

Exhumations, reburials and history making in post-apartheid South Africa.



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DECLARATION

I know what plagiarism entails, namely to use another's work and to present it as my own without attributing the sources in the correct way.

I, Robin-lea Karating, declare that '*Exhumations, reburials and history making in post-apartheid South Africa*' is my own work, that it 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.



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December 2018



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Abbreviations:

AmFarms	Anglo-American Farms Limited
EAFF	Equipo Argentino de Antropologia Forense (Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
MPPT	Missing Person's Task Team
NPA	National Prosecuting Authority
SAHRA	South African Heritage Resource Agency
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UCT	University of Cape Town
UP	University of Pretoria
UWC	University of the Western Cape
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand



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Abstract:

This mini-thesis, 'Exhumation, Reburial and History Making in South Africa', is concerned with an analysis of the practices of exhumation and reburial through discussing the case studies of the Iron-Age archaeological site of Mapungubwe, the Vergelegen Wine Estate in Somerset West and the reburials carried out by the Missing Persons Task Team (MPPT) from the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), particularly its unsuccessful attempt at exhumations at the Stikland Cemetery, in an attempt to understand how they form part of the production of history. These case studies conceive of the times of the precolonial, slavery and apartheid, and are all linked temporally to an envisaged future through ideas of nation building and nationalism. As narratives produced through these exhumations and reburials, they contribute to the notion of making the post-apartheid by remaking history and reconstituting nation. Each of these case studies are significant as they in some way have been utilized in a manner that is relevant to us in the new democratic South Africa.

This mini-thesis aims at rethinking the role of archaeologists, the exhumation and reburial processes, the construction of ethnicity, how the dead are used to construct narratives of struggle against apartheid and in general the implications each of these have on the re-making of history. It also thinks about what the practices of exhumation and reburial mean conceptually and how they relate to the concept of missingness, which I refer to as the process of making absence or invisibility. Thinking about exhumations and reburial in this way has allowed reflection on the purpose of the practices, in terms of who it's for and how it's perceived by the stakeholders involved in each case. Through dissecting each of these issues one may be able to trace how the remains to be reburied become missing. Therefore, the question of exhumation and reburial is essential in thinking about what it does for the human remains and how their identity is either shaped or lost. This thesis mainly argues that the remains in each of the case studies go through various phases of missingness and that their reburials and memorialization, or in the case of Stikland the spiritual repatriation, inscribes them further into narratives of the times that they emerged from.

Introduction

Exhumation, Reburial and Missingness

This study emerges out of an interest in Southern African reburial sites and how they have been historically documented and narrated. Much has been written about reburial cases specifically that of Klaas and Trooi Pienaar, a Khoisan couple whose remains were illegally smuggled out of the country for Austrian Anthropologist Rudolf Pöch around 1909 and were repatriated to South Africa in 2012.¹ Other instances such as the slave remains found at Cobern Street and Prestwich Place were at the forefront of my Honours Research Essay in 2016.² These cases have opened up questions of heritage, memorialization and how to remember the past. Prestwich Place, in particular, was the primary focus of my research essay and is the inspiration behind this mini-thesis.

In May 2003, the development and excavation of a set of luxury apartments at Prestwich Place situated in Green Point, Cape Town, came to a halt as human remains were discovered at the site.³ The skeletal remains soon became the topic of heated contestation between the developers of the site, archaeologists and the concerned community who claimed ancestry to the remains and expressed concerns about the future of the remains. The remains found at the site amounted to at least more than 700 individuals.⁴ Based on various oral, archival, documentary and archaeological evidence the remains were said to belong not only to slaves brought to the Cape from East and West Africa⁵ but were also made up of “the underclasses of colonial free-blacks, artisans, fishermen, sailors, maids, washerwomen and their children, as well as executed criminals, suicide deaths,

¹ City Press. ‘Reburial hit by controversy’, (11 August 2012), <http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/Reburial-hit-by-controversy-20150430>. Accessed 22 August 2017. Ciraj Rassool traces the return of the remains of Klaas and Trooi Pienaar to South Africa for reburial in 2012 and the debates surrounding their repatriation as well as the process of their rehumanisation from being treated and stored as artefacts in museums. C. Rassool, ‘Restoring the Skeletons of Empire: Return, Reburial and Rehumanisation in Southern Africa’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 41(3) (2015), 653-670.

² R. Karating. ‘Missing across Time: Slave Bodies, Burials and Wrecks’, (UWC. Hons. Thesis. 2016), 18-37.

³ N. Shepherd, ‘Post-apartheid urban imaginaries and the bones of the Prestwich Street dead’, *Journal of Social Archaeology*. 7(1) (2007), 4.

⁴ E. Finnegan, ‘Buried beyond Buitengracht: Interrogating Cultural Variability in the Historic Informal Burial Ground of Prestwich Street, Cape Town’, (MA. thesis, University of Cape Town, 2006), 1.

⁵ M. Hall, ‘New Knowledge and the University’, *Anthropology and Southern Africa*, 32(1&2) (2009), 71.

paupers, and unidentified victims of shipwrecks.”⁶ Due to the identity of those buried at the site, several members of the public claimed descentance to these deceased individuals and a call to memorialize the site followed. Thus, many residents and those sympathetic to the situation felt aggrieved by the request of archaeologists and forensic anthropologists to scientifically study the remains and various forms of protest were embarked upon. The heated contestations around the remains of Prestwich Place provides insight into the struggles over claims to community and those to scientific authority held by many archaeologists. The concerned community at Prestwich opposed the scientific study of the remains due to a number of reasons ranging from the past associations of biological and anthropological study as well as concerns over the supposed “truth” that the study promised to tell.

The views of the concerned community were contested by anatomist Alan Morris, who wanted to conduct scientific research on the Prestwich remains. He argued that anthropological studies have moved beyond the associations of physical anthropology with racial science of the previous century and that through scientific study more information about the Prestwich remains could have been recovered. He also directly challenged the views held by social scientists about physical anthropology: “There is a myth amongst social scientists that because physical anthropology no longer accepts the concept of race, that human variation somehow doesn't exist. This is a failure to understand current scholarship in the field and demonstrates an almost shameful ignorance of biology.”⁷ Morris too states his dissatisfaction with the manner in which the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) treated his team particularly concerning their exclusion from studying the remains. In response, another prominent archaeologist, Martin Hall, argued that Morris “denies the possibility of reconciliation with non-competing sets of interests.”⁸ Thus for him an alternative approach such as engagement between scientists and the concerned community should be sought when dealing with issues such as human remains.⁹ Nonetheless, to the

⁶ N. Shepherd, ‘Post-apartheid urban imaginaries’, 10.

⁷ A.G. Morris, 2008. *Inaugural Lecture: The Politics of Old Bones*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 3.

⁸ M. Hall, ‘New Knowledge and the University’, *Anthropology and Southern Africa*, 32(1&2) (2009), 74.

⁹ M. Hall, ‘New Knowledge and the University’, 74.

dismay of the scientists, access to the site was lost. In 2007, an ossuary was built close to the area by the City of Cape Town to house the old bones whilst a new luxury building was erected at the site of discovery.¹⁰

What has emerged through these and other instances of the extent of processes of reburial since 1990 in South Africa has been how these reburials are linked to attempts to recast times of history, signifying markers of temporality in constituting forms of precolonial, colonial and apartheid history, linking history of a reinterred past with the temporality of recovering and reconstituting nation. As such, this mini-thesis draws on the debates that emerged out of Prestwich Place in order to compare it with a selection of exhumations and reburials that took place before, after and during the saga. This mini-thesis mainly argues that the scientific voice is prevalent in each of the case studies examined and that the human remains are silenced due to the way their narratives have been inscribed in the reburial process.

Through an analysis of a series of exhumations and reburials in Southern Africa since 1990, my aim is to understand how temporalities of history are produced through processes of disinterment and reinternment. The Iron Age Site of Mapungubwe (AD 900-1300) situated in the Limpopo Province which not only presents a case of precolonial state formation but is also a site where the disinterment of human remains have come to represent the “stealing” and “looting” of ancestral remains.¹¹ Excavations at Mapungubwe have been taking place since the 1930s mainly under the auspices of the University of Pretoria (UP). Their work has not only included archaeological unearthing and discovery of artefacts but they were heavily involved in the permanent establishment of the Mapungubwe Collection in Pretoria, in June 2000.¹² The highlight of the museum is not the human remains exhumed at the site but rather that of the two golden rhinos excavated which arguably signifies the site’s rich history and external contact and trade routes.¹³

¹⁰ L. Green, and N. Murray, ‘Notes for a Guide to the Ossuary’, *African Studies*, 68(3) (2009), 371-372.

¹¹ W. C. Nienaber, N. Keough, M. Steyn and J. H. Meiring, ‘Reburial of the Mapungubwe Human Remains: An Overview of Process and Procedure’, *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 63(188), 2008, 164.

¹² University of Pretoria. ‘Mapungubwe Collection -The Collection’, (2018), <http://www.up.ac.za/en/museums-collections/article/1823912/mapungubwe-collection-the-collection>. Accessed 5 September 2017.

¹³ University of Pretoria. ‘Mapungubwe Collection -The Collection’, (2018).

Although much has been written about Mapungubwe and the discovery of material objects and remains, this mini-thesis is concerned with issues of ethnicity, identity, archaeological practices and history making which specifically emerged around the human remains, their disinterment and reinternment. Issues of ethnicity and identity are evident in the claims to the remains made by members of the Vhangona Cultural Movement, the Lemba Cultural Association and the Tshivula Royal Family. In essence, the unearthing of the human remains opened up the question of how reburial, which subsequently took place, was part of reconstituting the nature and the form of time labelled as precolonial.

Another case study I investigate is that of Vergelegen farm, where slave remains were uncovered. In 1987, the Anglo-American Farms Limited acquired the farm in Somerset West and invested in a R10 million project of building a winery and modernising the farm.¹⁴ Soon after, “the academic archaeology project at Vergelegen began when the UCT [University of Cape Town] archaeology department proposed to the Anglo American Corporation's Chairman's Fund for funds to undertake an excavation project at Vergelegen, an historical farm previously established and owned by Willem Adrian van der Stel, governor of the Cape between 1699 and 1705.”¹⁵ Archaeological excavations were allowed on the farm from July 1990, which focused on excavating the slave lodge, mill and knecht's house that had been constructed during Van der Stel's stay at the estate. My research is concerned with the excavation and subsequent narrative of the remains of a particular slave who was named as Flora. Much has been written about the exhumation and reburials which took place at the farm, specifically by the UCT scholars who were involved in these processes, although Flora's reburial is, in my view, the most prolific. Flora has been dubbed by scholars such as Carohn Cornell as the “slave foremother” and freedom fighter.¹⁶ Her case is significant as well due to the fact that she was reburied at the Slave Lodge, a space slaves inhabited

¹⁴ J. Pastor. ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education: A case-study at Vergelegen’, (UCT. M.A. Thesis. 1993), 37.

¹⁵ J. Pastor. ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education’, 38.

¹⁶ C. Cornell. *Slaves at the Cape: A Guidebook for Beginner Researchers*, (Cape Town: University of the Western Cape, 2005), 277.

during their stay at the farm¹⁷ Flora's case not only opens up questions about the depiction of slave lives but also the archaeological, reburial and memorial practices that form part of the production of a historical narrative about the slave dead, pointing to how reburial constitutes a colonial past.

Finally, there is an analysis of South Africa's Missing Persons Task Team's (MPTT) which was established around 2004. Their focus is on "tracing", "exhuming" and "identifying" the bodies of the remaining missing person's cases submitted to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.¹⁸ The task team worked alongside the Equipo Argentino de Antropologia Forense (EAAF) better known as the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team which was established in 1984 and examined 9000 cases of disappeared persons in Argentina.¹⁹ The MPTT modelled itself after the EAAF as "a team that sees the physical and the forensic work of exhumation and identification as one aspect of a wider collaborative and restorative process with families."²⁰ However, due to the MPTT emerging as one of the recommendations of the TRC in its final report, its main concern was with investigating and exhuming the remains of those who died due to the struggle against apartheid.

According to Rousseau, the majority of exhumations conducted by the MPTT were those of guerrillas or freedom fighters particularly from the African National Congress's (ANC) military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK).²¹ The exhumations and reburials of these MK veterans seemingly constructed a narrative of apartheid and resistance in the service of the nation and appears to be following a script, as pointed out by Rousseau, which largely depicts the veterans as heroes at their reburial ceremony. This mini-thesis will discuss the script in terms of the Stikland case where the MPTT were not able to positively identify the remains of twelve Robben Island prisoners, who were buried at the site during the 1960's, thus no reburial could take place. It would appear that the

¹⁷ A. Malan. 2008. Freedom Day Lecture: Unearthing Slavery, the Complex Role of Archaeology. Cape Town: Iziko Museum, 6.

¹⁸ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines: Missing Persons and skeletons in South Africa', in *Human Remains and Identification*, ed. E. Anstett and J.M. Dreyfus (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 188.

¹⁹ C. Rassool. 'Human Remains: Disciplines of the Dead and the South African Memorial Complex' in *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: Economies, Histories, Infrastructures*, ed. D.R. Petersen, K. Guava and C. Rassool (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 140.

²⁰ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines', 188.

²¹ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines', 184-185.

spiritual repatriation ceremony for the prisoners held at Robben Island and their subsequent memorialization in the form of a monument would stand in for the reburial which did not occur.

The Role of Forensic Anthropologists and Archaeologists:

Much of the scholarship around issues of the dead body to be examined in this study are written by forensic anthropologists and archaeologists. Mapungubwe and Vergelegen particularly emerge from archaeological projects whereas the MPTT reburials emerge from arguably a humanitarian effort within a discourse of transitional justice framed by the work of South Africa's TRC. Forensic anthropologists assist in identifying human skeletons and the cause of death. They are concerned with determining race, sex, age and height of the dead body. Arguably, they play an integral role in the production of reburial histories, as they perceive their work as uncovering or retrieving the past through the body and through DNA testing.

Furthermore, forensic archaeologists are concerned with assisting law enforcement "to locate the site where a body and victim's personal items or stolen goods are buried, through geological and geophysical surveying techniques, as well as using imaging and photography."²² They are largely involved in excavation and exhumation practices whereby they use specialized tools and the skills acquired from their discipline to accumulate evidence at the gravesite. Zoë Crossland argues that "forensic archaeology is located at the intersection of multiple evidential regimes that articulate different and often conflicting expectations for archaeological practice."²³ Her work is particularly useful in understanding the role of forensic archaeologists and forensic anthropologists and the ways in which they utilize their expertise to construct narratives of the dead through arguments surrounding the indexicality of the dead as well as how the dead are used as a body of evidence.²⁴ Thus, the work of Crossland, whose central argument is that the remains

²² R. Caesar, *The Anthropology of the Dead Body: The Corpse in Theory, Action, and Literature*, (Archaeology Undergraduate Course Syllabus: Berkley, 2014), 1.

²³ Z. Crossland, 'Evidential Regimes of Forensic Archaeology', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 43 (2013), 122.

²⁴ Z. Crossland, 'Of Clues and Signs: The Dead Body and Its Evidential Traces', *American Anthropologists*, 111(1) (2009), 69-80.

exhumed are produced as bodies (either/or and for bodies of evidence and bodies for mourning) through the work of a forensic expert, will be essential throughout this mini-thesis.²⁵ Moreover, Eyal Weizmann and Thomas Keenan argue for a rethinking of the notion of forensics that is not limited to science but focuses on the fields and forums through which evidence is retrieved, produced and presented in manners to convince.²⁶ Similarly to Crossland, Weizmann and Keenan also tackle issues of the dead body as evidence and how their identification by archaeologists and forensic anthropologists can be seen as a matter of ascertaining probability is essential to this study.²⁷ Their work provides deeper insights into the identification of remains as well as arguments surrounding the memory and agency of the bones.

The work by Joost Fontein, Cara Krmpotich and John Harries presents an argument focusing on the agency of bones and their impact on us. They argue for a rethinking of not what people do with bones and the ‘stuff of the body’ or the ‘thingness of bones’, but rather what do bones do to people, what does the ‘emotive materiality’ and ‘affective presence’ of human remains do.²⁸ This is interesting in thinking about what the remains do in relation to exhumation and reburial and what is their impact on those involved in these processes of reburial.

There exists much writing on the objectness and materiality of the dead. Finn Stepputat, Joanna Sofaer and Mod Fahlander are particularly useful in this regard. The dead body has been characterized as an object with material qualities. Sofaer argues that we need “to ground the materiality of the dead body in an appreciation of its material qualities.”²⁹ Fahlander characterizes

²⁵ Z. Crossland, ‘Evidential Regimes’, 121- 137.

²⁶ Keenan and Weizmann point out that in terms of *forensis* “the *field* is the site of investigation and the *forum* is the place where the results of an investigation are presented and contested”. However, they argue that the field should rather be understood as a site which does not just trace crime but does so fluidly. Whereas forum “in turn, is a composite apparatus. It is constituted as a shifting triangulation between three elements: a contested *object or site*, an *interpreter* tasked with translating “the language of things,” and the assembly of a public gathering”. By doing this, *forensis* is able to form a relationship between the material objects and politics. Weizman, E. ‘Introduction: Forensics’, Anselm Franke and Eyal Weizmann (eds), *Forensics: The Architecture of Public Truth*, (Berlin: Steinberg Press, 2014), 9.

²⁷ T. Keenan, and E. Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull: The Advent of Forensic Aesthetic* (Berlin: Steinberg Press, 2012), 9-71.

²⁸ J. Fontein, J. Harries and C. Krmpotich, ‘The substance of bones: the emotive materiality and affective presence of human remains’, *Journal of Material Culture*, 15(4) (2010), 371- 384.

²⁹ J. R., Sofaer, ‘*The Body as Material Culture: A theoretical Osteoarchaeology*’, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 68.

material qualities as “those material objects and things that are involved in and variously influence social development. That means that there can be no clear-cut boundaries between so called natural objects and culturally modified objects.”³⁰ These writings were influenced by scholars such as Bruno Latour who wrote about the lives of objects.³¹ To substantiate on the dead as objects, Katherine Verdery uses the statues of political figures to characterize the effect of the dead body as an object and its effect on us. Her work is also essential in understanding the process of reburial and its association with the political and will be discussed later on in detail. By viewing the dead body and the process of reburial as political it unsettles the writing of history and question the temporal aspects and sequences of these events. Thus, the arguments about the dead as political directly impacts on the production of reburial histories and opens up questions of temporality that are essential to this study.

Archaeology and the three case studies:

As mentioned above the cases of Mapungubwe and Vergelegen, have been directly involved in an archaeological project and written about within this framework. Although, the MPPT has not directly emerged out of the discipline of archaeology, their team consists of forensic experts who have framed their findings according to their practices. Ciraj Rassool refers to the disciplines of these forensic experts as disciplines of the dead and has pointed towards the racial associations connected to them particularly during the epochs of colonialism and apartheid, which was pointed out previously. However, despite this dark history associated with the disciplines he argues that “it is interesting how physical anthropology, reframed as forensic anthropology, has been able to present itself as able to deliver the missing body from its history of violation and death and to humanise it through identification, disinterment, and reburial in family cemeteries.”³² This mini-

³⁰ F. Fahlander and T. Oestigaard, *Material Culture and Other Things: Post- Disciplinary Studies in the 21st Century* (Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, 2004), 10.

³¹ B. Latour, ‘The Berlin Key or How to do Things with Words’, in *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991), 10-21.

³² C. Rassool. ‘Human Remains’, 156.

thesis is particularly interested in how the disciplines of the dead present themselves in the case studies and what role they play after the disinterment of the remains.

A clear overview of the archaeological project at Mapungubwe is best described by W.C. Nienaber, N. Keough, M. Steyn and J.H. Meiring who worked closely at the site. They recognize that the “Mapungubwe human remains have come to embody the 'stealing' and 'looting' of ancestral remains by 'Western scientists' in the minds of many South Africans” and thus offered recommendations on the repatriation of the dead at the site. They point out that “informal claims to the remains and speculation in the press regarding the future of the sites and collections led to the direct requests for repatriation as a matter of urgency.”³³ It is exactly this issue of informal claims which appears to refer the claimant communities not having a bona-fide link with the remains and the manner in which communities framed themselves as descendants of the dead at Mapungubwe. However, as part of the recommendations offered by Nienaber et al would see that they called for a unified claim to be made by all the claimant communities. The argument made by Nienaber et al concerning “the high social and cultural profile of the remains in question, making it politically sensitive” will be used to unpack questions of the contestation at the site, the role of the state, and how the story of Mapungubwe’s dead have been documented.

M.H. Schoemann alongside Innocent Pikirayi have written about the contestations arising from communities who claimed the dead as their own.³⁴ This is an extension of the complex roles of archaeologists and the prevalence of ethnicity at the site. They mainly argue that “South Africa’s ethnicised past ensured that the process of repatriating Mapungubwe human remains was framed in ethnic terms” which resulted in “archaeologists... not only negotiating responsible repatriation, but also consider[ing] their role in a divided present, as squabbles over repatriation could harm both the dead and the living.”³⁵ Evidently assertions that ethnicity dominated the human remains archive

³³ W. C. Nienaber, N. Keough, M. Steyn and J. H. Meiring, ‘Repatriation of the Mapungubwe Human Remains’, 164.

³⁴ M. Schoemann, and I. Pikirayi, ‘Repatriating more than Mapungubwe Human Remains: Archaeological Material Culture, a Shared Future and an Artificially Divided Past’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 29(4) (2011), 389-403.

³⁵ M. Schoemann, and I. Pikirayi, ‘Repatriating more than Mapungubwe Human Remains’, 342.

surrounding Mapungubwe. It is precisely this issue which opens up the question of how the site of reburial is reconstituting precolonial time.

Xolelwa Kashe-Katiya focuses on the disciplines in relation to the narratives that emerged through their discoveries during and after apartheid. Her work revolves around how race and ethnicity played an important role in the production of the narratives surrounding the artefacts.³⁶ This critique of archaeology is in relation to how the narrative of discovery was hidden away until after the advent of democracy. Both these critiques offer great insight into the role of academic disciplines and their impact on the narration of the site.

