGINNING OF SIDE A OF THE TAPE

**Mduduzi:** Yeah, so ...so, it is that one that comes to mind because to me it looks as if it is expressing something about power relations in the work place and that place ... in that case...in the open space, the land that is being cultivated ... people work on it...and also the other one that really intrigues me whenever I look at it is that one of a farmer's son with his ... with his nursemaid and that one also, I think almost falls under the same category of power relations....

**David:** Well, it's another aspect of it...it's another aspect of it...

**Mduduzi:** And then David, the other one that I have been trying to say something about it was...of course this one looks...as a continuation of the black and white one that you took... that you took ... that is in, eh, a book called *Structures* and this one is a continuation, but I assume it's not the same people because...

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<sup>881</sup> This interview was firstly recorded, erroneously, on Side 'B' of the cassette tape and continues on side 'A'.

**David:** Yeah, I don't know; it could be. I've got no idea; I don't know the names of the people that I photographed at first. I know the names of these people and there're only...there are a number of families who are in this business, as it were, so they could well be the earlier generation of the same family; I don't know.

**Mduduzi:** Because here... what I realized here is that they actually move around with these families because when I look at the black and white one, I assume that maybe it was mainly men going to try to make a living for their families...

**David:** No, no; now these are all family units. They tracked together...

**Mduduzi:** They moved together. So when they get somewhere they get a job...all of them ...do something...

**David:** Usually, if they can, yes, yes. I must make a phone call while you're talking. Mdu, do you...have you got a lot still to do, do you know?

**Mduduzi:** No, no, no...

**David:** Because...

**Mduduzi:** I will...I will just...

**David:** Okay...

**Mduduzi:** I have the last one that I need to ask you about, the very last one...because, eh,...

**David:** Okay, I just wanna tell Michael Stevenson that I will be a little bit late.

**Mduduzi:** Okay. Eh, ...now...this one...I've come across a number of photographs that, eh, are talking about asbestos and I wonder if there was a particular reason why you followed it up like that because I've seen this one: *Blue asbestos fibres* here and *The mill, Pomfret*...

**David:** Yes, there is a very particular interest here that **...(not clear)**...and incidentally, I went back to this place. Eh, and I did the same photograph here; it's now covered in grass and you and I are paying for that because we are paying, through the government, for the clean-up operations that the mines didn't do. So, this dump is now covered in grass; it looks very pretty, but it's costing us a huge amount of money and the taxpayers of South Africa...it's taxpayers of South Africa who're paying th...

**Mduduzi:** And are these fibres gone?

**David:** Well, buried, covered...

**Mduduzi:** So they're no longer...no longer...

**David:** No longer a danger. Now that makes them very, very important to change... Yeah, the reason why I became ... **(not clear)** ... is very simple. I had a friend who died of a disease that you get from blue asbestos...

**Mduduzi:** Aaah, asbestosis?

**David:** It's a very, very rare cancer and it...as far as we know it only comes from blue asbestos or from asbestos, but mostly from blue asbestos and...it's...it's a terrible disease because you might be sitting with it or I might be sitting with it but we don't know about it because maybe when you were a kid...I don't know, you might have been with your parents and you drove past ...**(not clear)**...or you were in the Northern Cape and you drove past one of these dumps and you could have inhaled just a tiny, tiny little fibre in your lung and it will lie there buried anything from five to fifty years and then suddenly, the cancer will grow and when it starts, there is no chan ...there is no hope; you will be dead within twelve months. They can't stop it...they can't cure it; there's no treatment.

**Mduduzi:** But here these children are playing in such a risky...

**David:** They're playing in the water of a blue asbestos mine...

**Mduduzi:** And they don't know how dangerous it may be. Thank you very much David ... the last one is about this one. I particularly like this *Groenfontein, Sutherland, Northern Cape* photograph. I like it for my own reasons and I don't want to ...

**David:** Yes, what are...what are your reasons?

**Mduduzi:** No, looking at it...at this vast expanse of the land and this isolated, small house, which I don't know what it is for or who it belongs to...

**David:** Farm labourers' ...farm workers' cottage, yeah...

**Mduduzi:** And also that, eh, eh...that small structure which appears there on the horizon which is not even far, eh, but I get tempted to look at your photographs in this way, but I need to hear from you what this house was all about...

**David:** Well, for me this...you know, I like... I'm interested in the complexity of reality. Eh, reality is, in fact, very complex. And so, when I look at this theme... incidentally, this is one of the ... **(not clear)** ... photographs taken in the early morning... eh, my wife and I were in Sutherland...we were driving out ...**(not clear)** ...early morning. Anyway, I looked at this scene and I thought: "F\*\*k it, there's just such an amazing set of circumstances here." There's a moon...there's a moon, there's a so-called house for a farm worker...terrible ...**(not clear)** ... and on the horizon here, there is a beacon for aircrafts flying from Johannesburg to Cape Town. Now, I've been in a ...I don't know...dozens ...many, many flights from Johannesburg to Cape Town and very often, in ...**(not clear)**... certainly, but occasionally enough, the pilot would say: "We're about

to make a turn at Sutherland...” because at Sutherland the beacon tells the pilot: “This is the point where you’ve got to turn and you go straight for Cape Town...”

**Mduduzi:** To approach Cape Town...

**David:** You know, it’s like a curve in the road...

**Mduduzi:** Yes, yes, yes...

**David:** Eh, and it’s that beacon that tells them to ...it sends up the signal... So, the planes flying between Jo’burg and Cape Town make a turn here at Sutherland and that’s the beacon that tells them. So, there’s this ...this strange complexity of circumstances...

**Mduduzi:** In fact and this poverty here which is just ...almost invisible. People are not sharply...acutely aware of it, but it is there; it has just been part ...part of the whole complexity of life... and just before we close, David, that, eh, eh, biography that I read...and I just made my own ... **(not clear)** ... assuming that I might be correct but I need to confirm it with you...that you are a photographer who looks at social justice and injustices and that is also because of your upbringing and that is what I have been claiming and some people have been challenging me on that and I need to ...I need to...

**David:** I...you know, I wouldn’t describe me as a photographer ...justice and injustice. I’m very aware of injustice, certainly, eh, and I suppose of justice. Eh, it has certainly been a strong...strong factor in my life from childhood. Eh, you know I think I’ve described certainly in one of the interviews how I used to see the black people who had been arrested being marched through the town in handcuffs and that seemed to me a terrible injustice; they would never have done that to white people. So, that certainly is a factor in my ...in my makeup...I mean you can’t live in this country and not be aware of injustice. So, yeah, it’s a factor, but I wouldn’t describe myself as being a photographer concerned with...particularly with injustice...

**Mduduzi:** No, but I think it’s part of it...it’s part of...

**David:** It comes into my work...yeah...hmm...

**Mduduzi:** Yeah. Oh, David, thank you very much for...for the time that you have dedicated to this interview. It has been very, very useful and I think I will be able to support my assumptions now based on what we have discussed. Thank you very much.