Natalie Swanepoel and M.H. Schoeman have also written about the cultural landscape of Mapungubwe in terms of the exhumation of the dead at the site and the lack of engagement with the community.³⁷ This argument provides deeper insight into the disciplines of archaeological work conducted at the site especially in relation to contemporary efforts of increasing mining in the area. Swanepoel and Schoeman argue against this move as they are claiming that

Mapungubwe as a place of archaeological and historical significance derives its value not only from the physical site but also from its position in the surrounding landscape. In addition, it operates as a national symbol in the South African imagination. It's future as a successful World Heritage Site within an industrial landscape is questionable.³⁸

Thus, their argument is useful in not only considering the impact of mining at the site, but places key significance on Mapungubwe as a heritage site. Although this aspect is not essential to this study, a focus on their argument surrounding the lack of community involvement in the exhumations may provide key insight into the claims of descentance made by the different cultural groups mentioned earlier. Through this, it is evident that the remains at Mapungubwe have become an ethnicized subject.

³⁶ X. Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away: Excavating the Archive of the Mapungubwe Dead and their Possessions', (UCT. M.A. Thesis. 2013), 5-91.

³⁷ N. Swanepoel, and M.H. Schoemann, 'Mapungubwe Matters', *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 65(191) (2010), 1-2.

³⁸ N. Swanepoel, and M.H. Schoemann, 'Mapungubwe Matters', 2.

Antonia Malan has worked closely at the Vergelegen Farm and has written about the complex roles of archaeology at the site. Her aim while working at the site was to uncover a sense of the lifestyle and culture of the slaves, since she claims that very little has been discovered about this phenomenon.³⁹ Ann Markell, Martin Hall and Carmel Schrire have also written along these lines as well as showing how an archaeological investigation of the site unearthed a history about the slave community at the farm,⁴⁰ Their conclusions about slave lives were similar to Malan providing a sense of the dynamics at the farm in terms of power relations between slave and master and the overall treatment of the slaves through evidence from the site.⁴¹ Their work does speak directly to the reburials at the site as they conducted the exhumation of the skeletal remains that were named as Flora. Thus, their findings and the results of their archaeological project will form the basis on this section of the study and will also be used as an analysis of how an archaeological narrative is constituted and how the discipline of archaeology produces what was called a ‘public archaeology’. Through this, it is evident that an attempt is made to make archaeological findings more accessible to the public as arguably the aim of their study already hinted at how Vergelegen provided the “the opportunity to pull back the curtain of silence about daily life in the early Cape.”⁴² This popularising of the discipline lends itself open to critique as it may overshadow the significance of the remains and inadvertently lead to its silencing through making past-present connections. As we will see, the manner in which Flora’s narrative at Vergelegen is told comes particularly from the voice of the archaeologists. She becomes a symbol of slavery at the estate and is unable to be memorialized beyond this inscription.

Juanita Pastor and Carohn Cornell have focused more on the archaeological project at Vergelegen in terms of remembering the past and memorialising the site. Pastor specifically provides an account focusing on the role of archaeology and museology at Vergelegen and how it

³⁹ A. Malan, 2008. Freedom Day Lecture, 2.

⁴⁰ A. Markell, M. Hall. and C. Schrire., ‘The Historical Archaeology of Vergelegen, an Early Farmstead at the Cape of Good Hope’, *Historical Archaeology* 29(1),1995, 10-34.

⁴¹ A. Markell, M. Hall., and C. Schrire., ‘The Historical Archaeology of Vergelegen’, 10-34.

⁴² A. Markell, M. Hall., and C. Schrire., ‘The Historical Archaeology of Vergelegen’, 11.

was adapted to develop an educational curriculum.⁴³ Although, she does focus on the reburial at Vergelegen, Pastor writes about it in terms of its representation at the farm and how the archaeological project has been incorporated into an educational framework. Cornell too is concerned with memorialisation and in one of her articles she examines four museums and provides recommendations on how they can improve their representation of slavery.⁴⁴ Her critiques were very insightful as it largely depicted how the slave past is hardly a prominent feature at three of the museums and the stereotypical Cape Malay identity is present in their construction. One could argue that her recommendations which relied extensively on creating documented displays and relied less on objects is a way to challenge the stylizing of the museum and create an alternative mode of exhibition. The challenging of museum displays may also be a key feature regarding how history is produced. Much can be criticised about her recommendations such as that she could have formulated a stronger critique of the representation of slave identity which could have included ways which showcased slave resistance and agency. Her recommendations largely read like extensions to what is already available and did not seem to illuminate what was already lost - the slave voice. Nonetheless, she does provide useful information regarding Vergelegen and how the slave memory at the site is being evoked. Thus, her article is particularly useful with regards to understanding the present context of the memorialisation at the site. What is evident at Vergelegen through Flora's exhumation and reburial is that slavery becomes the social subject of colonial oppression.

In 2008, the Robben Island Museum (RIM) started their enquiry into the burial of twelve ex-political prisoners from Robben Island in an attempt to return their remains to the families for a dignified reburial. Nolubabalo Tongo-Cetywayo provides the most detailed account of the twelve-ex political prisoners, from their time at Robben Island, to the inquiry from their loved ones about

⁴³ J. Pastor, 'Archaeology, Museology and Education', 1-107.

⁴⁴ C. Cornell, 'Whatever Became of Slavery in Western Cape Museums?', *Kronos: Southern African Histories*, 25 (Pre-millennium issue 1998/ 1999), 259-279.

their deaths and burial, her paper too traces the investigation to locate their graves.⁴⁵ In partnership with the MPTT, they discovered that the prisoners were buried at the Stikland Cemetery in Bellville. As mentioned, the MPTT was established to investigate and exhume the remains of apartheid victims. Nicky Rousseau's work is particularly of interest as she unpacks issues of how these dead bodies have been subjected to various injustices and how their reburials is of importance to not only their loved ones but also to the discipline of history as it reveals the harsh realities of apartheid and the implications of this in the post-apartheid South Africa. Although, much of her argument is centred around the missing or disappeared dead bodies, she unpacks different issues such as exhumations, the body as evidence and the work conducted by the TRC and the MPTT. Apart from this, her use of different case studies and discussions of the colonial and apartheid dead is useful in understanding how exhumation-reburial narratives are constructed in terms of a script and how they are inscribed into the category of the nation.⁴⁶ The reburial ceremonies have specifically become framed in a way that portrays liberation struggle veterans as heroes through the media's presence, the presence of high-profiled showcases of MK soldiers being heralded as heroes.⁴⁷ Fullard and Rousseau argue that the heroic reburial constitutes the national struggle history that has been used to display the resistance against apartheid and cement the legacy of a democratic post-apartheid South Africa.⁴⁸

Jay Aronson provides an account which problematizes the way in which the categories of the apartheid dead have been labelled by the TRC and critiques the processes involved in accounting for their absence.⁴⁹ Much of his account critiques the TRC and the subsequent work of the MPTT but he provides recommendations on how to make the processes of identification,

⁴⁵ Tongo-Cetywayo, N. 'Restoring Dignity to the 12 Political Prisoners who died During Incarceration at Robben Island', Robben Island Museum: Department of Arts and Culture (2014), 1-14.

⁴⁶ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines', 175-202.

⁴⁷ N. Rousseau and M. Fullard, 'Uncertain Borders: The TRC and the unmaking of public myths', *Kronos* 34(1), 2008, 215- 239.

⁴⁸ N. Rousseau and M. Fullard, 'Uncertain Borders', 215-239.

⁴⁹ J.D. Aronson, 'The Strength's and Limitations of South Africa's Search for Apartheid Era Missing Person', *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 5, 2011, 262-281.

exhumation and reburial more inclusive of familial or community efforts. He particularly recommended a 'grave to grave' approach which:

conceptualizes each stage in the recovery, identification, reburial and commemoration process, from the point where remains are located for the first time in a clandestine or hidden grave to the point at which they are reburied in a culturally appropriate manner with commemoration and memorialization worthy of official attention and family satisfaction.⁵⁰

One could argue that this approach is similar to the reburial script which Rousseau critiques, whereby liberation struggle veterans are heralded through obtaining a medal of honour, the flag laid upon their coffin and in attendance high profile political officials and the press.⁵¹ However, the main point he makes is that each situation should be treated within its capacity. What mostly stands out from Aaronson's recommendations is his call for families to be the key decision makers or as he puts it "officially recognized" in the reburial of their loved ones.⁵² What this means is that "if families are brought into the decision-making process, they will be able to help craft the inevitable compromises that will have to be made and may be more likely to accept the inevitable shortcomings and imperfections of the system".⁵³ This approach seems to have been considered in the Stikland case, where a joint decision was made between the families, the MPTT and the RIM to conduct a spiritual repatriation ceremony at the cemetery and the construction of a monument to stand in for the exhumation and reburial that could not take place.

The Production of History:

There are a number of reasons why reburials are carried out and it can be argued that we are now within the space and time of reburials. Katherine Verdery uses the statues of political figures in post-socialist Eastern Europe to characterize the effect and affect of the dead body as an object and its affect on us as well as discusses these figures in relation to the issue of reburial. She compares

⁵⁰ J.D. Aronson, 'The Strength's and Limitations', 276.

⁵¹ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines', 184.

⁵² J.D. Aronson, 'The Strength's and Limitations', 276.

⁵³ J.D. Aronson, 'The Strength's and Limitations', 276.

the statue to the dead body as mentioned previously, and uses their association as political figures to carry out her argument that “dead bodies have properties that make them particularly effective political symbols.”⁵⁴ By viewing the dead body as having political agency, it moves away from being dormant allowing for an awakening of the archive, instead of one that is buried and forgotten. It would appear that processes of reburial attempt to conclude the narrative of the dead, as a means to set the body at peace and offer closure. But by viewing the dead body and the process of reburial as political it unsettles the writing of history and questions the temporal aspects and sequences of these events. Thus, the arguments about the dead as political, the politics of the dead and the political lives of dead bodies, directly impacts on the production of reburial histories and opens up questions of temporality that are essential to this study.

To substantiate on her arguments concerning reburial, Verdery draws on aspects of the work conducted by Robert Hertz. Hertz has outlined three purposes of burials: “to give burial to the remains of the deceased, to ensure souls peace and access to the land of the deceased and finally to free the living from the obligations of mourning.”⁵⁵ Hertz’s characterization of burials is essentially one that evokes the notion of ‘rest in peace’ for both the deceased and the living, providing a sense of closure which is consistent with what Verdery is trying to argue about how reburials bring people together to essentially to mourn the dead. However, the question of ‘who the reburial is for’ is not always one embedded in providing dignity to the deceased and closure to their loved ones but is often intertwined with the politics of time, contributing to the production of national histories.

There are different elements that constitute the making of history or historical narrations. An analysis of these different elements such as: the archive, the document and who produces history may help us to understand how reburial is used to construct national histories. Achille Mbembe’s work on the archive and document is extremely useful as he argues that the archive is composed of both the building itself and the documents it hosts. Together these two elements play an integral role in the production of the archive as well as what the archive does. The building has an

⁵⁴ K. Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, 33.

⁵⁵ R. Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 54-56.

atmosphere resembling that of a sacred place which creates a religious space whereby certain sets of rituals are performed.⁵⁶ These rituals consist of processes of coding, classifying, identifying and interpreting the documents which form part and parcel of which documents are selected to be archived. This very process of selection results in the power and authority given to certain documents. Nonetheless, the archive presents both life and death in the sense that it depicts that a life existed through an act of death as the archive only presents traces of existence.⁵⁷ In terms of reburial histories, it would appear that the discovery of remains and the processes involved in the exhumation is the start of the narrative whereas the reburial itself seems to be the conclusion. One gets the sense that reburial histories in essence are about laying the archive to rest.

Leslie Witz, Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool problematize this and the conventions of history writing. This is most evident in their discussion of public and popular history as well as the making of the audience or rather thinking about for who history is produced. Their assertion on what the production of history is opens up a space to analyse reburial narratives. They put forward the argument that “instead of presenting history as the domain of professional historians whose work is made available for popularization, our argument is that there are a range of historical genres and producers of history, who cohere and compete with each other in the making of history in a variety of different ways.”⁵⁸ Through presenting the production of history as fluid, it allows one to examine whether reburial histories can be dynamic, in the sense of thinking going far beyond laying the archive to rest. Witz, Rassool and Minkley directly offer insight into the construction of reburial histories through their research on the apartheid dead. Their work is

situated between history opening and closing, appearing and disappearing, being exhumed and then reburied. It tells stories of experiments in history-making in South Africa since the 1990s, of history across a variety of genres, of coalescing and competing discourses, of envisaging new and different publics, and of

⁵⁶ A. Mbembe, ‘The power of the archive and its limits’, In Carolyn Hamilton et al (eds), *Reconfiguring the archive* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 1-9.

⁵⁷ He continues this argument by stating that archives “have no meaning outside the subjective experience of those individuals who, at a given moment, come to use them”. This action there presents the individual as the one who gives the archive its authority and power, however, the role of the state within the archive presents this as well. A. Mbembe, ‘The power of the archive and its limits’, 2.

⁵⁸ L. Witz, G. Minkley and C. Rassool, *Unsettled History: Making South African Public Pasts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 7-8.

attempting simultaneously to make sense of and participate in the production of history in the public domain.⁵⁹

One could describe this as presenting the reburial archive as one which is able to disclose and remake, going beyond the realms of life and death.

The notion of missing:

This mini-thesis will draw on the concepts of “missing” and “missingness”. These concepts were used in my Honours research essay in an attempt to analyse the slave remains found at slave burial sites and the undiscovered remains caused by ship wreckages as well as the slaves themselves.⁶⁰ In this mini-thesis I will analyse the ways in which the remains found in the different case studies have gone missing particularly through efforts of their memorialization, the claims attached to them and the role of archaeologists in terms of “how the bones allow us to speak for them and how they speak to us”.⁶¹ In essence, this mini-thesis will argue that the remains from the case studies are in a state of missingness despite their exhumation and reburial.

There exists a literature concerning the term *missing*, although, as Robins underscores, the “narrower definition of ‘disappeared’ is often privileged, both because it is a discussion that the human rights narrative tends to draw on and because it refers to a situation where there is a clear perpetrator.”⁶² This is particularly evident as South Africa’s TRC favoured the term disappeared over that of missing. The TRC did not provide a definition of the term ‘missing’ instead opted to draw on situations in which people ‘went missing’ such as “after a political rally, or during a period of political unrest or state of emergency.”⁶³ In fact, the term missing forms part of the four

⁵⁹ L. Witz, G. Minkley and C. Rassool, *Unsettled History*, 9-10.

⁶⁰ R. Karating. ‘Missing across Time: Slave Bodies, Burials and Wrecks’, (UWC. Hons. Thesis. 2016), 8-61.

⁶¹ Keenan, T., “Getting the Dead to Tell me What Happened: Justice, Prosopopoeia, and Forensic Afterlives”, in Forensic Architecture eds., *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, (Berlin: Steinberg Press, 2014), 35.

⁶² S. Robins, *Families of the missing: A Test for Contemporary Approaches to Transitional Justice*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 228

⁶³ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Chapter One, volume 6, section 4 (Cape Town: Jutas, 2003), 518

categories used to describe disappearances under apartheid.⁶⁴ It would appear that the TRC's articulation of missing could have been more inclusive and perhaps they could have provided a solid definition of the concept.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) too privileges the term disappeared. This is evident from a browse through their website in which they have various accounts focusing on the disappeared due to armed conflict or political violence.⁶⁵ Unlike the TRC they do provide a definition of the term missing which is an extended version of the one formulated by international humanitarian law: "The missing persons are those persons whose families are without news of them and/or are reported unaccounted for, on the basis of reliable information, owing to armed conflict or internal violence".⁶⁶ Although this definition may be of some use, it does not capture or completely relate to the issue of human remains unearthed from earlier epochs such as the precolonial or slavery times as these bones arguably only become accounted for through claims of ancestry made to them.

This mini-thesis will mainly make use of the work conducted by Jenny Edkins in relation to the term *missing*. The introduction of her book, *Missing: Person's and Politics*, is useful as it provides an understanding of the concept of missing as well as its categorization. Although, she does not provide a fixed definition of the concept her analyses of the different situations in which people have gone missing is useful. For her, there is an intriguing connection between politics and the missing in the sense that the missing state of the person is governed by the order of the day.⁶⁷ For her the state is instrumental in framing the status of those who went missing. This is particularly

⁶⁴ 'Enforced disappearances' made up the first category which explains that "persons last seen in the custody of the security forces, as well as those forcibly and unlawfully abducted by other known or unknown parties" fall under this category. The second category accounts for persons who have 'disappeared in exile'. 'Missing during periods of unrest or violence' makes up the third category accounts for those who went missing or disappeared during periods of heightened unrest." Not much is known about the circumstances in which these disappearances occurred in or whether or not these disappearances actually occurred within a political context. The final major category of the disappeared is 'the cases of indeterminate cause'. This category accounts for "those who disappeared under unknown circumstances. *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Chapter One, volume 6, section 4, 59-77.

⁶⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 2016, [Online] Available from: <https://www.icrc.org>. Accessed [17 August 2016].

⁶⁶ S. Robins, 'Families of the missing' 228- 229.

⁶⁷ J. Edkins, 'Missing: Person's and Politics', (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 14.

evident when thinking about the reasons relating to the unnamed burials at Prestwich Place. These burials came about through a denial of access to the Dutch Reformed Church's burial ground and as a way to cement the lack of citizenship enjoyed by those deemed as inferior.⁶⁸ However, for Edkins, the missing state of the person allows a shift from politics of order and security by the state to one in which '*the person as such counts*.'⁶⁹ This focus on the personhood of the missing is evident in each of the reburial case studies drawn upon in this thesis as well, in which the call for the preservation of the dignity of the deceased has been made by many sympathetic to the situation. Furthermore, Edkins article, 'Missing Migrants and the Politics of Naming: Names without Bodies, Bodies without Names', is useful as it focuses on the memorialization and naming of the missing. For Edkins "names without bodies and bodies without names disrupt and challenge the usual practices and demand something else."⁷⁰ Clearly, in the case of Flora at Vergelegen by attaching a name to her has served as a claim to her body and thus, the call for memorialization or acknowledgement of these bodies are often opted for.

A relevant definition of the concept of missing for this study is the one formulated by Casper and Moore. They argue that "to be missing means that something or someone was once visible and is now lost."⁷¹ Their use of the words '*to be missing*' not only highlights that it is a process but a rather ongoing one at that. The Mapungubwe, Vergelegen and Stikland bodies are well presented in documentation and certain historical records thus making them visible. Yet, in life and death and reburial, these bodies become lost on a number of levels. In terms of Vergelegen, once they become slaves, their previous identities become irrelevant just as their personhood does, for they are no longer regarded as humans but property. In relation to Mapungubwe, the deceased were used as a means not only to entrench ethnicity but as a way for communities to make land claims based on this. Thus, their bodies have been used as a way to correct past injustices.

⁶⁸ N. Shepherd, 'Post-apartheid urban imaginaries and the bones of the Prestwich Street dead', 15.

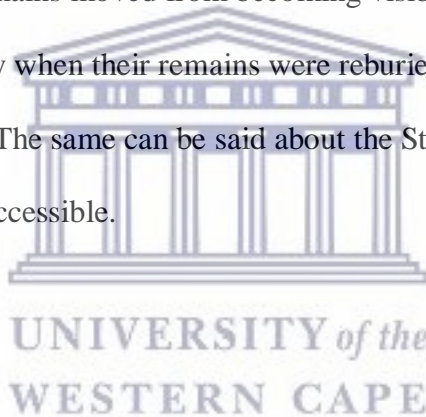
⁶⁹ J. Edkins, '*Missing: Person's and Politics*', 2.

⁷⁰ J. Edkins, 'Missing Migrants and the Politics of Naming: Names without Bodies, Bodies without Names', *Social Research*, 83(2) (2016), 1-2.

⁷¹ M. Casper, and L.J., Moore, '*Missing Bodies: The Politics of Visibility*', (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 3.

Similarly, to the Mapungubwe bodies, the Stikland remains also become entrenched in politics as they are used to herald the current government and their involvement in the liberation struggle. These bodies are used to unify the nation and thus lose their own significance as they cannot be commemorated beyond their service to the nation. According to Rassool, this is done through the work of the forensic anthropologists who promise “to return the dead to personhood, and to extend the biography of the dead person through procedures of recovery and identification.”⁷² This mini-thesis will argue that in death they die as slaves, or pre-colonial ancestors or as bodies belonging to the nation and are therefore remembered for the roles they played thus, they remain in a state of missingness, a state of being lost.

Casper and Moore go on to state that to be “missing” is a kind of invisibility.⁷³ The Vergelegen and Mapungubwe remains moved from becoming visible when their remains were discovered to a kind of invisibility when their remains were reburied, for we know the bones are there but they are not accessible. The same can be said about the Stikland remains, which were not exhumed and reburied, thus not accessible.



Chapter Outline:

The first chapter will focus on the period before the Prestwich Place saga: the reburial of slave remains especially that of Flora unearthed at Vergelegen, and how the remains found and then reburied at the site contributes to our understanding of the dead slave body in the production of history. A focus on the processes of exhumation, the erection of the memorial at the site and how it has been produced will form part of this chapter. It will analyze and rethink what the archaeological project has done at the site as well as the process of recovery. Furthermore, this chapter aims to think about and challenge the notion that slave reburials become a way of constituting social history. Lastly, comparative case studies of other slave burial sites will also be drawn upon

⁷² C. Rassool, ‘Human Remains’, 142.

⁷³ M. Casper, and L.J. Moore, ‘*Missing Bodies: The Politics of Visibility*’, 3.

particularly that of Prestwich Place in order to rethink what occurred at Vergelegen in terms of the contestations that emerged at Prestwich. Through this analysis, this chapter mainly argues that through the narration of the remains of Flora by the archaeologists, she is rendered into a state of missingness.

Chapter Two will engage with the literature on South Africa's precolonial dead, post-Pretswich, particularly those found and exhumed at Mapungubwe. This chapter will think about reburial in terms of reconstituting ethnicity and the production of new knowledge or rather becoming a site of new post-apartheid knowledge which then perhaps can be thought about as the constituting of the precolonial past. A look at the roles of those who claimed the dead as their own will also be outlined and the implications of this for the reburial. This chapter argues, that the reburial of the Mapungubwe remains has further inscribed the remains to an ethicized past as ongoing lands claims have not been resolved.

The final chapter on the twelve Robben Island political prisoners buried at Stikland and their memorialization, will in many ways be an extension of the previous two chapters outlined above. This chapter will particularly analyse the work of the MPPT as well as the context of their work. I will discuss the use of scientific study in terms of its claims to restore human rights and justice. It will do this by presenting the case of the twelve Robben Island political prisoners who were buried at Stikland Cemetery in Bellville and the attempts made by the MPPT to rebury them. Furthermore, this chapter will mainly produce an assessment and argument surrounding the practices associated with the exhumations of the apartheid dead and how their reburials are constituted into history. It will particularly focus on the production of history in terms of the debate surrounding how reburials construct narratives of apartheid and how exhumations and reburials are embarked on in the service of the nation and its history. This chapter argues that the Stikland remains have been written in terms of a national history due their spiritual repatriation ceremony.

Chapter One: Slave Reburials and the Representation of Flora, a slave woman, at Vergelegen Wine Estate.

“Funeral arrangements were made. A coffin was purchased, and food and flowers were planned. The day of the reburial ceremony, 6 April 1991, was rainy but the clouds parted in the afternoon, long enough for the ceremony and the refreshments afterwards.”¹ These are the words of archaeologist Martin Hall, who was involved in the Historical Archaeological Project at Vergelegen Estate between 1990 and 1991. Together with a crowd of almost forty people he attended the reburial of the skeletal remains of a female slave unearthed at the site during the project. After the exhumation of the skeletal remains at Vergelegen the community consisting of farmworkers and ex-farmworkers had taken an interest in her story and according to Hall, they “tenderly called her Flora,”² thus blurring the boundaries between what she was – a slave - and who she was.³ Naming has become a way to ascribe personhood to the dead. Hall further states that one of the local women [Pam Jackson] presided over the reburial ceremony. She spoke, in her eulogy, “of the circumstances of Flora’s discovery and exhumation.”⁴ Jackson made various claims during her eulogy, which opens up much debate and sets the tone for this chapter:

She told of the bits of information that the archaeologists had surmised about Flora, and how she had received her name. She spoke of the history of the estate, and of the slave lodge. She spoke of Flora’s humanity, of the fact that though her personal history was unknown, she had been someone’s daughter and, perhaps, mother or sister. She spoke of the fact that Flora had walked over the same ground that they walked over, and of her ties to the same land where they lived.⁵

Her eulogy not only proclaims the work of archaeology but further asserts the claims that the archaeologists themselves have made. The archaeologists have claimed that “by inviting a wide spectrum of people to participate directly in unearthing Vergelegen’s early history, we believe we

¹ M. Hall, *Archaeology Africa*, (South Africa: David Phillips Publishers, 1996), 63.

² M. Hall, *Archaeology Africa*, 63.

³ J. Edkins, *Missing: Person’s and Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), viii.

⁴ M. Hall, *Archaeology Africa*, 63.

⁵ M. Hall, *Archaeology Africa*, 63.

are offering participation in the creation of history in one of the most direct ways possible.”⁶ Their creation of history, lies in their aim to produce through their archaeological methodology what the written documents cannot.⁷ As Tony Bennett points out, the archaeological gaze “would help to form a new language of history whose signs comprised [of] the visible marks on the buried remains which provided the material evidence for pasts beyond writing.”⁸

The archaeological gaze at Vergelegen is confirmed, not only through the practice of excavation which later included the exhumation and the display of material objects within a display at the homestead on the estate, but also through their involvement in the reburial. Reburial is not often associated with the work of archaeologists as it generally falls out of the framework of their concerns of unearthing pasts through the discovery of artefacts. However, at Vergelegen the archaeologists were heavily involved in the process of reburial even to the extent of providing financial assistance. The archaeologists claimed that the reburial at Vergelegen “provided the first time archaeologists and the community had discussed their mutual needs.”⁹ Throughout this chapter I will trace the work of archaeologists at the site, their involvement in reburial and the implications for making histories.

Apart from proclaiming archaeology, Jackson’s eulogy at the reburial also asserted a claim to Flora by the farmworkers. It is “burials and reburials [that] serve both to create and to reorder community” according to Verdery.¹⁰ In terms of Vergelegen, the claimant community is created and composed of the farm workers who were present during the archaeological project and the older workers before the Anglo-American Corporation takeover of the estate in 1987. Their involvement in the project forms a platform, where the popularisation of archaeology can manifest itself. This becomes evident through the attempts by the archaeologists at creating an educational project at the

⁶ M. Hall, and C. Schrire, ‘Archaeology and Education at Vergelegen: A Proposal’, 2.

⁷ M. Hall, and C. Schrire, ‘Archaeology and Education at Vergelegen: A Proposal’, 2.

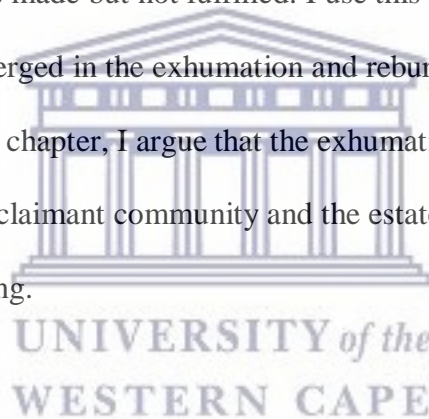
⁸ T. Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 42.

⁹ South Newspaper, ‘Community finds link with slave Flora’, *South* (1 May 1991).

¹⁰ K. Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 108.

estate as well as the way in which they produced the narrative out of a set of skeletal remains that were named as Flora.

In this chapter my main focus will be on the process surrounding the exhumation of human remains at the site of the slave lodge at Vergelegen during the archaeological dig conducted by the University of Cape Town (UCT). These remains, named as 'Flora', were subsequently reburied after scientific study was conducted on her remains. But before analysing the exhumation and reburial, I provide a detailed description of Vergelegen, the site where the body was found. Following this, I turn to the process of exhumation itself, looking at how archaeological knowledge was produced in terms of the work done at Vergelegen. Comparisons will be made with the contestations and debates that emerged at Prestwich Place almost twenty years later where the claim of archaeological as recovery was made but not fulfilled. I use this latter dig and the issues it raised to re-examine the history that emerged in the exhumation and reburial at Vergelegen in 1990. As a result of the analysis made in this chapter, I argue that the exhumation, the reburial and the narrative as told by the archaeologists, the claimant community and the estate have, instead of recovering and making Flora, rendered her missing.



Part One: The exhumation of Flora

Vergelegen Estate is situated in an exclusive upmarket area in Somerset West, about 50km east of Cape Town.¹¹ The area was named after Lord Charles Somerset in 1819, and in 1825 was named as Somerset West in order to differentiate from Somerset East, as town in the Eastern Cape.

According to travel web-sites Somerset West is “renowned for its scenic beauty, flora and fauna, wine and fruit, gastronomic experiences, friendly hospitality and historical heritage.”¹² It is proclaimed to be the “residential capital of the Helderberg Basin” and “boasts the largest

¹¹ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton from the Slave Lodge at Vergelegen,’ *Historical Archaeology in the Western Cape* 7, 1993, 84.

¹² South African Places, ‘Somerset West’, (2018), https://www.places.co.za/html/somerset_west.html. Accessed 7 August 2018.

concentration of millionaire residents in the country.”¹³ Although, Somerset West consists of a number of tourist attractions, Vergelegen Estate is arguably its pride and joy.

Vergelegen “was established at the beginning of the eighteenth century as the country residence of Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel.”¹⁴ He named it ‘far away’, which is a direct translation of the name of the estate, due to the long distance from Cape Town to Somerset West.¹⁵ Van der Stel had a tumultuous and conflict-ridden time as governor. In the end he was sent back to the Netherlands after a conflict with groups of free burghers led by Adam Tas. They complained about his leadership, and were “protesting against the corruption and extravagant lifestyle of Van der Stel and the fact that abuse of power by officials led to unfair competition with burghers.”¹⁶ Tas drew up a petition in 1706 on behalf of himself and the burghers to complain about Van der Stel and his leadership and sent it to the Lords Seventeen, the governing body of the Dutch East India Company (VOC).¹⁷ Two centuries later, this revolt against Van der Stel was to be mythologized as the onset of white Afrikanerdom in South Africa. Van der Stel was deported by the VOC and three years later his 400-morgen estate was split into four farms and sold off to various owners.¹⁸ Through the hands of multiple owners, the estate has undergone plenty of changes as well although its key elements remain as the homestead, the knecht’s house, the mill and the camphor trees in the garden which were declared a national monument under the old National Monuments Act in 1942.¹⁹

In 1987, Anglo-American Farms Limited (AmFarms) bought Vergelegen from Tom Barlow, who took over in 1966 from his father Charles ‘Punch’ Barlow. Their family had been in charge of the estate since 1941, a year after the death of Lady Florence Phillips whose husband Sir Lionel Phillips had owned Vergelegen between 1917 and 1941. Much of the reconstruction of the estate

¹³ South African Places, ‘Somerset West’, (2018), and From the Old, ‘History Bits: Somerset West’, (4 March 2008), <http://fromtheold.com/history-bits-somerset-west>. Accessed: 5 November 2017.

¹⁴ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 84.

¹⁵ W. de Bruin, ‘Vergelegen: a perfect blend of past and present’, *Restorica* 28, 1994, 22.

¹⁶ South African History Online, ‘Adam Tas’, (17/04/2011), <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/adam-tas>. Accessed 12 July 2018.

¹⁷ South African History Online, ‘Adam Tas’, (17/04/2011).

¹⁸ W. de Bruin, ‘Vergelegen’, 23.

¹⁹ Vergelegen, ‘An Award-Winning Wine Estate’, (2018), <http://www.vergelegen.co.za>. Accessed 12 July 2018.

took place during the time the Phillips owned it.²⁰ AmFarms spent R22 million to acquire the farm in 1987 and aimed to invest R30 million by 1997.²¹ It appointed architects Rennie and Goddard “to advise on redevelopment and restoration, in particular, of the core historic area and major buildings.”²² This coalesced in 1990 with a proposal from the University of Cape Town (UCT) archaeologists to AmFarms asking for permission to excavate on the farm and to set up an educational project in order to “to investigate the relationships between slaves and other sectors in society on the farm.”²³ Their proposal to excavate sites at Vergelegen was approved and were given a grant by the Anglo-American/De Beers Chairman’s fund that would cover costs until 1992.²⁴ The educational project in the end was scrapped due to a lack of funding.²⁵ Nonetheless, the archaeological project would benefit both archaeologists and AmFarms as the archaeologists would generate a useable past by uncovering the historical significance of the Estate and while AmFarms turned its efforts in turning the farm into a major winery.

The dig which took place at Vergelegen was part of the Historical Archaeological Project based at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The project was headed by archaeologists Martin Hall and Carmel Schrire with Ann Markel, the project manager, who led the excavations at Vergelegen with an assistant and six labourers from the nearby township of Lwandle.²⁶ As mentioned in the introduction Vergelegen offered “rich possibilities for historical archaeology.”²⁷ This is what archaeologist Ann Markell had to say about the promise of archaeological work at Vergelegen which emphasises the colonial period. She pointed out that “archaeological data can provide the elements of everyday existence that allow a fuller interpretation of what it was like to

²⁰ Vergelegen, ‘Phillips Era’, (2018), <http://www.vergelegen.co.za>. Accessed 22 November 2018.

²¹ E. van Rensburg, ‘Flora the slave’s reburial today’, *Cape Times* (8 April 1991).

²² W. de Bruin, ‘Vergelegen’, 26.

²³ J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education: A case-study at Vergelegen’, (UCT. M.A. Thesis. 1993), 38.

²⁴ A. Markell, ‘Vergelegen: Slave Archaeology at the Cape’, *Crossmend* 1(1), 1991, 1.

²⁵ J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education’, 39.

²⁶ A. Markell, ‘Vergelegen’, and J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education’, 1.

Leslie Witz and Noeleen Murray have worked on the Lwandle migrant Labour Museum where they mainly argued that apartheid regime aimed at constructing Lwandle as a ‘native location’ thereby creating a fixed category of community ultimately ignoring the sites history of dislocation. L. Witz and N. Murray, *Hostels, Homes, Museum: Memorialising Migrant Labour Pasts in Lwandle, South Africa*, (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2014).

²⁷ A. Markell., M. Hall. and C. Schrire., ‘The Historical Archaeology of Vergelegen, an Early Farmstead at the Cape of Good Hope’, *Historical Archaeology* 29(1),1995, 10.

live, survive, endure, and materials and provisions, and providing views, plans, and diagrams.”²⁸ According to Carohn Cornell, the major difference between historical archaeology and other forms of archaeology is that while they also “dig up physical remains of the past and interpret what they find” they “usually concentrate on the more recent past, not on pre-historic times. They are interested in what material objects can tell us about the past – and about slavery. They interpret what they find in the light of documentary and other sources.”²⁹ Evidently, the archaeologists did not intend to find anything more than objects, materials or ceramics which would explain how life was on the farm particularly during Van der Stel’s era. Thus, Markell proclaims, “inspired by the archaeological possibilities of Van der Stel's estate, the research team began, in 1989, a three year program of excavation and research.”³⁰ This project was one of recovery specifically seeking to find a social history at Vergelegen or what has been called ‘a history from below’ whereby a focus is on the “experiences of the underclasses” as told through the artefacts recovered, the assemblages constructed and linking this with documentary evidence.³¹ Then they also discovered a set of human remains, and named her Flora.

In October 1990, UCT archaeologists unearthed the site of the Slave Lodge at Vergelegen and discovered the remains of an 18th-century female slave.³² The discovery came as a complete surprise to the archaeologists who were at first unsure if they had stumbled upon human remains.³³ This is most noticeable through the field notes made by Markell, who posed the question: “What is a rectangular shaped pit dug through L8 with wood inside that seems to be a rectangular shaped box with a skull inside [the] wooden box?” She then exclaimed “Burial!!- Burial”. She realized that the wooden container unearthed at pit 2, which was “located in the interior of the building cut through the second, remodelled floor surface, and the original floor surface in the lodge” , was an actual

²⁸ A. Markell., M. Hall. and C. Schrire., ‘The Historical Archaeology of Vergelegen’, 10-11.

²⁹ C. Cornell, *Slaves at the Cape: A Guidebook for Beginner Researchers*, (Cape Town: University of the Western Cape, 2005), 276.

³⁰ A. Markell., M. Hall. and C. Schrire., ‘The Historical Archaeology of Vergelegen’, 10-11.

³¹ C. Cornell, *Slaves at the Cape*, 276.

³² E. van Rensburg, ‘Flora the slave’s reburial today’, *Cape Times* (8 April 1991).

³³ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 84.

coffin as nails were found too and the soil inside was much darker than the rest of the pit.³⁴ To be exact, “Thirty-six iron nails [were] recovered [and] ranged in length from 18 to 105 mm.”³⁵ The nails were also said to be either reused or ones that were stumbled upon due to the differences in size and length.³⁶ In terms of the coffin it was “1,69 m long and 0,49 m wide at the top, tapering to 0,28 m at the foot” and the “grave was just long enough to accommodate the coffin, which in turn had been barely large enough to receive the deceased.”³⁷ Moreover, the “coffin was probably constructed of yellow-wood” and “no materials [were] buried with the skeleton, and no clothing remains or fasteners were found.”³⁸ In essence “the circumstances of the interment are highly unusual. The care with which this was done argues for a special status, although the use of unmatched coffin nails implies limited access to resources.”³⁹ But what about the shallow and narrowness of the grave? Could it indeed not imply that it was a makeshift burial due to the condition of the nails and the grave which also indicates that it was done rather hastily therefore questioning whether she indeed had a “special status”. But in relation to the mass grave at Prestwich Place unearthed 20 years later, Flora’s burial appears much more of an intimate nature.

The archaeologists had discovered fine pieces of bone in the box.⁴⁰ The amount of bones unearthed is not stated, but overall the condition of her remains was fair but most of the damage was as a result of contact with the coffin. The back of her skull and her legs were well preserved but it is recorded that the: “worst damage is on the face, sternum, scapulae, the ventral aspects of the vertebrae and the pelvis.”⁴¹ Despite this, the archaeologists were still able to conduct tests on the remains and thus could construct an osteobiography of Flora. The “wide sub-pubic angle of the pelvis”, indicated that she was a female.⁴²

³⁴ A. Markell. Field Notes. 19/10/1990.

³⁵ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 84.

³⁶ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 84.

³⁷ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 84.

³⁸ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 84.

³⁹ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 84.

⁴⁰ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 85.

⁴¹ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 85.

⁴² J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 85.

After doing scientific testing on the remains for four months, they made various conclusions concerning her health and diet.⁴³ They found that she was aged between 50-59 years old, her general health had been good throughout the years apart from suffering from arthritis in her hands and back.⁴⁴ This may be due to years of domestic duty, whereby the scholars argue that she may have been a cook, therefore sitting for long periods of time while preparing.⁴⁵ Furthermore, as a result of the arthritis in her back, she was most likely to have been disabled to a certain degree in her later life.⁴⁶ Although, they could not determine the exact location of her birth and found little indication of her having Khoisan ancestry, her dental records turned out to be very good as her teeth had no decay and were in all their sockets indicated that she had been from a tropical or semitropical area where maize and seafood were her staple foods.⁴⁷ It would appear that due to the isotopic and dental records, they inferred that she was a slave., These results showed that she “came to the Cape from a foreign, tropical land, probably as a slave.”⁴⁸ With the dates of the abolition of slavery in mind, with the Atlantic Trade officially ending in 1808 and slavery at the Cape in 1838, it is assumed that if Flora

arrived at the Cape in 1808 in her late 20s, and died in her early 50s, the burial would have taken place about 1828. If, on the other hand, she arrived in 1808 in her mid-teens, and died in her late 50s, the burial could have taken place as late as 1853. These dates are consistent with abandonment of the slave lodge during the first half of the nineteenth century.⁴⁹

The archaeologists have admitted that the date of her burial is difficult to decipher.⁵⁰ It appears that they seem convinced about a burial in 1853, although this may contradict the date of abolition of slavery in the Cape. Furthermore, the archaeologists also seem to still have reservations concerning Flora’s identity and her status as a slave, with Markell stating that her true identity may never be known and that based on the evidence, they assume that she was indeed a slave.⁵¹

⁴³ M. Hall, *Archaeology Africa*, 62.

⁴⁴ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 85.

⁴⁵ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 89.

⁴⁶ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 89.

⁴⁷ M. Hall, *Archaeology Africa*, 178.

⁴⁸ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 89.

⁴⁹ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 89.

⁵⁰ J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 89.

⁵¹ E. van Rensburg, ‘Flora the slave’s reburial today’. (8 April 1991).

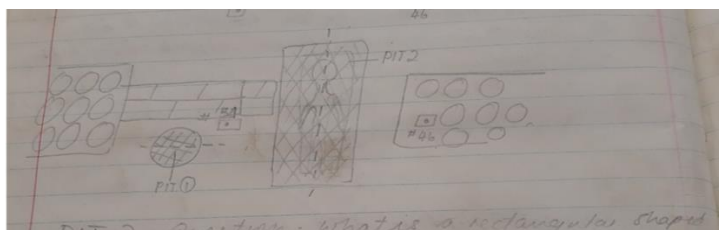


Figure 1: A sketch in Ann Markell’s Field Notes, April 1990.

(Photographed by Robin-lea Karating).

The indistinct sketch above is the first piece of evidence of Flora’s existence. For Edkins, images “make the missing visible” but they also produce an ambiguous effect as “at once present as objects yet inevitably records of an absence.”⁵² The sketch was made by Markell in her notebook and is successful in visibly depicting presence beneath the soil and is meant to signify Flora. In the sketch, are the areas of pit 1 and pit 2 (which contained the remains of Flora). Flora is outlined as a figure resembling a human body, reflecting the shape of a head with a neck, shoulders, arms, a torso and legs with her hands and feet not clearly indicated but are present in the sketch. Her figure is drawn within a container presumably the outline of a coffin which is also sketched within a container- the pit. There are criss-cross lines drawn across the sketch perhaps indicating the soil.

As Verdery argues, “only when archaeology becomes physical and objects are taken out of the ground do they get separated from the soil into which they have disintegrated.”⁵³ However, the sketch is more of an investigation of what is in the soil, and depicts the underlying presence as not being separated from it. Although, the sketch is certainly also trying to signify that the object or the presence below is “claiming that one belongs to the human community, that one’s status is human.”⁵⁴ Which of course, based on the discovery it was human remains. Of course, the status of the slave was never one that was considered human – slaves were always counted and regarded as

⁵² J. Edkins, *Missing*, 1.

⁵³ Weizman, E., ‘Introduction: Forensis’, in Forensic Architecture eds., *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, (Berlin: Steinberg Press, 2014), 25.

⁵⁴ T., Keenan, “Getting the Dead to Tell me What Happened: Justice, Prosopopoeia, and Forensic Afterlives”, in Forensic Architecture eds., *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, (Berlin: Steinberg Press, 2014), 42.

property - thus the sketch does attempt to change the politics and shift it to one which calls for the personhood of the slave to be recognized or rather even just the recognition that human remains have been discovered. The sketch re-produces the ambiguous effect of making both the slave visible and invisible. In other words, “bones and photographs [in this case, a sketch] share the structure of an imprint: the moment and forces of the impression are gone forever, but they have left behind something to be read.”⁵⁵

Part Two: The reburial

After all the scientific testing had been concluded the arrangements for the reburial were made. As mentioned previously, the reburial ceremony took place on the 6th of April 1991, what had been marked a significant date in the history of South Africa under apartheid. The day was a public holiday known as Van Riebeeck Day, commemorating the arrival of the Dutch commander, Jan van Riebeeck, to set up a revictualling station as the so-called founding moment of European settlement in South Africa.⁵⁶ With this, the opportunity came to legitimize apartheid through the state’s promotion of their separatist racial ideology based on white supremacy acquired from European founding.⁵⁷ By reburying Flora on this day, the idea may have been an attempt to rewrite or overturn apartheid history or perhaps counter the narrative of colonialism. A new coffin was made, flower arrangements were delivered and food was prepared for the day.⁵⁸ The archaeologists personally funded the burial that was planned by one of the community members and a gathering was held after the ceremony.⁵⁹ A lay minister from the estate presided over the funeral.⁶⁰ In attendance were around twenty to thirty members of the farmworker community who now had an opportunity to “gather as a community again after a long time, since Anglo-American Farms had

⁵⁵ Weizman, E., ‘Introduction: Forensis’, 40.

⁵⁶ L. Witz, *Apartheid’s Festival: Contesting South Africa’s National Pasts*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1.

⁵⁷ South African History Online, ‘The van Riebeeck Festival Commemorating Settlement Whites South Africa 300 years ago’, (14/12/2011), <http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/van-riebeeck-festival-commemorating-settlement-whites-south-africa-300-years-ago-official>. Accessed 12 July 2018.

⁵⁸ M. Hall, *Archaeology Africa*, 63.

⁵⁹ J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education’, 42.

⁶⁰ E. van Rensburg, ‘Flora the slave’s reburial today’, (8 April 1991).

arranged to put many of the elderly, retired farmworkers in old-age homes in Macassar. Other farmworkers had been offered home-ownership outside the farm, in the Strand.”⁶¹ The reburial of Flora is consistent with the argument made by Verdery highlighted in the beginning of this chapter, about the occasion creating a community. She argues that reburials “do so in part simply by bringing live people together to eat, drink, gossip, and exchange gifts and information, and in part by setting up exchanges (usually of food and objects) with the dead, whom they thereby bring as ancestors into a single community with them.”⁶² It would be Pam Jackson who insisted on bringing the community back together “in order to celebrate their links with one another and the past.”⁶³ During and after the ceremony everyone joined in the traditional funeral hymns as the men of the community gently lowered the coffin into the ground. Leaves and petals were strewn over the coffin before sand was gently shovelled into the grave.”⁶⁴ Flora would now be laid to rest, after a dignified and fitting reburial, but the story of her remains would live on at the Estate. The community would continue to reminisce and “over refreshments, the older members of the community told how the slave lodge site used to be a football field.”⁶⁵

It was decided between the UCT scholars, the farmworker community as well as the owners of the Estate, that she would be reburied at the site of the Slave Lodge where she lived.⁶⁶ It would appear that the archaeologists had made the decision to rebury due to controversies that had started to emerge around the work of archaeologists and the digging up, treatment and the storage of human remains in countries like the United States and Australia.⁶⁷ The controversies around the exhumation of human remains had largely occurred between the scientists and those who claim descentance. Pastor points out that the exhumation and reburial of remains had not been a political

⁶¹ South Newspaper, ‘Community finds link with slave Flora’, (1 May 1991).

⁶² K. Verdery, *The Political Lives*, 45.

⁶³ South Newspaper, ‘Community finds link with slave Flora’ (1 May 1991).

⁶⁴ South Newspaper, ‘Community finds link with slave Flora’, (1 May 1991).

⁶⁵ South Newspaper, ‘Community finds link with slave Flora’, (1 May 1991).

⁶⁶ J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education’, 42.

⁶⁷ M. Hall, *Archaeology Africa*, 63.

issue in South Africa at the time.⁶⁸ This of course would change some twenty years later with the Prestwich Place saga and later Mapungubwe.

The politics of reburial may not have been an issue in South Africa in 1990 but it certainly started becoming one soon thereafter with the advent of democracy in South Africa.⁶⁹ Human remains started to become “the subject of claims and demands for repatriation, restitution, and reburial, as part of attempts to address legacies of colonial ethnography and racial science in the representation of South African people in museums in South Africa and Europe.”⁷⁰ But this went beyond colonial legacies as the claims for remains of fallen liberation struggle veterans also started coming to the fore. The formation of the TRC in 1996, had created a platform to investigate the deaths of these veterans so that they could be reburied, resulting in debates concerning heritage and memorial practices.⁷¹ At about the same time, the Xhosa King Hintsa’s supposed skull was brought back from Scotland by Nicolas Gcaleka, who claimed ancestry to the bones. However, after testing was done, it was asserted, drawing upon categories of physical anthropology, that the skull did not belong to Hintsa, but rather, a middle-aged Caucasian woman.⁷² The return of Sara Baartman’s remains, in 2002, was another incident which seemingly settled years of racial discrimination faced by her. Her reburial may be considered as a moment allowing her to regain the dignity that she had lost. It could be argued that these instances of repatriating and reburying remains culminated in the Prestwich Place saga.

It would appear that the archaeologists at Vergelegen wanted to comply with international regulations surrounding reburial at the time. Markell, in particular, discussed the issue with the farmworkers as many were intrigued by the archaeologists’ work and according to Pastor, a few farmworker women felt that Flora should be reburied. But actually, it was only after the reburial in

⁶⁸ J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education’, 41.

⁶⁹ C. Rassool, ‘Human Remains: Disciplines of the Dead and the South African Memorial Complex’ in *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: Economies, Histories, Infrastructures*, ed. D.R. Petersen, K. Guava and C. Rassool (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 139.

⁷⁰ C. Rassool, ‘Bone Memory and the Disciplines of the Dead’, 133.

⁷¹ C. Rassool, ‘Bone Memory and the Disciplines of the Dead’, 140.

⁷² P. Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*, (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2009), 1-269.

September 1991, that the archaeologists conducted interviews with the farmworker community in order to gain a broader perspective on their view of the reburial. Pastor recorded the findings of the interviews and found “that many people thought well of the reburial because it was what the academics planned.”⁷³ She further claims that “the idea was popular as it was the Christian ethical thing to do.”⁷⁴ It thus appears that the reburial was primarily the decision of the archaeologists. There is no mention of additional discussions to keep the remains for more scientific evaluation as evidently extensive study had already taken place and the archaeologists only decided to rebury after Flora’s remains were “analysed by the archaeometry laboratory.”⁷⁵ The interests of the archaeologists and of ‘science’ were met before opting for reburial.

Through various scientific methods, archaeologists argue that they are able to provide significant details concerning the life lived by those who have been exhumed. These details range from diet, place of origin, age, sex and race as evident in the case of Flora. According to Clyde Snow (who established the EAAF and whose role will be discussed in chapter three), an osteobiography of the bones provide a situation in which “the bones, constituting neither part of the living human, nor simply an object; bear the imprint of a lived life.”⁷⁶ He asserts that the bones through an osteobiography can provide useful information if you are able to read them. This notion of reading bones lends to the idea of scientific experts being interpreters of the dead.⁷⁷ The reading of bones requires and depends on specialized scientific training and interpretive skills. Therefore, evoking the prosopopeia figure is “in which a speaker artificially endows inanimate objects with a voice.”⁷⁸ In other words, it is a figure which speaks on behalf of the bones. Thus, the archaeologists at various point, such as when reading her bones, at her reburial as well as the exhibition to be discussed, became this figure and in essence the agency or voice of the Flora is silenced. But, as

⁷³ J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education’, 44.

⁷⁴ J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education’, 44.

⁷⁵ J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education’, 41.

⁷⁶ T. Keenan, and E. Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull: The Advent of Forensic Aesthetic*, (Berlin: Steinberg Press, 2012), 28.

⁷⁷ C. Moon, ‘Interpreters of the Dead: Forensic Knowledge, Human Remains and the Politics of the Past’, *Social and Legal Studies* 22(2) (2013), 149.

⁷⁸ T., Keenan, and E., Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 44.

Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizmann, point out “forensic anthropology, like every other empirical science is a matter of probability.”⁷⁹ This probability lies with the use of manipulation referring to the techniques used when conducting scientific study as well on the one who interprets it.⁸⁰

At Vergelegen, it appears that this tension was not evident as Flora’s narrative was constructed by the archaeologists. The overwhelming voice of the bones were indeed those of the scientists. They made use of special scientific dental, chemical and isotopic tests and analysis to gather the data from her bones.⁸¹ These different tests require different procedures and techniques, which allows for the manipulation of scientific study to occur. The studies conducted on Flora, consisted of splitting her bones and teeth into samples and the use of an acidic solution to wash and powder the samples weekly formed part of the procedures.⁸² The effects of these procedures are not stated. The very art of interpretation also results in a degree of probability, as Keenan and Weizman argue, “material science is never conclusive, but subjected to probability calculations and margins of error, and the material reality forensically presented is itself of course filtered through language.”⁸³ To reduce the “margins of error” or to “increase or decrease the balance of probability”, the Vergelegen archaeologists also made use of archival material in an attempt to verify information.⁸⁴ Yet the probability still remained intact. Markell admits “that Flora’s identity will probably never be confirmed” due to the lack of documentation and because the archaeologists were unable to trace her origins, religious background and genetics successfully.⁸⁵

Despite their claim that the knowledge being produced at Vergelegen was a collaboration between archaeologists and community members most of the power to make knowledge lay with the archaeologists.⁸⁶ This was evident at the reburial of Flora. Everything that the archaeologists had told the farmworkers about Flora was retold. The main speaker at the funeral even went as far

⁷⁹ T. Keenan, and E. Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 22.

⁸⁰ T. Keenan, and E. Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull*, 29.

⁸¹ M. Hall, *Archaeology Africa*, 177.

⁸² J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 86.

⁸³ Weizman, E., ‘Introduction: Forensics’, 10.

⁸⁴ A. Markell, M. Hall. and C. Schrire., ‘The Historical Archaeology of Vergelegen’, 11.

⁸⁵ *South newspaper*, ‘Community finds link with slave Flora’ and J. C. Sealy, A. G. Morris, R. Armstrong, A. Markell and C. Schrire, ‘An Historic Skeleton’, 88-90

⁸⁶ *South Newspaper*, ‘Community finds link with slave Flora’. (1 May 1991).

as to say that the archaeologists “out of love and sensitivity had asked them if they wanted to rebury Flora.”⁸⁷ That was not the case. A number of farmworker woman expressed their concerns about reburying Flora. Nearly everything known about Flora, excluding her name as it was given by the community, who asked during the exhumation if she had a name, is a reflection of the archaeologists’ findings.⁸⁸ Most importantly, Flora’s name is invented and can be ascribed to the category constructed as “community”. The implications of this is that through ascribing a voice to Flora’s remains she falls into a state of missingness.⁸⁹

Part Three: Searching for Flora

In mid-2017, I embarked on my first visit to Vergelegen Estate in Somerset West to find Flora. The visit was part of my research to find out more about the archaeological project that had taken place at the site twenty years before as well as to investigate the implications of this for thinking about archaeology, exhumation, reburial and the making of history. Although, I must admit that with the impeccable scenic beauty of the Estate I almost lost sight of the purpose of my visit. Upon entering the premises, visitors are requested to pay a fee, R5 for scholars and pensioners and R10 for adult visitors. With this fee, one receives a map of the site and an entrance ticket. After driving past an avenue of enormous lush trees, the Vergelegen Wine Estate parking lot and visitors centre awaits. Once inside the centre, one is greeted by a hostess who introduces the estate and bids one to taste the delicious wine crafted at the premises although the cellar is “located on a little hill a few km away from the commercial hub of the Estate and offers magnificent panoramic views of the Helderberg mountains, False Bay and way off into the distance.”⁹⁰ Vergelegen is well-known for its

⁸⁷ South Newspaper, ‘Community finds link with slave Flora’. (1 May 1991).

⁸⁸ South Newspaper, ‘Community finds link with slave Flora’. (1 May 1991).

⁸⁹ In my Honours research essay I made use of Jenny Edkins use of the concepts of missing and missingness. While she does not provide a fixed definition of either concept, my research essay related it to invisibility and loss. The concept of missing is particularly highlighted through the loss of personhood and identity whereas missingness can be utilized as the process of becoming invisible or lost. R. Karating. ‘Missing across Time: Slave Bodies, Burials and Wrecks’, 68.

⁹⁰ N. Krige, ‘Exploring 3 of SA’s oldest wine farms’, (16/08/2015), <https://m.traveller24.com/Explore/WeekendEscapes/Exploring-3-of-SAs-oldest-wine-farms-20150816>. Accessed 4 August 2018.

wine crafting and has won several awards in this category.⁹¹ Considering that it is a major winery it should come as no surprise that the wine is privileged above all the other aspects of the Estate.

Following this, a walk around the herb garden leads us to the onsite library, which was “originally a winery built in 1816”. This is not a library where one can peruse and read the books but is a display of the “priceless collection of Sir Lionel Phillips”, which houses “4500 books” with the oldest book dating back to 1696.⁹² The collection includes “ancient and modern history, travel journals and a small collection of Africana and French Volumes.”⁹³ The centrepiece of the visit though is to the Old Homestead, number 8 on the visitor’s map. It is here where domestic slaves once shared a roof with their master, Willem Adrian van der Stel, the governor of the Cape and his family from 1700 until 1706, when he was expelled from the Cape.

At the Old Homestead, a pictorial exhibition of the history of the Estate is displayed. The visitor is also invited to look at a set of interior furnished rooms in the house, and wander through the gardens which include monumental camphor trees. The homestead built by van der Stel has undergone many changes over the years. Currently, it is advertised on the estate web-site as being “authentically furnished” and also known for housing “an Exhibition Corridor, comprising a series of pictorial panels detailing the various eras of history as well as significant visitors to the Estate.”⁹⁴ The homestead did not always host the exhibition (it used to be in what is today the Stables Restaurant section of the estate) but its new location can be seen as fitting in with the evocation of history at the estate.

The choice of having an exhibition corridor is interesting but it is a strategy that is used elsewhere. In Florence the Vasari Corridor which “is a kilometre long passageway that connects the Uffizi Gallery to the Pitti Palace.”⁹⁵ Beautiful artworks and narrations of history are displayed at

⁹¹ Vergelegen, ‘An Award-Winning Wine Estate’, (2018).

⁹² Vergelegen, ‘An Award-Winning Wine Estate’, (2018) and SA People Contributor, ‘16 Heritage Reasons to Visit One of South Africa’s Oldest Wine Estates’, (2017), <https://www.sapeople.com/2017/09/25/16-heritage-reasons-visit-one-south-africas-oldest-wine-estates/>. Accessed 7 August 2017.

⁹³ Vergelegen, ‘An Award-Winning Wine Estate’, (2018).

⁹⁴ Vergelegen, ‘An Award-Winning Wine Estate’, (2018).

⁹⁵ Visit Florence, ‘The Vasari Corridor’, (2018), <https://www.visitflorence.com/florence-museums/the-vasari-corridor.html>. Accessed 7 August 2018.

this site. Interestingly the corridor was designed “for the possibility to move freely and safely from their home[s] in Palazzo Pitti to Palazzo, the seat of the government, passing and observing the people below while remaining unnoticed.”⁹⁶ The exhibition corridor at Vergelegen does not serve as a passageway. Instead it appears unlike the interiors of living, dining and bedrooms as a useful space with a much more contemporary look in which to place exhibition texts, models and pictorial panels. The exhibition corridor forms part of the homestead which, in contrast, largely appears as a house museum.

House museums are spaces that not only present particular moments in the history of its inhabitants but play a crucial part in knowledge production. They are sites that usually focus on the structure of the house, the inhabitants, the art and furniture or even the story behind the house.⁹⁷ According to Butler, “the development of the house museum as an institution crosses many traditional, cultural, intellectual and institutional boundaries” in the sense that “it encompasses issues in the traditional history and decorative arts museum; the historic preservation movement; the role of the government in museums and society; concepts of popular education for children and for general audiences; gender roles among museum volunteers and professionals; the role of popular education for children, and in particular, “patriotic” organizations in society; and the place of collectors and antique dealers in establishing and maintaining these institutions.”⁹⁸ For Levy, although the house museum conventionally appears as an almost un-lived perfect space associated with the upper classes of society they do contain the ability to say something about the social history of the inhabitants of the house and the space they inhabited. She explains that it is important to show the way people lived in the house. This can be strategically done in order to disturb the “pristine, clean, “perfect” historic house”. The use of “objects to convey clutter, use photographs,

⁹⁶ Visit Florence, ‘The Vasari Corridor’, (2018).

⁹⁷ P. Butler, Past, Present, and Future: The Place of the House Museum in the Museum Community, in *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2002), 18.

⁹⁸ P. Butler, Past, Present, and Future, 18.

add ambient sound, use living history techniques.”⁹⁹ are ways to alter the form and content of the house museum as a being in pristine condition.

The house museum at Vergelegen is different to those described above. It does not show a house that has been inhabited at a specific time or place and thus does not depict any period rooms. Instead, the Vergelegen house museum draws on different periods of times and cultures. Thus the meanings presented are quite arbitrary and says very little about the history of the estate. However, it does keep up with the overall manicured look of the estate and certainly reflects a sense of high culture. In fact, one may argue that the Homestead still largely reflects the Phillips era. Sir Lionel Phillips and Lady Florence Phillips acquired the Estate in 1917 and restored much of it after “the house came close to vandalism” by the Kerr family.¹⁰⁰ This was due to the Kerr’s idea of modernising the estate which saw “the old front windows of 60 panes of glass set in teak wood were replaced by plate glass and painted deal frames.”¹⁰¹ A friend of Lady Florence, called Dorothea Fairbridge alluded to the idea that the Kerr renovations were not appropriate.¹⁰² Lady Florence was apparently responsible for pressurising her husband to purchase the estate and for Ian Borden and Katerina Ray this move should be seen as “claiming the early settler past as their own.”¹⁰³ Furthermore, ‘Florrie’ as Lady Florence was known as, was also responsible for the art and furnishings in the homestead, of which many is still featured in the house today, despite going through the hands of the Barlow’s and AmFarms.¹⁰⁴ Thus, for Borden and Ray “the purchase, “restoration” and living in of the Vergelegen was more than an act of possession of grandeur and status, it was the restitution and securing of “European civilisation” as tautology, the very definition of civilisation itself.”¹⁰⁵ Once again, this indicates the importance of the colonial narrative at the estate that is reaffirmed through Flora’s exhumation, reburial and story to be discussed. The

⁹⁹ B. A. Levy, Interpretation Planning, *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2002), 55.

¹⁰⁰ W. de Bruin, ‘Vergelegen’, 24.

¹⁰¹ W. de Bruin, ‘Vergelegen’, 24.

¹⁰² W. de Bruin, ‘Vergelegen’, 24.

¹⁰³ I. Borden, and K. Ray, *The Dissertation: An Architecture Student’s Handbook* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2000), 138.

¹⁰⁴ W. de Bruin, ‘Vergelegen’, 25.

¹⁰⁵ I. Borden, and K. Ray, *The Dissertation*, 140.

Barlow's in fact bought most of the furniture from the Phillips.¹⁰⁶ Evidently, one may argue that the homestead is a reflection of Lady Florence Phillips and perhaps could speculate that the naming of the remains as Flora may be unstated reference to her, as an equivalence in the realm of 'history from below'.

With the acquiring of the estate by AmFarms, they restored and renovated the estate. Very few changes were made to the homestead apart from including an exhibition corridor. The homestead comprises of six main rooms, which includes the exhibition corridor that has a pictorial display. One enters the homestead through a wooden door with glass frames. These doors are open at both sides of the hallway allowing entrance to the other side. The hallway is split into two sections, the smaller and front section one is greeted by a round table with a flower bouquet on top. The second hallway comprises of a rectangular table also fashioning a flower bouquet and chandeliers that resemble the shape of a candle, thus creating minimal light. In this second hallway, there are six rooms in total.

There are three rooms each on both sides of the hallway. On the left, is the exhibition corridor, a sitting room and an entertainment room hosting a piano. On the right side of the hallway, is a garden link room (containing a stair case which I speculate leads to the bed rooms), the dining room and the living room. Each of these rooms apart from the exhibition corridor, shows "a layered historicism of furniture depicting various styles at Vergelegen over the past 300 years- French, Cape Dutch, Anglo-Indian and a large Omari porcelain collection."¹⁰⁷ The garden link room and the piano room are the only rooms that contain paintings. According to the travel journal, "the SA National Gallery has loaned paintings and bronzes to complement the furniture and porcelain."¹⁰⁸ This again indicates that the homestead is not periodized and does not reflect an inhibited house. It

¹⁰⁶ W. de Bruin, 'Vergelegen', 25.

¹⁰⁷ IOL News, 'Not just another wine estate', (5 July 2010), <https://www.iol.co.za/travel/south-africa/not-just-another-wine-estate-890487#subNavMenu>. Accessed 7 August 2018.

¹⁰⁸ IOL News, 'Not just another wine estate', (5 July 2010).

is a house museum that depicts very little in its artefacts about the history of the inhabitants. But it is also the “pristine, clean, “perfect” historic house”, as described by Levy.¹⁰⁹

In terms of lighting, most of the rooms have chandeliers, which are not very bright. The atmosphere is dark and subdued. The garden link room contains fluorescent lights with shades over them adding to the light in the room. The sitting room and music room are particularly bright due to the sunlight shining through. However, no other room matches the brightness coming from the exhibition corridor. This is due to its white walls and the long bright strips of neon lights above the panels. Both the exhibition corridor and the garden link room have white walls whereas the rest of the house displays cream painted walls. The white walls of the exhibition corridor has become the standard for art galleries and has been coined ‘the white cube’ a strategy used “to let the art speak for itself.”¹¹⁰ In terms of the exhibition at Vergelegen the display in the corridor does not speak for itself, as there is evidently a voice prescribed to the pictorial panels and the objects on display.

There are many stark contrasts between the exhibition corridor and the house museum. As mentioned, the furnishing, the lights and overall look of the corridor and the rest of the house museum does not coincide. In fact, the light in the exhibition corridor is so bright compared to the rest of the house drawing one’s attention to it. Moreover, the exhibition corridor consists of layers of display of chronology and periodization, something that the house museum certainly lacks. Everything is strategically placed in the exhibition corridor, whereas in the house museum nothing coincides or makes links with the broader historical narrative of the estate. The house museum is also presented in a way that prohibits one to engage with the space as the rooms are cordoned off with rope, whereas the exhibition corridor openly invites one to roam the space freely and to absorb the information on display. Therefore, the house museum is out of time and place, a space to glance at whereas the exhibition corridor demands full and uninterrupted attention.

¹⁰⁹ B. A. Levy, *Interpretation Planning*, 55.

¹¹⁰ A. Cain, ‘How the White Cube came to Dominate the Art World’, (23/012017), <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-white-cube-dominate-art/amp>. Accessed 8 August 2018.

The exhibition corridor at Vergelegen seeks to present a wider history of the house museum. Twoshoes Graphic Designers “designed the Exhibition Corridor, comprising a series of pictorial panels detailing the various eras of history, timeline of events and visitors to the estate.”¹¹¹ A timeline running from 1672 (the establishment of the first Dutch outpost at Hottentots Holland) until 1994 (democracy in South Africa) is incorporated by chronologically mapping important dates at the estate with that of major world events. The exhibition corridor consists of a T plan, whereby the first corridor comes to a T junction and intersects with a second corridor at right-angle to it. The first corridor consists of pictorial panels displaying the history of slavery at the estate as well as a broader narration of the life and decline of Willem Adriaan van der Stel at the Cape. It also hosts a model of the slave lodge. The second corridor consists of pictorial panels regarding the history of the changing owners at the farm, information about the finding of Flora, a statue of Gavin Relly who was the chairperson of the Anglo American Corporation when they bought the farm, and a cabinet containing ceramics found in the dig. The timeline runs in the middle and across the pictorial panels in the second corridor, and traces the history of Dutch settlement in Somerset West until Willem Adriaan van der Stel is granted Vergelegen in 1700 with the buildings at Vergelegen completed in 1704 and then his decline is mapped until 1708 when he sails back to the Netherlands and his death is recorded in 1733.¹¹² Apart from van der Stel, the timeline of course traces the legacies of all the Vergelegen estate owners in the same way it does with him. Each owner’s history is also displayed in depth on the panels, from the time they bought it, to the mark they left at the Estate and their deaths. It would appear that on the timeline, the legacy of the owners at Vergelegen is traced alongside settler history as well from the arrival of the Dutch to the British, ensuring that the history of colonialism is fore fronted and perhaps setting the tone for the narration of Flora as a slave representing slavery at the estate. Also, the timeline dates important South African history for example the smallpox epidemic in 1713 and the conflict between the Xhosa and British in the 1770s

¹¹¹ Twoshoes Graphic Designers, ‘Vergelegen Heritage Exhibition’, (2018), <https://twoshoes.co.za/work/349-2/>. Accessed 7 August 2018.

¹¹² Homestead: East Façade Panel, 2018.

is highlighted. Arguably a special focus is on slavery throughout the timeline, from the codification of slave laws in 1753 to the abolition of slavery at the Cape in 1834.¹¹³ As mentioned, world events are also mapped such as the French Revolution in 1789, the Napoleonic Wars in 1803 as well as the two World Wars during the twentieth century. It would appear that the timeline is trying to create resonances between the estate's history, particularly its settler past, to a broader world history.

This is also evident upon entering the exhibition corridor, one is greeted at the far end with an enlarged photograph of Nelson Mandela, his wife Graca Machel, alongside politician Hilary Clinton and her husband former United States President Bill Clinton. It dominates and gazes upon one from wherever one is in the corridor. Reference is also made to other illustrious visitors such as musician, Elton John who performed at the estate. But it is definitely the image of the former presidents and their wives that grabs the attention because of the size and colour. The display emphasizes the rich and famous, which is reinforced on the website when it speaks of the Estate which “has borne witness to many visits of heads of state and celebrities from all over the world.”¹¹⁴ This is evident at almost every corner of the estate which privileges fine wine, dining and scenic beauty. However, what is also quite evident is the celebration of the owners of the farm, the Anglo-American Corporation.

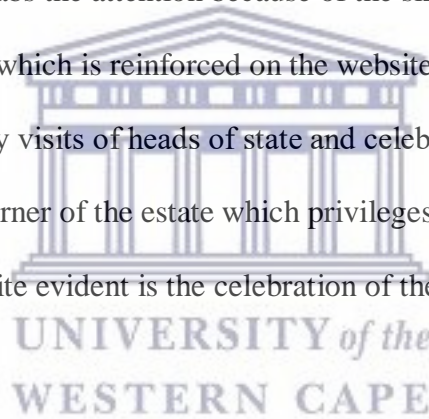


Figure 2: A statue commemorating Gavin Relly, Chairman of AngloAmerican in the Exhibition Corridor at Vergelegen Wine Estate.

(Photographed by Robin-lea Karating)

¹¹³ Homestead: East Façade Panel, 2018.

¹¹⁴ Vergelegen, ‘An Award-Winning Wine Estate’, (2018).

On exhibition today in the Homestead at Vergelegen is bust of Gavin Relly (figure 2) the Chairperson of AngloAmerican in 1987. The plaque below the bust describes Relly as the mastermind behind the move and preservation of the Estate. Perhaps here we can evoke the argument made by Katherine Verdery, who likens statues to dead people:

statues are dead people cast in bronze or carved in stone. They symbolize a specific famous person while in a sense also being the body of that person. By arresting the process of that person's bodily decay, a statue alters the temporality associated with the person, bringing him into the realm of the timeless or the sacred, like an icon.¹¹⁵

Although, there is a clear difference between a bust and a statue, in terms of the point made by Verdery one can see that these artworks play an integral role in representing the person who is memorialized and ensuring that their legacies live on. Thus the bust of Relly not only cements his legacy at the estate but that of AmFarms as well. It presents a certain sense of permanence and ensures that the narrative of AmFarms is emphasized and is on full display. The statue also stands in contrast to the way that the history of previous owners is narrated on the exhibition in the Homestead. That history is only displayed on pictorial boards, but AmFarms is immortalized through the figure of Relly.

Apart from celebrating the legacy of AmFarms in the exhibition corridor, archaeology and the archaeological project at the estate is too put on full display. Archaeology largely revolves around the discovery of objects and the scientific analysis thereof and emphasis is also put on the cultural meanings surrounding objects.¹¹⁶ Thus, the discovery and mostly the displaying of objects presents an opportunity to showcase the work conducted by archaeologists. Vergelegen is not exempted from this as a cabinet displaying various ceramics from different eras and backgrounds sits in the exhibition corridor as well. The archaeologists found "pottery such as oriental pottery, earthenware cooking pots and stoneware jugs and storage vessels were excavated at the mill and the

¹¹⁵ K. Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, 5.

¹¹⁶ G. Lucas, *An Archaeology of Colonial Identity: Power and Material Culture in the Dwaars*, (New York: Kluwer Academic/ Plenum Publishers, 2004), 137.

slave lodge.”¹¹⁷ The success of the dig is primarily due to the vast “historical documents and the existence of the original buildings, dating from the 1700s made the site an ideal one for excavation because of the location of the original outbuildings, including the slave lodge, [which] could be mapped.”¹¹⁸ However, the ceramics were not very useful in explaining or providing an idea of the ‘material culture’ of the slaves who lived there.¹¹⁹ This may be due to the fact that: “the slaves had little or no access to goods other than what was provided for them or handed down from the main house, such difference is made even harder.”¹²⁰ Most of the ceramics are of Asian and British origin. In essence, through displaying the work of archaeologists a history of recovery is also being produced thus proclaiming the power to narrate these histories. This is even more evident in the aims of the archaeologist at the site as well as the way that Flora’s narrative has been portrayed in the exhibition corridor.

Similarly, to the exhibition of ceramics, it appears that by uncovering by accident human remains and then creating the story of Flora and giving her a reburial, the archaeologists at Vergelegen were intent on recovering a history of slavery, making it popular and aligning it with the community of past and present farmworkers. The display of slave names close to the ceiling in the first part of the corridor exhibition in the homestead is particularly striking as “there are about forty listings that reveal nothing about the individuals but say a great deal about the loss of identity, of individuality, of history, which slavery involved.”¹²¹ But naming too has the contradictory power to silence and to enforce the “missingness” of a person. This is particularly evident in the manner in which slaves lost their birth names and were given new ones at the time when they became enslaved. Weeder points out that once slaves arrived at the Cape, they were given “facetious and classical or biblical names.”¹²² Following this, the slaves were then “registered, classified and

¹¹⁷ P. Mitchell, *The Archaeology of Southern Africa*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 393.

¹¹⁸ J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education: A case-study at Vergelegen’, 4.

¹¹⁹ P. Mitchell, *The Archaeology of Southern Africa*, 393.

¹²⁰ G. Lucas, *An Archaeology of Colonial Identity: Power and Material Culture in the Dwaars*, (New York: Kluwer Academic/ Plenum Publishers, 2004), 137.

¹²¹ C. Cornell, ‘Whatever Became of Slavery in Western Cape Museums?’, *Kronos* 25, 1998/ 1999, 275.

¹²² M., Weeder, ‘The Palaces of Memory: A reconstruction of District One, Cape Town, before and after the Group Areas Act’, (MA. thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2006), 50

stereotyped by the bureaucracies of colonialism, and later, by that of apartheid.”¹²³ This is consistent with the names given to the Vergelegen slaves, although they were not named by van der Stel. According to the ceiling of names at Vergelegen, common biblical names such as Adam, Abraham, Moses and David were given to the slaves as well as Dutch names such as Anthonji, Susanna and Andries are but a few examples.¹²⁴ The names given to slaves by their masters was not due to a concern about who the slave was but rather as a means to strip the slave from the last remainder of their previous self. The slaves at Vergelegen are a good example of this. According to the panel describing the ceiling of names at Vergelegen:

A chronological list of the slave acquired by Willem Adrian van der Stel during his term as Governor of the Cape is arranged on the ceiling above. The transactions record the name, origin, age, purchase price and previous owner of each slave.¹²⁵

The ceiling reduces the slaves to transactions thereby ensuring that their identities are fixed as slaves. Thus, this process then not only erases the slave’s previous identity but also establishes a new one, one which separates the personhood from the body of the slave. For scholar Jenny Edkins, the process of classification ensures that “the person is produced as an object of governance: as something without political standing, as something that has no voice, as disconnected and individualized.”¹²⁶ Therefore, through trying to provide a name for the slaves the exhibition has instead caused their silence, a silence which resonates in the actual namelessness of their bodies.¹²⁷ Even though the intention of naming is to give personhood, all that it does allow is a collective remembrance of the slaves as being slaves. Thus they remain in a state of being *what* they are instead of *who* they were.

But of course, Flora is named and the archaeological voice plays an integral role in her narrative in the second part the exhibition corridors of Vergelegen, adjacent to the display of

¹²³ M., Weeder, ‘The Palaces of Memory’, 50

¹²⁴ Slave Name Ceiling Panel, 2018.

¹²⁵ Slave Name Ceilings Panel, 2018.

¹²⁶ J., Edkins, *Missing*, viii.

¹²⁷ J., Jonker, ‘The Silence of the Dead Ethical and Juridical Significances of the Exhumations at Prestwich Place, Cape Town, 2003-2005’, (MA. thesis, University of Cape Town, 2005) 49.

ceramic display. Regarding her 1998 visit to Vergelegen Estate before the current exhibition was created, Cornell mentioned that “the small museum is a depiction of how the archaeologists “read” the bones.”¹²⁸ Cornell pointed out that the textual exhibition of Flora at the site “can be read like a detective story” as “the skeleton of "Flora", a woman in her 50s, was found buried in the middle of the slave lodge. The skeleton provides clues that she was brought to the Cape as a young woman from a tropical or subtropical area like Indonesia or Madagascar, that she was probably a favourite slave, and that she was healthy except for severe arthritis.”¹²⁹ Again, not much information about her life is relayed.

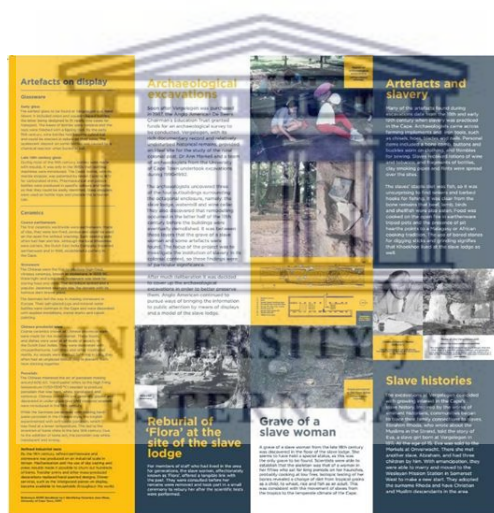


Figure 3: Pictorial Panel about Flora.

(Courtesy of Twoshoes Designers)

This is evident in the present exhibition as well which has been around for seven years. It starts similarly to the previous exhibition, whereby the story of rediscovery is at the forefront. The panel (figure 3) reads: “A grave of a slave woman from the 18th century was discovered in the floor of the slave lodge.”¹³⁰ Staying true to the detective like narration we further read that “she seems to have

¹²⁸ C. Cornell, *Slaves at the Cape*, 278.

¹²⁹ C. Cornell, ‘Whatever Became of Slavery’, 276.

¹³⁰ Pictorial Panel about Flora, 2018.

held a special status, as this was the only grave to be found”.¹³¹ After this, the work of the archaeologists is in full swing: “Scientists were able to establish that the skeleton was that of a woman in her late fifties who sat for long periods on her haunches, probably cooking at low fires.”¹³² Following this are the isotopic results from the studies conducted on Flora’s remains which shows that she came from a tropical island.¹³³ Evidently the newer panel contains less information as nothing is said about her health or specifically which island she came from. Although, consistent with the older exhibition, the newer one too fails to say anything significant about Flora’s life outside of servitude.

Cornell’s main argument surrounding Flora’s panel in the older display is that her story can easily be missed as it blends in with the rest of the signboards on display.¹³⁴ Even though the newer exhibition hosts larger pictorial boards and is much more elaborate, Flora’s board is treated the same way as the other information at the estate. This is particularly due to the colour schemes used and also the typeset used called Gotham which provides a sense of “plainspokenness with a welcome of sophistication.”¹³⁵ In other words, there is nothing about her panel that is more eye catching than the rest of the exhibition boards which are more focused on the ownership of the farm. Apart from this, the second exhibition corridor is arguably also set up in a manner to portray the work of historical archaeologists which as they claim ‘recovered’ the slave past of the estate, with the pictorial panel dedicated to Flora and the cabinet containing the archaeological findings side-by-side at the site. And above all else the photograph of the Nelson Mandela, Graca Machel, Hilary and Bill Clinton tends to overshadow everything else.

Flora’s narrative is placed together with another slave story occupying the same board as hers. The other slave story is one that starts with a researcher, Ebrahim Rhoda, attempting to trace his family tree, contacting various people and regularly visiting the archives, through which he

¹³¹ Pictorial Panel about Flora, 2018.

¹³² Pictorial Panel about Flora, 2018.

¹³³ Pictorial Panel about Flora, 2018.

¹³⁴ C. Cornell, *Slaves at the Cape*, 278.

¹³⁵ Hoefler & Co, ‘Gotham’, (2018), <http://www.typography.com/fonts/gotham/overview/>. Accessed 7 August 2018.

stumbles upon the 1816 slave register belonging to Wilhelmus Mathinus Theunissen (a former owner of the Vergelegen Estate), which recorded the name Eva.¹³⁶ She was around 5 years old when she arrived at Vergelegen where she met Abraham. They married and had three children. The Rhoda family tried to trace their ancestry back to slavery although they could not confirm that Eva and Abraham were their ancestors.¹³⁷ The story of Eva is an example of the growing interest in Cape slavery and could perhaps be seen as an attempt to reclaim the archive as the site and voice of ‘community’. Yet even though Eva is the slave whose identity could be corroborated, and her lineage could be traced, she does not receive the same amount of coverage on exhibition as Flora. Perhaps this is because her remains were not discovered. There is no archaeological imprint and thus Eva’s story cannot gain as much prominence as Flora. It will therefore remain in the archives at Roeland Street and a footnote at the exhibition. Instead Flora has been made into an identifiable person who is meant to allow slavery at Vergelegen resonate with the viewer. Her skeletal remains as body have become an archive of slavery and its narration a useable past. Thus, the findings of her exhumation, her reburial and the subsequent narration of her story as a slave and slavery at Vergelegen can be seen as an attempt to construct a history of colonialism. Yet the instances of her being granted personhood creates more instances of her being in a state of missingness. In the recovery of her voice from the skeletal remains she is silenced by the archaeologists, the estate itself and the community who at various points had spoken on her behalf.

The approach taken at Vergelegen through the historical archaeological project and the exhibition in the corridor today resonates with social history and its popularisation in the 1980s and 1990s. Social history, has been described as “the articulation of the voices of the silenced and dispossessed”, and its work was at the centre of the 1980s Witwatersrand History Workshop (WHW)¹³⁸ Social historians aim at popularising the discipline of history through aiming to make it

¹³⁶ E. Rhoda, ‘The Origin of the Rhoda-Family of the Strand’, 1.

¹³⁷ E. Rhoda, ‘The Origin of the Rhoda-Family of the Strand’, 1.

¹³⁸ L. Witz, G. Minkley and C. Rassool, *Unsettled History: Making South African Public Pasts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 5.

more accessible to the public and encouraging the emergence of a ‘history from below’.¹³⁹ This was due to the changing political climate at the time in South Africa, whereby a demand for alternative or inclusive types of histories were called upon.¹⁴⁰ According to Wares, “it can be thought that the popularising projects arose as a way in which social historians could remain connected to or even in control of these contemporary South African histories.”¹⁴¹ However, during this time there were “critics who had accused the History Workshop of elitism, a lack of humility, and of prioritizing academic excellence over and above a need to develop a much broader “historical consciousness.””¹⁴² The critique of social history and popularisation projects during the 1980s in South Africa, made by historian Nicky Rousseau, is particularly essential and fitting for the analysis of the archaeological project at Vergelegen.¹⁴³ Her main argument was that although historians, particularly at the University of the Witwatersrand, claimed to produce a history of the oppressed for the oppressed in an attempt to make it more accessible this was not the case as the production still fell within the bounds of academic crafting.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, Rousseau points out that the relationship between ‘a history from below’ and the assumed public is manufactured, and “the public only comes into being because of the existence of that particular version of history, then those writing the history must be controlling both the narrative and the characteristics of the audience.”¹⁴⁵

This can be applied to the popularisation of archaeology and the archaeological project at Vergelegen. The language used by the archaeologist is evidence of popularisation. Cornell who wrote about Flora not only described her as the slave foremother but also mentioned that “her coffin

¹³⁹ L. Witz, G. Minkley and C. Rassool, *Unsettled History*, 8.

¹⁴⁰ L. Witz, G. Minkley and C. Rassool, *Unsettled History*, 4.

¹⁴¹ H., Wares, ‘Finding Meermin’: An exhibition without objects’, presented at *Fault Lines: Rethinking Temporal and Disciplinary Traditions in African Studies Conference, UMN, Minneapolis, 21-23 April 2016*. 29.

¹⁴² L. Witz, G. Minkley and C. Rassool, *Unsettled History*, 6.

¹⁴³ Nicky Rousseau critiques the popular history projects of the 1980’s by the Witwatersrand History Workshop (WHW) and the Write Your Own History Project because of their popular history projects. Her major criticism lies in the fact that despite their efforts to make history more accessible, the projects still adheres to the norms of the academy. N. Rousseau, ‘Unpalatable Truths’ and ‘Popular Hunger’: Reflections on Popular History in the 1980s’ (paper presented at the South African Contemporary History Seminar, University of the Western Cape, July 25, 1995), 5-10.

¹⁴⁴ N. Rousseau, ‘Unpalatable Truths’, 5.

¹⁴⁵ N. Rousseau, ‘Unpalatable Truths’, 13.

indicated that she was a favourite slave in the family household”.¹⁴⁶ Coupled with this, is the interaction with the community members and how they narrated the story based on what the archaeologists told them. At the reburial, a female community member delivered a eulogy where she spoke about “the bits of information that the archaeologists had surmised about Flora”.¹⁴⁷ The archaeologists also invited the press to the reburial ceremony where their work of recovery was celebrated.¹⁴⁸

Pastor claims that “for the most part, archaeological knowledge is not popularised, partly because of its specialised research nature.”¹⁴⁹ However, similarly to the social history, the discipline of archaeology too experienced the need for popularisation during the 1980s, as a call “for an archaeological practice which exhibited a greater social awareness” was made and manifested into workshop called Literature Action Group and the Archaeology Awareness Workshop.¹⁵⁰ At Vergelegen, this task was taken up as a gap between museology and archaeology was highlighted. The archaeologists at Vergelegen attempted to use their project at Vergelegen and the exhibition as the basis of an educational project. The educational program aimed at making archaeology accessible to the community and the archaeologist claimed that their work at Vergelegen provided “the opportunity of discovering of the nature of their early history.”¹⁵¹ The community was the farmworkers and having claimed ancestry to Flora, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to apparently further their knowledge about their supposed ‘early history’. Pastor explains that “this particular community was chosen because there was already an existing informal relationship with an archaeological project.”¹⁵² This link came about through the reburial of Flora, specifically in relation to the interviews conducted after the ceremony had taken place. Therefore, the archaeologists have successfully created an audience to resonate with their work. The UCT

¹⁴⁶ C. Cornell, *Slaves at the Cape*, 277.

¹⁴⁷ M. Hall, *Archaeology Africa*, 63.

¹⁴⁸ J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education’, 42.

¹⁴⁹ J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education’, 17.

¹⁵⁰ J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education’, 2.

¹⁵¹ M. Hall and C. Schrire, ‘Archaeology and Education at Vergelegen’, 3.

¹⁵² J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education’, 4.

archaeologists saw the possibility of an archaeological dig and education project at Vergelegen as an attempt “to ‘rewrite’ history which has been seen as propagating an apartheid ideology” as well as to change the perception that archaeology is highly considered to be a “white” and “male” occupation in South Africa.¹⁵³ Nonetheless, consistent to what Rousseau has argued, the archaeologists were constructing the project as one of recovery and formulating a public to observe their work. The project would have been characterized by the archaeological gaze and crafted according primarily to the norms of the discipline. The educational project in fact was not undertaken due to the lack of funding.¹⁵⁴

Striking evidence of Flora being in a state of missingness lies at the site of her reburial - the board and roped off area which today indicates ‘Slave Lodge’. The Slave Lodge was built during the 1700s as commissioned by Willem van der Stel, the owner and Dutch master of Vergelegen at the time. He owned an estimated 200 slaves during this time and had the lodge built in order to house most of them. According to Markell, “the architectural form of the slave lodge while previously unknown in South Africa, was a common vernacular type in the 17th and 18th century Holland, known as *loshoes*, this misled structure was functionally related to the more common South African longhouse.”¹⁵⁵ The building itself was “relatively large” and is believed to have been “122 Cape feet by 38 Cape feet and was only superseded by the VOC’s slave lodge in Cape Town.”¹⁵⁶ Unsurprisingly, the building also had a typical and expected prison edge to it as the “windows had strong iron bars and the doors were locked at night to prevent slaves from escaping.”¹⁵⁷ Although no record exists concerning the outline of the arrangements in the lodge, it was said to be filthy and not well kept.¹⁵⁸ Thus, van der Stel kept all his best slaves in the homestead where he and his family lived. Nonetheless, “the building was used for approximately one hundred years as a slave lodge” and “during its lifespan had undergone a remodelling episode,

¹⁵³ J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education’, 12.

¹⁵⁴ J. Pastor, ‘Archaeology, Museology and Education’, 38.

¹⁵⁵ A. Markell, ‘Vergelegen’, 1.

¹⁵⁶ A. Mountain, *An Unsung Heritage: Perspectives on Slavery*, (South Africa: David Phillip Publishers), 186.

¹⁵⁷ A. Mountain, *An Unsung Heritage*, 189.

¹⁵⁸ A. Mountain, *An Unsung Heritage*, 187.

probably around mid- [18th] century.”¹⁵⁹ It would appear that the building was not sufficiently maintained which most likely led to its deterioration and ultimately its disintegration over the years.



Figure 4: The site of the Slave Lodge and Flora’s grave.

(Photographed by Leslie Witz).

The photograph (figure 4) above indicates a cordoned off vacant piece of land, with an indication sign of the building that once stood there and house the rest of the slaves is displayed. The sign is labelled as the Slave Lodge which is number 6 on the tour map provided by the Vergelegen Estate personnel. The rest of the estate features beautiful gardens and well-maintained old-fashioned buildings whereas the Slave Lodge, is merely a piece of land with patches of grass, sand and trees surrounding it. All buildings deteriorate over time especially if they are not maintained. This is what happened to the Slave Lodge at Vergelegen. Eyal Weizman, specifically has made an argument surrounding how the architecture of buildings can tell us about its condition, the people who inhabit it and the surroundings.¹⁶⁰ He specifically refers to the situation in Gaza and speaks about the separation wall in the West Bank as depicting violence and occupation. He speaks about the different materials and traces of these buildings and how they become an architecture of violence.¹⁶¹ However, the buildings are not considered to be “passive elements” or “just the scenes

¹⁵⁹ A. Mountain, *An Unsung Heritage*, 186.

¹⁶⁰ Weizman, E., ‘Introduction: Forensis’, 14.

¹⁶¹ Weizman, E., ‘Introduction: Forensis’, 15.

of a crime, the locations in which violence takes place” but have “the capacity to act and interact with their surroundings and shape events around them.”¹⁶² Based on the description above about the conditions of the Slave Lodge, the filth and its very make up produced a certain violence of indignity and lack of freedom for the slaves.

Now that it is has disintegrated, the violence is almost hidden away and the presence of slavery at this site is missing with the signboard supposedly being evidence of what once was there. The archaeologists took a conscious decision to rebury the remains of the slave lodge which they unearthed in order to preserve it. Tim Hart expresses that, “at Vergelegen the remains of the slave lodge and other significant heritage sites have been completely reburied to protect them from the elements- a factor that has been more important than exposing fabric to public view.”¹⁶³ It may have been easier to reimagine the remains had the site not been covered but perhaps the miniature model in the exhibition corridor might be a way to rethink this state of missingness as well as to reimagine the role of slavery at the Estate.



Figure 5: A model of the Slave Lodge.

(Courtesy of Twoshoes Designers).

During the archaeological work on the estate, a small-scale model of the Slave Lodge was built (Figure 5) which is displayed in the corridor exhibition in the homestead. Scholars, used various pieces of archival evidence to re-imagine how the Slave Lodge looked, was laid out, planned and

¹⁶² Weizman, E., ‘Introduction: Forensis’, 15.

¹⁶³ T. Hart, ‘Chavonnes Battery’, *A conservation Plan prepared for Syfrets*, August 2001, 3.

built. The model can be seen as an attempt to create resonance with the history of slavery at the estate. Greenblatt's notion of resonance and wonder is particularly fitting for the analysis of the model as an object.¹⁶⁴ He argues that when providing objects with a context it creates a certain resonance.¹⁶⁵ In the case of Vergelegen, the miniature slave lodge is meant to stand in for the disintegrated or rather 'missing' Slave Lodge. Through the creation of the miniature model, wonder is established which revolves around how the slaves lived, the conditions of the slave lodge that they were exposed to as well as wonder of the lodge itself. This wonder presents a case whereby the slave history at the estate becomes tangible thus creating resonances with the narrative displayed on the pictorial panels.

Most importantly at Vergelegen, the lack of a grave marker at Flora's burial site may actually contradict all the attempts made to rehumanize her. The photograph of the site of the Slave Lodge at Vergelegen has an underlying presence as the remains of Flora are buried there, and her reinternment ceremony was hosted at the site. By contrasting the current photograph of the slave lodge site with the photograph taken from the reburial ceremony, it seems almost a distant memory as there is nothing to show Flora's presence. This becomes even more contentious when contrasting Flora's gravesite to that of Samuel Kerr's. Kerr was an Irishman who took over the Estate in 1899.¹⁶⁶ Kerr and his family "led a busy social and outdoor life" and were known to host "parties and picnics" at Vergelegen.¹⁶⁷ Although, Kerr profited from 'the diamond fields' "his money didn't buy taste and his programme of modernisation amounted to vandalism."¹⁶⁸ Kerr died on the estate on the 25th of April 1905 and his grave is still found at the site.¹⁶⁹ Almost no effort has been made to memorialize Flora in the same way that Kerr has become a permanent figure at the estate. Apparently, there previously was a grave marker at the site, it was not as elaborate as Kerr's thus

¹⁶⁴ S. Greenblatt, 'Resonance and Wonder', *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 43 (1990), 42.

¹⁶⁵ S. Greenblatt, 'Resonance and Wonder', 44.

¹⁶⁶ IOL News, 'Not just another wine estate', (5 July 2010).

¹⁶⁷ W. de Bruin, 'Vergelegen', 24.

¹⁶⁸ IOL News, 'Not just another wine estate', (5 July 2010).

¹⁶⁹ N. Krige, 'Exploring 3 of SA's oldest wine farms', (16 August 2015).

had to be removed as it did not keep up with the 5-star Vergelegen Estate image. Kerr's gravesite is not featured on the map given to visitors perhaps because he is not a celebrated figure at Vergelegen as he is likened to a vandal. Although his grave might be missed, surely Flora deserves a more celebratory gravesite as her narrative is meant to recover the history of slavery at the site. Flora's memorialisation at the site is currently undergoing reconstruction but for now with no gravestone, no signboard or even a bunch of flowers, the significance of Flora's reburial is lost at the site. Twenty years after her exhumation and reburial her state of missingness is yet again reinforced.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to analyse the way in which Vergelegen Wine Estate has memorialized its slave legacy. It firstly traced the history of the estate and the importance of house museums. It indicated that slavery at Vergelegen was relatively huge particularly under the ownership of Willem Adrian van der Stel. However, after his expulsion from the Cape, the estate went through the hands of many owners. The Phillips' particularly turned the estate into a major success and much of the renovations and furnishing done by Lady Phillips in the homestead is still prevalent today. Nonetheless, the most significant changes to the estate came along with the ownership of AmFarms which saw the homestead being converted into a house museum and the undergoing of an archaeological project which began in 1990.

The current state of the homestead turned house museum seemingly contradicts the usual criteria of house museums which are meant to depict a certain period of time. The Vergelegen homestead instead show cases various periods and ultimately a house that has not been inhibited. The exhibition corridor that has been inserted into the house museum, courtesy of the archaeological project at the estate, has seen the incorporation of the slave narrative which seems to threaten the overall manicured look of the estate.

This chapter has sought to uncover and engage with the work of historical archaeologists at the site. This chapter has mainly focused on the exhumation and reburial of the slave found at the

site - named as Flora. Through looking at Flora's narrative and presence at the estate, the chapter aimed to analyse exactly how this narrative has unfolded and been written.

This was done partially through re-visiting the case study of Prestwich Place and comparing Vergelegen, an older case study to the newer debates that unfolded there. Prestwich Place offered the opportunity for different perspectives to arise regarding the discipline of archaeology and the treatment and memorialization of human remains. In the case of Vergelegen, there were no such debates arising and arguably the disinterment, reinternment and commemoration of Flora is a great archaeological success story. However, by contrasting the two case studies, a broader critique or analysis could be done.

Thus, in the light of what happened at Prestwich, this chapter has argued that there were different moments whereby Flora went missing or was in a state of missingness, mainly due to the fact that the overarching voice of her narrative was that of the archaeologists. The archaeologists largely narrated her story in a manner whereby Flora is meant to represent slavery at Vergelegen, which is fitting considering the estate's settler past. Her exhumation, the findings thereof and her reburial can be said to be reaffirming the status of colonialism at the estate as her remains is used evidence for this colonial narrative. Through making Flora speak on behalf of slavery at the estate, her narrative is ultimately lost. Therefore, the representation of Flora is setting Vergelegen in the space and time of colonialism.

Although, there were attempts to rehumanize Flora, her narrative ended similarly to that of the Prestwich Place remains that were neatly tucked away into boxes and hidden away from public view at the ossuary that was built. The same can be said about Flora's remains, hidden away beneath the surface of the slave lodge without any marker of her presence.

Moreover, it is evident that the overarching voice in Flora's narrative is that of the archaeologist, legitimating "expert knowledge about the past" and transcending "any talk of, or engagement with, shared authority or the possibilities of twin histories."¹⁷⁰ Through the narrative of

¹⁷⁰ L. Witz, G. Minkley and C. Rassool, *Unsettled History*, 13.

archaeologists her life and body have remained but she is nowhere to be found. It does not seem that there is or ever was a space at Vergelegen to present a different kind of voice. Even today the “farm appears to be confirmed in its Edwardian role as [a] symbol of landed and elite heritage.”¹⁷¹



¹⁷¹ P. Merrington, 'Heritage, Pageantry and Archivism: Creed Systems and Tropes of Public History in Imperial South Africa', *Kronos* 25, 1998/ 1999, 149.

Chapter Two: The Representation of the Mapungubwe Remains and the Production of History.

“Claimants are seen gathered around the grave that has been prepared for the internment of the human remains. The people seated around the grave are chanting, calling upon the ancestors to bless the space and to facilitate the return of the ancestral spirits to their resting place”. This was the atmosphere at the reburial of the Mapungubwe remains which took place on 20 November 2007.¹ From this description it would appear that the reburial was peaceful and without any controversy. However, this was not the case. In fact, the grave was not even ready at the time of reburial due to a problem with one of the concrete slabs.² The proposed reburial was said to take place in the evening, however, certain claimant groups, not mentioned by name, had called for the immediate reburial.³ Despite the controversy, the reburial managed to take place but the issue of land claims had not been laid to rest. In short, controversy had been at the heart of Mapungubwe, ranging from its earlier past of concealment about the contrasting claims made by archaeologists and claimant groups to the material and human remains excavated at the site.

The Zakes Mda 2013 novel, *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe*, provides a backdrop to some of the issues regarding the site’s history. The novel is set in the iron-age site Mapungubwe (situated in the Limpopo Province, South Africa) in 1300AD and follows the tale of Rendani (Rendi) and Chatambudza (Chata) who were raised as brothers and share a love of creating artworks particularly sculptures. However, they have a very strong rivalry especially on the part of Rendi who sees Chata as a threat to bureaucracy. Mda said that the novel was aimed at “reconstructing those times from the work of ethno-archaeologists, but creating a fictional story, using the oral traditions of the people today, who still have the folklore that has been passed from generation to generation, and

¹ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away: Excavating the Archive of the Mapungubwe Dead and their Possessions’, (UCT. M.A. Thesis. 2013), 73.

² X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 73.

³ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 73.

also using the writings of the Arab traders and travelers who traded with the inhabitants of Mapungubwe at that time.”⁴ Many of the events in the novel takes place on the Mapungubwe Hill that has become known as one of Africa’s first ancient civilizations and kingdoms although this notion has been heavily contested. Nonetheless, Mda seems to follow this claim in his novel as it was meant to showcase to “South African readers, and world readers, that we had a civilisation here before we were colonised.”⁵ The trade relations is one way to show that the kingdom flourished primarily due to the participation in the Indian Ocean trade with people from India, Indonesia, China and Islamic traders.⁶ According to Hall, Mapungubwe “also provides the earliest physical evidence of substantial gold working in the sub-continent, which may account for the reason behind the stern focus on the gold.”⁷

The emphasis on the gold is apparent in Mda’s novel, and is viewed by Rendi as a source of power and wealth: “What was the good of gold if it was not used to enrich one’s life with power and wives, and the luxury items that the Swahili brought from across the sea?”⁸ Through Mda setting the novel at Mapungubwe, the time period as well as his reliance on documented sources depicting the site as the first urban centre, he reproduces and asserts the notion of the precolonial emerging from the narrative of trade and gold.

But Mapungubwe is significant for other reasons that are not usually highlighted. Human remains were unearthed at the site during the 1930s by the archaeologists from the University of Pretoria (UP). In the early 2000s, these remains were claimed by various cultural groups. These claims of possession manifested in land claims and the opposition towards more scientific study of the bones. This then resulted in the reinternment of the remains in 2007.

⁴ J.U. Jacobs, ‘Performing the Precolonial: Zakes Mda's *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe*’, *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*, 21(1) (2015), 15.

⁵ J.U. Jacobs, ‘Performing the Precolonial’, 16.

⁶ M. Hall, ‘The Changing Past: Farmers, Kings and Traders in Southern Africa, 200-1860’, (Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Phillips, 1987), 53.

⁷ M. Hall, ‘The Changing Past’, 50.

⁸ City Press, ‘Book Review- the Sculptors of Mapungubwe: A Cautionary Tale Gleaned from History’, (10/11/2013). <http://m.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/Book-review-The-Sculptors-of-Mapungubwe-A-cautionary-tale-gleaned-from-history-20150429>. Accessed 23 September 2018.

The reburial narrative at Mapungubwe emerged after the Prestwich Place controversy which saw concerned community members oppose the scientific study to the dismay of the archaeologists involved in unearthing the site back in 2003. This was due to the heated debate concerning the history of archaeology in South Africa and its earlier associations with racial and dehumanizing scientific practices. Based on this, archaeologist Innocent Pikirayi made the claim that the reburial process at Mapungubwe had learnt the lessons from Prestwich and the archaeologists at Mapungubwe have worked closely with the claimant communities. During this process of negotiations, the claimant community was identified to be the “Lembs Cultural Association, Machete Royal Family, Tshivula Royal Council, Vhangona Cultural Movement and the San Council.”⁹ These groups identified themselves “as the original Venda inhabitants.”¹⁰

There was nonetheless some doubt among the archaeologists as to the standing of the claimant communities. Pikirayi asserts that the Machete and Leshiba Royal family may be an “invented community” as no records show their existence at the site despite their claims that they were relocated from Mapungubwe.¹¹ Pikirayi mentions that the claimant communities used their ethnicity to claim ownership of the remains, but in an effort to ensure that reburial took place, the different claimant communities worked together to form one group.

Nonetheless, in order to avoid another situation like Prestwich, and even though there were some doubts amongst the archaeologists as to whom these communities were and their bona fides, Pikirayi asserts that they adopted an approach which sought to listen to the concerns of the claimant community and to cooperate with them and facilitate their needs.¹²

This chapter aims at running together these two narratives: the dominant story of gold trade and the reburial narrative. At times these two narratives work with and against each other. It also aims at critically discussing the claims made by Pikirayi in terms of the narration of the

⁹ I. Pikirayi, *Tradition, Archaeological Heritage Protection and Communities in the Limpopo* (Ethiopia: Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), 2011), 53.

¹⁰ I. Pikirayi, *Tradition, Archaeological Heritage Protection*, 53.

¹¹ I. Pikirayi, *Tradition, Archaeological Heritage Protection*, 53.

¹² I. Pikirayi, ‘What Can Archaeology Do for Society in Southern Africa?’, *Historical Archaeology*, 43(4) (2009), 125-127.

Mapungubwe reburials and whether or not these claims are indeed signs of a new post-Prestwich approach, and also how the reburial may be configured in the construction of a precolonial past. This chapter argues that, the human remains unearthed at Mapungubwe have gone missing throughout the unfolding of the Mapungubwe narrative to their subsequent reburial.

Part One: The Excavations at Mapungubwe

The story of Mapungubwe as being discovered dates back to the early 1930s. On the 31 December, 1932, a man simply known as Mowena accompanied Greefswald farmer E.S.J van Graan's son Jerry and three other men to the Greefswald farm, on the Mapungubwe Hill. Mowena had constantly feared visiting the Hill and was reluctant to escort van Graan because it was "the burial of the old ones" and was believed that whoever goes up there would die.¹³ In this story of beginnings the idea of people inhabiting the site is thus at the fore. The notion of respecting and fearing the dead at Mapungubwe is present. But very quickly the narrative of the dead body and its inhabitation begins to fade as the narrative progresses. They "saw stone walls, gold and iron artefacts, pottery and glass beads there and realised its importance."¹⁴ They returned the next day and found a gold grave.¹⁵ This firmly resulted in the human remains being displaced and with the aura shifting to the gold story. Evidently, their findings were significant and a team effort with Mowena arguably playing the most important role. However, it would be Van Graan and Jerry that would be heralded as discovering Mapungubwe.

The findings of the expedition by Mowena and Van Graan received much attention especially from the media and through this was reported to the head of the History Department at the University of Pretoria, Professor Leo Fouché.¹⁶ Following this, the University entered talks with E.E. Collins, the owner of the farm and legally procured the "ownership of the gold and other

¹³ X. Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 30.

¹⁴ H. Ramji, *Producing the Precolonial: Professional and Popular Lives of Mapungubwe, 1937- 2017* (UCT. M.A. 2018), 30.

¹⁵ H. Ramji, 'Producing the Precolonial', 30.

¹⁶ X. Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 30.

artefacts and secured an option and contract for excavation rights.¹⁷ At this point already, the human remains found at the site go missing. The University also successfully requested a postponement of prospecting, mining and related activities on Greefswald.”¹⁸ In June 1933, the farm was bought by the government which fully granted excavation rights to the University.¹⁹ During this time, there was also a heavy police presence at the site and as soon as excavations started they took on a more permanent role of protecting the site.²⁰ Perhaps this was an effort to protect the rich artefacts found at the site or part of the elaborate scheme to ensure that knowledge of the ancient African civilisation would be kept hidden in an attempt not to undermine the apartheid system and its racial ideologies. The argument relating to Mapungubwe as being hidden, was the primary argument made by Kashe-Katiye:

the site, [Mapungubwe Hill] even during these early days, was fraught with contestation as it stood to challenge long held beliefs of a primitive and uncivilised precolonial South Africa. Although it is argued by the University of Pretoria that information on Mapungubwe has always been in the public domain, even during this period [1930’s], I argue that it was in fact hidden. It was hidden in both archaeological terminology that is inaccessible, and also in the Afrikaans language that for years was rejected as the language of the oppressor by the majority of the South African population.²¹



The notion of Mapungubwe as hidden, is not the focus of this thesis, however what is prominent is that its narrative later (post-1990) becomes a symbol of heritage and inscribed as a story of the nation.

The University of Pretoria set up an Archaeological Committee which was active from 1933 to 1947 and was in charge of the research and excavations which commenced in 1934.²² As part of their framework, the Committee appointed a Methodist missionary, Reverend Neville Jones, to conduct fieldwork at Mapungubwe.²³ Jones had experience in working in Rhodesia and was

¹⁷ X. Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 31.

¹⁸ X. Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 31.

¹⁹ N. Swanepoel, and M.H. Schoemann, 'Mapungubwe Matters', 2.

²⁰ X. Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 54.

²¹ X. Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 60.

²² N. Swanepoel, and M.H. Schoemann, 'Mapungubwe Matters', 3.

²³ X. Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 55.

considered to be “a pioneer of the prehistory of the Southern Rhodesian archaeology.”²⁴ The first excavations during 1934 until 1937 saw Rev. Jones, “more concerned with deciphering a chronology of cultural society and cultural relations across space and time, through an archaeology of the objects found.”²⁵ What this meant was that Jones used the objects found at Mapungubwe “gold items, ceramic pottery, glass beads, as well as skeletons” to identify which groups inhabited the site.²⁶ Jones was not able to successfully trace the chronology of the site. However, as we will see, the preoccupation with wanting to trace the origins of the site would later be written in racial and ethnic terms.

In 1937, analysing the ceramic culture at Mapungubwe, John Schofield, an archaeologist who similarly to Jones had spent time in Rhodesia, provided some sense of the inhabitants at the Hill.²⁷ He identified a Shona and Sotho-Chuana connection to the site.²⁸ It would appear that the Mapungubwe inhabitants were believed to have come from then-Rhodesia and settled on the Hill. Gerald Lestrade, seems to confirm Schofield’s interpretation, as “his findings were that Mapungubwe was occupied by “a race of mixed elements of Shona and Sotho origin”.²⁹ He visited the site at least three times and was credited as being the first researcher to do an ethnological analysis of the Hill due to interacting with local people in various parts of the Sashe-Limpopo Confluence area and testing the knowledge they had concerning the objects found on the Hill.³⁰ Up until this point, it would appear that the Mapungubwe remains were written in terms of cultural and ethnic terms as the inhabitants were said to have Sotho and Shona origins.

The writing would then dramatically turn into a racialized recording of the past. Alexander Galloway who wrote in 1937 and 1959, studied the remains of about 70 found at Mapungubwe, he conducted his study on their craniums and concluded that they were of Bush-Boskop origin.³¹ Thus,

²⁴ N. Swanepoel, and M.H. Schoemann, ‘Mapungubwe Matters’, 1.

²⁵ H. Ramji, ‘Producing the Precolonial’, 30.

²⁶ H. Ramji, Producing the Precolonial, 30.

²⁷ H. Ramji, Producing the Precolonial, 31.

²⁸ H. Ramji, Producing the Precolonial, 31.

²⁹ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 33.

³⁰ H. Ramji, Producing the Precolonial, 32.

³¹ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 34.

contesting the findings of Neville and Schofield which ultimately meant that the Mapungubwe remains were not designated as 'Bantu' (Shona and Sotho people were categorized in this way) but rather as 'Hottentot'. Galloway argued that so-called 'Hottentot' people have few 'Bantu' physical features.³² G.A. Gardner, an amateur archaeologist and American soldier who fought for Britain in the South African War, praised Galloway's work and conducted studies on the remains after Galloway but only published in 1963, he found that "the human remains that were found buried on Mapungubwe Hill signified the absorption of "Hottentots" by the Nguni people, then the Venda people and then again the "Hottentots"."³³

In 1970, physical anthropologists G.P. Rightmire through more extensive studies on the skeletons at Mapungubwe found that they were of designated black or African origins. What is evident throughout these interpretations was that each of the studies were considered to be factual truths during the time period of their studies. It would appear that Rightmire's analysis would be the most accepted one as the "bones were considered to whisper only truth – they are themselves an assemblage of facts, irrespective of what culture they might be attached to when extracted, – and so the new truth for the occupants of ... Mapungubwe became that they were admittedly Black."³⁴ Once again, this evokes the figure of *prosopopeia* spoken about in chapter one, whereby it was claimed that the bones can speak to us.³⁵ However, as I have argued, it is the voice of the archaeologist that comes to the fore as they speak on behalf of the bones. Therefore, one could argue that the "figure of *prosopopeia* structures ... [the archaeologists] entire work; the underlying, understated evocation of the dead is present and can be deciphered everywhere."³⁶ The findings of Rightmire were corroborated later in 1997, by Maryna Steyn, an archaeologist from the University of Pretoria (UP). Thus, the different phases of excavations at Mapungubwe were inscribed in racial and ethnic categories used by scientists to trace the significance of the Hill. By inscribing the

³² X. Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 42.

³³ X. Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 42.

³⁴ H. Ramji, *Producing the Precolonial*, 47.

³⁵ H. Ramji, *Producing the Precolonial*, 49.

³⁶ S. Felman, 'Benjamin's Silence', *Critical Inquiry*, 25(2) (1999), 217-218.

remains into these categories, the remains enter a state of missingness, whereby their narratives are silenced by the way their bones have been read in racialized terms.

Steyn, provides the most detailed account of the human remains, the narrative emerging from her findings clearly reinforces the importance of the gold findings and also asserts that Mapungubwe was a class based society. This is apparent as the university procured a rich collection of artefacts made of gold and other materials, as well as human remains which had become markers of racial identity during their 1930s excavations. They found that: “fundamental social adjustments to the consequences of accumulated wealth in products such as gold, ivory, glass beads and cotton cloth, were reflected in the social and physical separation of an elite class and sacred leadership on the top of Mapungubwe Hill, with commoners on the plains below.”³⁷ The gold graves found at the top of the Hill certainly suggests that it was indeed a class based society.

Steyn points out that, “twenty-seven graves were excavated on top of Mapungubwe Hill between 1933 and 1940.”³⁸ Of the twenty seven graves, only three of them contained gold, “namely the first burial known as the *Original Gold Grave*, the second burial known as the *Sceptre Skeleton*, and the third grave simply known as the *Gold Skeleton Grave*.”³⁹ During excavations in 1993 and 1995, three, possibly four more individuals were discovered, one of which comprised a skull, mandible and three cervical vertebrae found in a pot.⁴⁰ All the skeletons from Mapungubwe Hill were discovered in the so-called grave area,⁴¹ and they comprise seven adults, three adolescents and two juveniles.⁴² Most individuals, with the probable exception of the Mapungubwe skeletons buried with gold, were buried in a horizontally flexed position, often surrounded by pots or potsherds and frequently with beads and bangles.⁴³ Two of the individuals buried with gold were probably in a sitting position, but the position of the third is unknown.⁴⁴

³⁷ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 48.

³⁸ M. Steyn, ‘The Mapungubwe Gold Graves Revisited’, *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 62(186) (2007), 140.

³⁹ M. Steyn, ‘The Mapungubwe Gold Graves Revisited’, 140.

⁴⁰ M. Steyn, ‘The Mapungubwe Gold Graves Revisited’, 140.

⁴¹ M. Steyn, ‘The Mapungubwe Gold Graves Revisited’, 141.

⁴² M. Steyn, ‘The Mapungubwe Gold Graves Revisited’, 141.

⁴³ M. Steyn, ‘The Mapungubwe Gold Graves Revisited’, 142.

⁴⁴ M. Steyn, ‘The Mapungubwe Gold Graves Revisited’, 142.

Although, her findings signal how the gold and the remains work together, the emphasis put on the gold, overshadows the significance of the remains as the narrative of the gold would be constructed around the two golden rhinos unearthed at the site. The excavations at the site primarily subjected the remains to a narrative where they become markers of ethnicity and race, thus also silencing their importance.

An evident shift in the work of archaeologists can be seen within the context of Mapungubwe especially during the early 1990s. This shift is a move away from the earlier study of the remains which had a racial inclination and made use of terms that were degrading. Previous studies also drew on the categories of the ethnic which is not only problematic but treats ethnicity as fixed and not socially constructed. Steyn's archaeological work on Mapungubwe in 1997, "reconstructed the lifestyle and health status of the people" as well as "made reference to the grave goods as they were thought to be a reflection on the number of people who had obligations to the deceased."⁴⁵ She further states "that skeletons are valuable sources of information on disease, diet and the general wellbeing of a community."⁴⁶ For her analyses, she made use of archival material and oral traditions signalling another shift in archaeological work.⁴⁷ However, this too is problematic as: "on the one hand, it sought to disrupt the distinction between science and tradition. But on the other, the findings also echoed and gave credence to the "foreign origins" doctrine of the past."⁴⁸ This was due to her findings using Venda oral traditions suggesting that the burials may belong to Venda kings.⁴⁹ She also made use of sources which formulated racial notions and created the idea of 'others' such as De Villiers 1968 data on the 'South African Negro' which may impact on the formulation of her data.⁵⁰ Thus, begging the question whether archaeology can fully move away from racial and ethnic categories while conducting their studies? Steyn too proposes that "the Mapungubwe burials may have been brought from elsewhere and so are possibly much older than

⁴⁵ M. Steyn, 'The Mapungubwe Gold Graves Revisited', 145.

⁴⁶ M. Steyn, 'The Mapungubwe Gold Graves Revisited', 141.

⁴⁷ X. Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 59.

⁴⁸ X. Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 59.

⁴⁹ X. Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 59.

⁵⁰ M. Steyn, 'The Mapungubwe Gold Graves Revisited', 141.

the actual site.”⁵¹ If this is indeed the case, what would this mean for the status of Mapungubwe? The findings of the archaeologist? And would the claims of the claimant community still be valid?

Part 2: The Reburial

The Mapungubwe remains are clearly a case whereby: “death is political no less so in the past than in the present, and ancient burials are even more symbolic and powerful than modern burials.”⁵² This speaks to the claims made by the various claimant communities mentioned previously to the remains that are associated with the land. Pikirayi argues that “apartheid ideology not only separated black and white, but also made ethnicity the prime identity for Africans, many of whom internalized it. South Africa’s ethicised past ensured that the process of repatriating Mapungubwe human remains was framed in ethnic terms.”⁵³ He further says because of the claimant communities wanting to prove sole ownership, there was constant conflict during the negotiation process. Edkins uses the term “irreplaceable person” to describe the significance of the missing to those who were closest to the missing person whether it was the relatives, friends or neighbours. They are the ones who demand the return of the person, for them that one person counts.⁵⁴ The Mapungubwe remains appeared to be in a state of missingness throughout the apartheid era until claims were made to the remains. Which, I argue are still missing, nonetheless, now, the questions arise to whom is the ‘precolonial body’ an irreplaceable person to can they even count as irreplaceable persons, as they are old bones and nameless?

Edkin’s argument about the missing initially focuses on those who were enforcedly disappeared particularly in Argentina. She argues that contemporary politics have caused them to go missing due to systems of management such as categorization and the administering of

⁵¹ M. Steyn, ‘The Mapungubwe Gold Graves Revisited’, 140.

⁵² R.S. Hallote and A.H. Joffe, ‘The Politics of Israeli Archaeology: Between ‘Nationalism’ and ‘Science’ in the Age of the Second Republic’, *Israel Studies* 7(3) (2003), 84.

⁵³ M. Schoemann, and I. Pikirayi, ‘Repatriating more than Mapungubwe Human Remains: Archaeological Material Culture, a Shared Future and an Artificially Divided Past’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 29(4) (2011), 390.

⁵⁴ J. Edkins, “*Missing: Person’s and Politics*”, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 2.

populations.⁵⁵ This very same contemporary system of politics render those missing who are in search of the irreplaceable person they are looking for.⁵⁶ It is at this point that she argues that “a demand for, or indeed an expression of, a different form of politics, one where the person *as such* counts: this could be the called *a politics of the person as missing*.”⁵⁷ Thus, one gathers from Edkins’s notion of the “irreplaceable person” and the “person-as-such” that she is actually calling for the realization that every person counts, in life, in death or as missing. This is evident with the various communities who took it upon themselves to ensure that they are recognized as descendants of the remains and halted further scientific study on them. By doing this, one may argue that they were giving a voice to the remains. The contestations were a clear example of those who maintained that they wished to reclaim the personhood of the deceased and to indicate that the precolonial dead are irreplaceable persons in the sense that they carry the legacy of the people and thus cannot be erased from history.

The biggest concern that the archaeologists had with the claimant groups was that there is hardly evidence indicating a link with the Mapungubwe remains. Pikirayi and Schoeman argues that, “historical sources have helped us understand the creation of ethnicity in the 1900s, but unfortunately do not provide verifiable insights into pre-colonial identity or ethnicity.”⁵⁸ This may be due to the relocation of communities from the site. They do point out that “much of South African archaeology which examined indigenous African farming communities of the last 1000 years has been framed in cultural historic or ethnic terms.”⁵⁹ No wonder most of the earlier studies on the culture and identity of the Mapungubwe people have shown that these groups are generally culturally homogenous thereby viewing culture as fixed. As pointed out by Pikirayi and Schoeman, archaeologists use the study of ceramic styles or Indigenous Knowledge System whereby you are

⁵⁵ J. Edkins, “*Missing: Person’s and Politics*”, viii.

⁵⁶ J. Edkins, “*Missing: Person’s and Politics*”, viii- ix. For Edkins, we are unknowable and unknown because we are bound up with those who we are in relation to. She goes on to say that this relation is what makes people irreplaceable and for the missing there are no boundaries, it is open ended in the sense that what we miss about the person is unfathomable and thus hard to pin down.

⁵⁷ J. Edkins, “*Missing: Person’s and Politics*”, pp. 2.

⁵⁸ I. Pikirayi, ‘What Can Archaeology Do for Society in Southern Africa?’, 57.

⁵⁹ I. Pikirayi, ‘What Can Archaeology Do for Society in Southern Africa?’, 56.

expected to be part of a homogenous ethnic group in order to be indigenous.⁶⁰ The assumption of ethnicity could also possibly lead to clashes amongst different groups especially over territory and materials. This is exactly the case of Mapungubwe.

Pikirayi and Schoeman argue that “most of the claimant communities are competing in ongoing land claims and many other struggles for resources, which in spite of the legislation are often framed in ethnic terms.”⁶¹ These tensions came about with each claimant group trying to prove sole descent and ownership of the Mapungubwe remains.⁶² Julian Jonker’s view on those who claimed ancestry to the Prestwich Place remains may be useful in this case as well. He argued that the claimant group at Prestwich did not have a legitimate ancestral claim to the remains, instead he argues that their claiming is based on instrumental reasons and thus can merely only be seen as an interest group.⁶³ The same can be said about the Mapungubwe claimant groups, as there is no evidence to suggest that the remains were indeed those of their ancestors. Therefore, the claimant community through trying to prove sole ownership of the remains have instead caused their silence, a silence which resonates in the actual namelessness of their bodies.⁶⁴

Throughout Pikirayi’s writing on the issue of the remains at Mapungubwe, it appears that he is trying to depict the claimant communities as divided and the archaeologists as sensitive to their ethics and responsibilities. He writes: “in this potentially volatile context archaeologists were not only negotiating responsible repatriation, but also had to consider their role in a divided present, as squabbles over repatriation could harm both the dead and the living.”⁶⁵ What followed on from the archaeologists reluctantly agreeing to the repatriation process was a joint claim to the bones made by the various claimant communities mentioned previously. After a series of discussions, it was

⁶⁰ M. Schoemann, and I. Pikirayi, ‘Repatriating more than Mapungubwe Human Remains’, 2.

⁶¹ M. Schoemann, and I. Pikirayi, ‘Repatriating more than Mapungubwe Human Remains’, 2.

⁶² M. Schoemann, and I. Pikirayi, ‘Repatriating more than Mapungubwe Human Remains: Archaeological Material Culture, a Shared Future and an Artificially Divided Past’, 2.

⁶³ Jonker, J. ‘The Silence of the Dead Ethical and Juridical Significances of the Exhumations at Prestwich Place, Cape Town, 2003-2005’, (MA. thesis, University of Cape Town, 2005), 49.

⁶⁴ J. Jonker, ‘The Silence of the Dead Ethical and Juridical Significances of the Exhumations at Prestwich Place, Cape Town, 2003-2005’, 49.

⁶⁵ I. Pikirayi, ‘What Can Archaeology Do for Society in Southern Africa?’, 58.

decided by the archaeologists and claimant communities that the Mapungubwe remains would be reburied.

The reburial of the skeletal remains at Mapungubwe was preceded by a handover and cleansing ceremony involving traditional healers and members of the communities that claimed to be the *bona fide* descendants of the human remains. On the 29 October 2007, the symbolic handover ceremony took place at the University of Pretoria and was well attended.⁶⁶ A number of cultural activities took place such as burning incense, calling on the ancestors to bless the remains and the site as well as indulging in traditional beer, tobacco and medicine.⁶⁷ One could argue that a sense of dignity was returned to the remains and the various cultural groups in attendance seemed pleased with the proceedings.

The ceremony was deemed as a success by Pikirayi as it not only implied returning the dead to their descendants but also signalled a moment whereby the wishes of the claimant communities were taken into account unlike the situation at Prestwich.⁶⁸ Following this, the cleansing ceremony “hosted by the Freedom Park Trust, and the provincial government of Limpopo, started on the 5th of November and concluded with the “return of the spirits ceremony” on the 6th of November 2007.”⁶⁹ Freedom Park is a memorial established by the state in order to heed the call for memorialization at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings made by the families of victims that fought for the countries freedom during apartheid.⁷⁰ The memorialisation project “was officially launched on 1 June 2000, and the Freedom Park Trust was established in 2001 to develop the heritage project.”⁷¹ This project is one of nation building.

The reburial ceremonies were conducted from the 18 to 20 November 2007 and were supervised by SANParks and the archaeologists from UP, UCT and Wits.⁷² The fact that SANParks

⁶⁶ I. Pikirayi, ‘What Can Archaeology Do for Society in Southern Africa?’, 58.

⁶⁷ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 72.

⁶⁸ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 70.

⁶⁹ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 70.

⁷⁰ Freedom park, ‘A Heritage Destination’, (2018). <http://www.freedompark.co.za>. [Accessed October 2018].

⁷¹ Freedom park, ‘A Heritage Destination’, 2018.

⁷² I. Pikirayi, ‘What Can Archaeology Do for Society in Southern Africa?’, 58.

archaeologists were so integral to the process, arguably provided a platform for the archaeologists to discuss their views and to assert how they felt about the reburial. However, the archaeologists had reluctantly agreed to the reburial as they were unable to perform DNA analysis of the bones.⁷³ According to the claimant communities, this practice would have been regarded as defiling the remains before burial.⁷⁴ Due to the circumstances of the reburial (as we shall see later), it would appear that archaeologists might still have a chance to do more scientific testing on the bones.

Part three: Searching for the Mapungubwe remains

In 2017, I had the opportunity to briefly visit the Mapungubwe Collection in Pretoria. When the Mapungubwe gold was declared as a national heritage collection in October 1997, the University of Pretoria became its official custodians. With this the university was tasked with the curating and preserving the gold.⁷⁵ The gold collection comprises of “the three fragmented animal figurines, a gold rhinoceros, a gold bovine, and a gold feline. Fragments of another animal torso were found, as well as five gold bangles, gold nails, decorative gold foil — which included a crocodile head — large quantities of glass beads, many iron and copper bangles, and three earthenware ceramic vessels.”⁷⁶ Each of these items had to be preserved and even reconstructed due to the “due to natural degradation of shallow burials and the disturbed context by early excavators, the gold was in a less than ideal condition and in a bad state of preservation.”⁷⁷

The Mapungubwe gold finds were first examined in February 1933 by the South African Royal Mint in Pretoria. Dr. Roger Pearson “was most probably the first person to attempt a reconstruction of the gold fragments of the gold rhinoceros.”⁷⁸ His work was later followed on by Dr W. A. Oddy of the British Museum in the 1980’s.⁷⁹ Today the Mapungubwe Collection has

⁷³ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 74.

⁷⁴X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 76.

⁷⁵ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 3.

⁷⁶ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 3.

⁷⁷ T. Nel and H. Botha, ‘The conservation of the Mapungubwe gold collection, South Africa’, *Journal of the Institute of Conservation*, 36(1), 1-16.

⁷⁸ T. Nel and H. Botha, ‘The conservation of the Mapungubwe gold collection, South Africa’, 4.

⁷⁹ T. Nel and H. Botha, ‘The conservation of the Mapungubwe gold collection, South Africa’, 3.

made sure that the gold artefacts are well preserved and it is not surprising that it has become the centrepiece of the Collection. This is clear as during the fourth World Archaeological Conference at UCT, the University “released for public display a selection of gold artefacts from Mapungubwe, including the gold rhinoceros, during the plenary session of the Congress.”⁸⁰ This not only advertised the work of archaeology but also was creating a sense of pride for all South Africans. This is also due to South Africa being welcomed back into the international archaeological climate due to the academic boycott of the country during apartheid.⁸¹

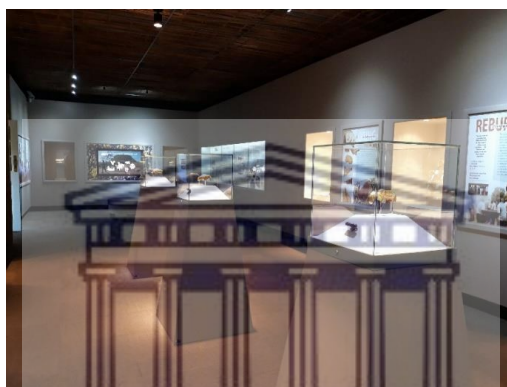


Figure 6: Inside the Mapungubwe Collection.

(Photographed by: Robin-lea Karating)

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The Mapungubwe Collection at the University of Pretoria hosts “the largest ancient gold collections in Southern Africa.”⁸² The Golden Rhinos are the museums centre pieces and are described as “rare and unique” on the Universities website.⁸³ They are the first artefacts that one lays one’s eyes upon when entering the premises, which consists of a large room within the old arts building. The room is relatively dark with spotlights on the gold pieces. They cannot be missed. The Golden Rhinos are the ‘star attraction’ and are placed in the centre of the room in glass cabinets (figure 6).⁸⁴ It is

⁸⁰ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 62.

⁸¹ T. Nel and H. Botha, ‘The conservation of the Mapungubwe gold collection, South Africa’, 5.

⁸² University of Pretoria. ‘Mapungubwe Collection -The Collection’, (2018), <http://www.up.ac.za/en/museums-collections/article/1823912/mapungubwe-collection-the-collection>. [Accessed 5 September 2017].

⁸³ University of Pretoria. ‘Mapungubwe Collection -The Collection’, (2018).

⁸⁴ University of Pretoria. ‘Mapungubwe Collection -The Collection’, (2018).

believed, that the two rhinos excavated at the Mapungubwe Hill were a representation of black rhinos.⁸⁵ This is due to the notion that:

a black rhino will destroy a bush or termite mound in great fury, stamping the ground and tossing soil and leaves into the air. This action is similar to a special dance that Zimbabwe culture leaders performed on the graves of their ancestors. Because of this similarity, the name for a black rhino in the Shona and Venda languages (*chipembere*) is a cognate for the name of the dance. For all these reasons, the black rhino was an appropriate symbol of leadership.⁸⁶

Evidently, the description of the black rhino falls into the same framework of an ethnic past that has been associated with the site and also tends to interpret Mapungubwe in terms of Shona and Venda culture. The strangest part about the identification of the two rhinos unearthed at the site, is that they were fragmented thus making it difficult to identify them as rhinos.

Nonetheless, they are not the only golden items at the site, which includes “bovine-like creatures and a feline statuette similarly fashioned from gold sheeting, a ceremonial bowl and a part of the golden sceptre.”⁸⁷ Textual and photographic panels form part of the surroundings around the rhinos. There are “ten display cases containing the original artefacts of gold, iron, stone, clay, pottery, shell and glass.”⁸⁸ The cases also contain information panels stating the history of the artefact and its significance. The panels of mostly white and brown in colour, perhaps A2 in size, trace the history of Mapungubwe and the gold findings, with each of the three gold burials having a panel dedicated to them.

The first panel called ‘Unearthing’ depicts ‘the original gold burial’ which was discovered in 1932 and contained a golden rhino and other animal figurines such as the bovine, feline and traces of golden ears, snouts and tails that were not able to be reconstructed.⁸⁹ The burial also contained ‘a black shallow bowl’, ‘a spherical pot’ and ‘iron and gold anklets’ as well as ‘glass

⁸⁵ T. N. Huffman, *Mapungubwe: Ancient African Civilisation on the Limpopo* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2001), 48.

⁸⁶ T. N. Huffman, *Mapungubwe*, 48.

⁸⁷ University of Pretoria. ‘Mapungubwe Collection -The Collection’, (2018),

⁸⁸ University of Pretoria. ‘Mapungubwe Collection -The Collection’, (2018),

⁸⁹ Pictorial Panel Unearthing, 2018.

beads'.⁹⁰ Perhaps the unearthing refers to the actual excavating of the gold finds described here, but this link is not made explicitly. The same can be said about the second panel.

The second panel called 'Exposing' focuses on 'the gold sceptre burial', which 'had been referred to as the 'King's Grave', due to the sitting position of "a middle aged male about six feet tall" and how the remains were buried and the point that the sceptre is a 'symbol of office', in other words signifies power.⁹¹ Other grave goods such as beads and fragments of another golden rhino were found along with trading goods such as cowrie shells and glass trade beads.⁹² Again, the naming of the panel as 'Exposing' is not explained in relation to the information provided.

The last panel discussing the gold graves is named 'Uncovering' and looks at 'the third gold burial'.⁹³ This grave "was the richest of all the burials", with "about 3kg of gold jewellery in the form of bangles, necklaces, anklets, beads and other ornamental gold forms."⁹⁴ Similarly, to the Kings burial, this burial also depicted high status. The remains of a female aged between 40 to 60 was found in the grave and due to the gold findings she was considered to be "an elite matriarchal symbol in the Mapungubwe society."⁹⁵ Yet again, no clear link is made between the panels name and the information portrayed. However, what is made clear is that the Mapungubwe Collection's main focus is on the gold finds.

To further highlight this, there are three panels solely dedicated to the history of the gold findings. Namely, 'Symbolising' reflects on the 'metaphors and meanings' of the gold which refers to "a spiritual power of the ancestors, and with social and ritual control of indigenous metallurgy."⁹⁶ This sets the platform for the next panel which is named 'Indigenising' and speaks to the 'Gold metallurgy. Here a connection between the gold and trade is presented,⁹⁷ indicating the importance of mining and the production of metals at the Hill, although the origin of the gold is not known. The

⁹⁰ Pictorial Panel Unearthing, 2018.

⁹¹ Pictorial Panel Exposing, 2018.

⁹² Pictorial Panel Exposing, 2018.

⁹³ Pictorial Panel Uncovering, 2018.

⁹⁴ Pictorial Panel Uncovering, 2018.

⁹⁵ Pictorial Panel Symbolising, 2018.

⁹⁶ Pictorial Panel Symbolising, 2018.

⁹⁷ Pictorial Panel Indigenising, 2018.

last panel, called 'Conserving' focuses on 'The Mapungubwe Gold Collection', This traces the work conducted by the British Museum and the role they played in conserving the gold as mentioned previously.⁹⁸ These panels and their labels have a clear and distinct link with each other and evidently traces the narrative of the gold at the Hill and its process of restoration undertaken by UP.

What is striking is that only one panel is dedicated to the debates about the human remains unearthed and the reburial ceremony. Simply termed as 'Reburying,' it focuses on 'the Mapungubwe human remains', which highlights the claims made to the remains, the return of the remains and the reburial of 143 human remains in 2007.⁹⁹ The Mapungubwe Collection is clearly bedazzled by the gold artefacts procured from the Hill, as the remains are overshadowed by the gold findings and particularly the rhinos that are the at the forefront of this exhibition, and in the novel by Mda, as pointed out in the introduction.

Evidently, Mapungubwe cannot be separated from the narrative of the rhino which may not even be a rhino. The human remains are rendered into a state of missingness as their narrative is overshadowed by the gold findings at the Collection. However, what is most striking about how the narrative of the reburial of the remains constructed at the Collection, is that the university frames it as part of the nation. The panel reads:

The University recognized that the claim is the culmination of a difficult, emotive and culturally sensitive process that was reached through negotiation in a spirit of compromise and nation building in which the ideals of a new South Africa and the redress of an unfortunate pasts were achieved.

Despite, the lack of representation of the remains at the site, the reburial can be seen as a compromise between the claimant communities and the archaeologists. As Kashe-Katiye points out that "this is indicative of yet another way that the repatriation and burial process was inherently an

⁹⁸ Pictorial Panel Conserving, 2018.

⁹⁹ Pictorial Panel Reburying, 2018.

improvisation that sought to address short-term tensions between the university and the concerned communities.”¹⁰⁰

However, there are views which oppose these. Pikirayi argued that the Mapungubwe reburials saw new practices and forms of community engagements. This was in contrast to the bad image of archaeology, “often associated with desecration of sacred places including burials. To the majority of southern Africans, its usefulness is limited to knowledge production which only benefits archaeologists.”¹⁰¹ As we have seen this was a view, particularly expressed by the concerned community at Prestwich Place who opposed archaeological studies due to its association with racial science and the looting of ancestral graves.

Steyn has recognized the tension between archaeological work on ancestral bones and the viewpoints held by the claimant communities. She acknowledges that the excavation and study of skeletal remains has become “socially inappropriate because of its conflict with local beliefs, particularly of those that were obtained in an unethical manner.”¹⁰² This may be the reason behind Wits University not opposing the reburial at all and being the first to agree to it. For Kasha-katye, Steyn’s “acknowledgement reflects an attempt to reinvent physical anthropology and move it away from a form of racial science, while acknowledging the culturist critique that was becoming stronger at the time.”¹⁰³ Perhaps it is on this basis that Pikirayi feels that “the December 2007 reburial of human remains excavated since the 1930s from the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape brought about a sense of community building and interaction with archaeologists.”¹⁰⁴ He contends that despite the tensions between the claimant groups about who has ownership of the remains, they were able to work together with archaeologists in ensuring reburial.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 54.

¹⁰¹ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 54.

¹⁰² M. Steyn, ‘The Mapungubwe Gold Graves Revisited’, 143.

¹⁰³ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 59.

¹⁰⁴ I. Pikirayi, ‘What Can Archaeology Do for Society in Southern Africa?’, 125.

¹⁰⁵ I. Pikirayi, ‘What Can Archaeology Do for Society in Southern Africa?’, 125.

However, with the type of reburial that was agreed upon it would seem that archaeologists were more satisfied with the outcome as they could still access the remains to study while the land and ancestral claims are still ongoing between the various groups.



Figure 7: Reburial of the remains.
(Photographed by Xolelwa Kashe-Katiye)

Similar to the Prestwich Place remains, the Mapungubwe human remains too were neatly packed in boxes. However, these boxes “were made of high-density polyethylene, a type of plastic” that would secure “a total of 150 skeletons.”¹⁰⁶ The material of the boxes would ensure that the bones were well preserved and safely tucked away for future scientific practice. Furthermore, “the boxes were engraved with a series of numbers, according to each skeleton’s unique code and recorded in a corresponding register. These were to be placed in tomblike structures in Mapungubwe” (figure 7).¹⁰⁷ This ensured that archaeologists would be able to conduct future research on the bones. They even made sure that the human remains were interred in the same grave so that it would be more convenient to find them.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps, the graves may be easy for archaeologists to locate, however while on the field trip (which will be discussed below), I would not have known where the burial ground was if the archaeologist Tom Huffman who accompanied us had not indicated them.

Therefore, one could argue that the grave at Mapungubwe Hill can go unnoticed. Thus, ones again

¹⁰⁶ W. C. Nienaber, N. Keough, M. Steyn and J. H. Meiring, ‘Repatriation of the Mapungubwe Human Remains: An Overview of Process and Procedure’, 1.

¹⁰⁷ W. C. Nienaber, N. Keough, M. Steyn and J. H. Meiring, ‘Repatriation of the Mapungubwe Human Remains’, 1.

¹⁰⁸ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 76.

presenting a case of missingness whereby the remains are trapped in a state of being lost. Yet again, one can compare how the Golden Rhinos are being showcased while the remains at Mapungubwe are neatly hidden away. Despite the fact that they are not marked, it would appear that the fact that archaeologists have future access and that the gold receives more coverage would entail the missingness of the remains. Therefore, Kashe-Katiye has argued that the Mapungubwe remains were not reburied but ““archived” or preserved for posterity.”¹⁰⁹ What was meant to be a project to redress past injustices has meant merely laying the archive to rest, for now.

Early in 2018, I had the opportunity to embark on a field trip to the Mapungubwe Hill and the surrounding area with a group of researchers and students, comprising of Carolyn Hamilton, Simon Hall, Henry Fagan and Himal Ramji from the UCT. We were also joined by Sikho Siyotula from UP and the University of Potsdam as well as Professor John Wright with archaeologist Amanda Esterhuysen from Wits. The journey officially began on 13 March 2018. We visited various sites such as Molokwane in Rustenberg, which according to Ramji “became a framing device for the rest of the trip, in that it is one of the less publicly (or popularly) known historical sites in southern Africa.”¹¹⁰ Here, Simon Hall discussed the various stone walls and structures in the area. The most important trip for my research specifically was the Mapungubwe Hill. After approximately an eight-hour drive from Johannesburg, I was definitely not as enthusiastic as I was before the trip began.

We were joined by archaeologist Thomas Huffman, “one of the foremost members of the southern African (and global) archaeological community.”¹¹¹ Huffman took the lead of introducing the various sites we would visit in the area,

we were graced with a thoughtful though brief engagement with Zhizo and Leopard’s Kopje histories (those being the two dominant historical cultures in the region, as determined by archaeologists). We visited five key sites: Mapungubwe Hill, K2, Leokwe, the SLCA, and Schroda. Of these, Schroda (occupied by Zhizo

¹⁰⁹ X. Kashe-Katiya, ‘Carefully Hidden Away’, 76.

¹¹⁰ Ramji, H. ‘Visit to the Shashe-Limpopo Confluence Area’, (2018), <http://www.apc.uct.ac.za/apc/june8/shashe-limpopo>. Accessed: 7 August 2018.

¹¹¹ Ramji, H. ‘Visit to the Shashe-Limpopo Confluence Area’, (2018).

people) is the oldest, dating back to 900 CE, while Mapungubwe is the most recent, dating between approximately 1220 and 1290 CE.¹¹²

For me the most significant source of information came from Huffman's explanation of the human remains found at the Mapungubwe Hill. I was certainly surprised when we made it on top of the Hill, after climbing more stairs than I could count, I was expecting to see something extraordinary but to my dismay- there was absolutely nothing to see. No trace of a grave marker, or anything unusual standing out from the few trees, patches of grass or even the rocks. Everything blended in. What was apparent was that the remains had simply gone missing.

This is reinforced by the lack of their presence at the Interpretation Centre at the site. Unfortunately, I was unable to visit the centre myself but have gained insight through literature and visual materials. After Mapungubwe attained World Heritage status in 2003, discussions to develop an interpretation centre were in full swing. In 2005, SANParks decided on hosting a design competition whereby architects with the best concept would win. December that year saw Peter Rich, a UCT architect and owner of Rich Enterprises, as the winner of the competition and whose "design started in March 2006 and was completed by August 2007".¹¹³ However, due to the politics at the time concerning the various local groups claims to the Mapungubwe ancestral remains, the aim of the Interpretation Centre was meant not to make any obvious references to specific groups.¹¹⁴ Thus, Rich claims that he had to find inspiration outside of community consultation for his design. Although Rich was inspired by the "semi-arid scenery of the sandstone outcrops dotted with huge baobab and mopane trees in the surrounding hilly savannah"¹¹⁵ the design still made reference to Venda culture and made use of 'the traditional structure of khotla' which meant 'meeting under a tree'.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Ramji, H. 'Visit to the Shashe-Limpopo Confluence Area', (2018)

¹¹³ J.C. Tall, 'On Site Review Report Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre Limpopo, South Africa', *SAF*, 3953, 3.

¹¹⁴ J.C. Tall, 'On Site Review Report', 2.

¹¹⁵ J.C. Tall, 'On Site Review Report', 1.

¹¹⁶ A. Rynkowska-Sachse, 'Architectural Means of Expression in the Creation of Contemporary Heritage: Interpretation Centres and their Role in Envisioning Heritage', *Envisioning Architecture: Image of Perception and Communication Heritage*, (2015), 261.

The centre is situated one kilometre from the Hill and “is composed of a museum, including an introduction hall where the general history of Mapungubwe is told with information on the context, different rooms hosting exhibits of the artefacts found in Mapungubwe, the history and social organisation of the kingdom and a sacred place dedicated to remains found in the area.”¹¹⁷

According to Ramage, “the internal exhibition spaces are archaic and cave-like” creating a romanticised atmosphere.¹¹⁸ The play of light and shadow highlight only the most important artefacts inside (Golden Rhino) even though these are only replicas.¹¹⁹ The Golden Rhino has been described as the ‘master piece of the centre’ as it refers to ‘the power of the king’.¹²⁰ However, only “a minor collection is now exhibited at an Interpretation Visitor Centre on site, ensuring greater community access. Future curation of this collection remains unstable, due to informal calls for restitution, together with the archaeological site being under threat from nearby mining activities.”¹²¹ Furthermore, there are “facilities [that] were developed for the visitor [such as a] (coffee bar, restaurant, shop, etc.)¹²², as well as “offices for the Park staff, an outdoor amphitheatre and facilities for researchers.”¹²³ With “tourists ... offered game viewing, night drives, guided walks, collection of rock art in the park, accommodation in boats and lodges, Bird Hide, rivers confluence look-out points or resting at a designated picnic place (braai) that all enable them to experience the heritage site as it was a long time ago.”¹²⁴ In essence, “the Interpretation Centre look like a “building” in this context. It is basically designed like “another stone hill” within a context of stone hills.”¹²⁵

The project is highly regarded by architects, not only in South Africa but in the African region and all over the world. “It has gained several prizes since its completion, amongst which:

¹¹⁷ J.C. Tall, ‘On Site Review Report, 3.

¹¹⁸ M. Ramage, ‘Design and Construction of the Mapungubwe National Park Interpretive Centre, South Africa’, *ATDF Journal*, 7(1/2) (2010), 16.

¹¹⁹ A. Rynkowska-Sachse, ‘Architectural Means of Expression’, 261.

¹²⁰ D. Fleminger, ‘Mapungubwe Collection Only a Fraction of Wealth’, (2018), <http://southafrica.co.za/mapungubwe-collection.html>. [Accessed: 5 October 2018].

¹²¹ D. Fleminger, ‘Mapungubwe Collection Only a Fraction of Wealth’, (2018).

¹²² J.C. Tall, ‘On Site Review Report, 3.

¹²³ A. Rynkowska-Sachse, ‘Architectural Means of Expression’, 262.

¹²⁴ A. Rynkowska-Sachse, ‘Architectural Means of Expression’, 262.

¹²⁵ J.C. Tall, ‘On Site Review Report, 4.

“World Building of the Year, World Architectural Festival, Barcelona, October 2009, World Building, Culture Category winner, World Architecture Festival, Barcelona, October 2009; David Alsop Sustainability Award, British Structural Awards, 2009; The Institute of Structural Engineers, South Africa Absolute Vision Designer of the Year, 2009; and Wienerberger Brick Award, 2012.”¹²⁶

According to Rynkowska-Sachse, the Interpretation Centre “does not fundamentally aim to collect, preserve and study objects (although they may indeed do this)”, the same way in which museums do. Instead “the essential purpose of the Interpretive Centre is to facilitate public appreciation of the value of the specific cultural or natural heritage features, by raising public awareness and providing education.”¹²⁷ In essence, the aim of the Centre is to provide the significance of Mapungubwe and to display artefacts found at the site in order to educate the public which may refer to the surrounding community and tourists about the site’s heritage. But due to security reasons only replicas of the artefacts are put on display.¹²⁸ The construction of the site began in October 2007 and ended in June 2009 but the official opening of the Centre was only six months later in December, two years after the reburial had taken place.¹²⁹ The project made use of “labour-intensive construction using low-skilled local people and materials [which are] economical, sustainable and can have a positive effect on livelihoods.”¹³⁰ It further aimed to enable poverty relief and skills transfer into the surrounding area.¹³¹ The significance of using local labourers was emphasized: “They were trained in the manufacture of stabilized earth tiles, which informed them of the abilities of natural materials used by ancestors who developed their culture in symbiosis with nature”.¹³² Thus, the project can be read as drawing on indigenous design in an effort to destabilize the ethnic categories that has characterized the claims to the remains at Mapungubwe. This is

¹²⁶ J.C. Tall, ‘On Site Review Report’, 10.

¹²⁷ A. Rynkowska-Sachse, ‘Architectural Means of Expression’, 259.

¹²⁸ J.C. Tall, ‘On Site Review Report’, 3.

¹²⁹ M. Ramage, ‘Design and Construction of the Mapungubwe’, 19.

¹³⁰ M. Ramage, ‘Design and Construction of the Mapungubwe’, 20.

¹³¹ J.C. Tall, ‘On Site Review Report’, 4.

¹³² M. Ramage, ‘Design and Construction of the Mapungubwe’, 19.

evident in the inclusive aspect of the project, which aimed at giving back to the surrounding communities and using materials from the Hill itself instead of choosing to present a certain cultural background.

Conclusion:

Mapungubwe emerged out of a narrative of discovery whereby Jerry van Graan, the son of a farmer at Greefswald gained all the recognition that came with the sites' rich heritage. Here, the local informant Mowena, who showed Van Graan the way, was noticeably silenced despite having a link to the site. Van Graan would then report the findings to the University of Pretoria who took it upon themselves to investigate the site and reap the benefits of the grand discovery of gold artefacts and human remains. Although, the narrative of the findings was said to be public knowledge since the 1930's, Kashe-Katiye has particularly argued that this was not the case. For Kashe-Katiye, the significance of the Mapungubwe Hill was hidden and remains hidden: as it contradicted the segregation and the later apartheid system, the government made sure to hide it away from public knowledge in order to sustain its power.¹³³ However, the end of the apartheid system saw the site soaring to even higher heritage and commercial heights, as it became a World Heritage Site.

This is evident as the Golden Rhinos excavated at the site have become national symbols as well as the showpiece of Mapungubwe's commercialization. The Rhinos are at the forefront of the narrative of Mapungubwe, as they are fully on display at both the Mapungubwe Collection and as replicas at the Interpretation Centre. They seem to enjoy more recognition than the ancestral remains recovered at the site, as the remains have been reinterned to a vacant site with no sign of their presence. Thus, Kashe-Katiye has argued that their reinternment has caused Mapungubwe to still be hidden, as the remains were not simply reburied but archived for future scientific inquiry.

¹³³ M. Steyn, 'The Mapungubwe Gold Graves Revisited', 143.

This chapter has argued, that since the first or early excavations at the Mapungubwe Hill, the human remains unearthed at the site had been subject to ethnic and racial categorisation, which not only caused the silencing of the remains but rendered them into a state of missingness. This state would continue from the 1930's and the emphasis on the ethnic reading of the bones despite attempts by Steyn, in particular, who tried an alternative approach of scientific study which focused uncovering the health and lifestyle of the remains. Although, her study would be useful in this respect, she made use of sources which were previously associated with the racial and ethnic classification of the remains. Nonetheless, ethnic classification would further become heightened during the claims made to them by the various claimant communities. Although, I have argued that the claimant community has attempted to claim the remains *as persons as such*, their focus on using their ethnicity to make land claims have overshadowed this. Thus, their attempts at rehumanizing the nameless remains have rather caused their silencing and reinserted them into the period of the precolonial, as these bones would only be significant to them because of an ethicized history.

The same thing can be said about the archaeologists who have heralded the gold findings as South Africa's Crown Jewels and have reinforced the era as of the precolonial. The archaeologists were interested in conducting more scientific research on the remains but this did not materialize due to the claimant communities' plea to have the bones reburied. Here, Pikirayi, whose work has been at the forefront of this chapter, particularly heralded the moment of reburial as the working together between the claimant communities and the archaeologists. For Pikirayi, it would appear that in the light of the Prestwich Place saga, that the archaeologists have taken on the task to listen to the requests by claimant communities and even chose to work closely with them.¹³⁴

This resulted in the reburial of the remains in 2007. However, the cooperation seemed to benefit archaeologists more as the land and ancestral claims have not been resolved. It would appear that the use of the ethnic is a way to reconcile the injustices of the past by the claimant

¹³⁴ I. Pikirayi, 'What Can Archaeology Do for Society in Southern Africa?', 125.

communities. However, it is not only them who are reinforcing the narrative of Mapungubwe to be immersed in the ethnic as the archaeologist are too despite efforts to try to move away from these categories. Would it ever be possible to narrate a history of ancestral remains without drawing on racial and ethnic categories?



Chapter Three: The twelve Robben Island political prisoners buried at Stikland and their memorialization.

The 22 March 2013, a day after the Human Rights Day celebrations, saw the symbolic release of twelve fallen (deceased) political prisoners from Robben Island by the Correctional Services Minister Sibusiso Ndebele, together with the families of the prisoners.¹ The Human Rights Day celebrations marked the 53rd anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre, where more than sixty people were tragically killed by the apartheid state and provided a fitting backdrop for the commemoration of the twelve political prisoners. The minister stated that: “Next year [2014], our country will commemorate 20 years of democracy. The Constitution obliges us to ‘honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land.’² In keeping up with this spirit, Robben Island Museum (RIM) worked closely with the families of the twelve political prisoners to ensure that they would find closure after almost forty years of not knowing what had happened to their loved ones.

On the 23rd of January 2013, a spiritual repatriation ceremony was held in Bhisho in the Eastern Cape. Before the ceremony, the families of the twelve Robben Island prisoners agreed to first conduct a ritual on the Island and at the Stikland cemetery, “as part of preparations for the spiritual repatriation.”³ This was part of their cultures and beliefs surrounding the dead. The minister stated that, “In African culture, when someone dies in a foreign land their spirit should be returned to their place of birth.”⁴ It was against this background that the spiritual repatriation ritual took place and was particularly fitting for the prisoners as “the fetching, and symbolic repatriation, of the spirits forms part of a body of knowledge of African thoughts about incarceration.”⁵ The process “includes the cleansing of the returning ex-offender, so that the bad experiences of prison can be removed

¹ South African government, ‘Correctional Services Minister Sibusiso Ndebele releases 12 political prisoners from Robben Island’, (22 Mar 2013). <https://www.gov.za/correctional-services-minister-sibusiso-ndebele-releases-12-political-prisoners-robben-island>. [Accessed: 15 October 2018].

² South African government, ‘Correctional Services Minister’, (22 Mar 2013).

³ South African government, ‘Correctional Services Minister’, (22 Mar 2013).

⁴ South African government, ‘Correctional Services Minister’, (22 Mar 2013).

⁵ South African government, ‘Correctional Services Minister’, (22 Mar 2013).

from the new life of the ex-offender. It allows the ex-offender to start his post-prison life on a clean slate.”⁶

The spiritual repatriation ceremony of the 12 political prisoners would be the closest step to providing dignity to the fallen victims and to acknowledge “the tremendous sacrifices made by the many men, and women, who gave their lives for their vision of a democratic South Africa.”⁷ The speech made by the Minister of Correctional Services staked many claims and ensured that the deaths of these prisoners were to be remembered as in the service of the nation. Here, nation-building is clearly projected and the identity of these deceased prisoners take on that of liberation veteran or struggle icon. Apart from this, a claim to Robben Island was made by the Minister as well, once again reaffirming the grand narrative of the nation. He states: “Robben Island is a symbol of the brutality of South Africa's apartheid past, and of the immense courage of those who fought for the country’s freedom.”⁸ Certainly, the Island is cemented as a space and time of apartheid, that has been reconceptualised in the post-apartheid. This reconceptualization is evident in the heralding of freedom fighters and their making of the national narrative as foregrounded by the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and later the National Prosecuting Authority’s (NPA) Missing Persons Task Team (MPTT) which will be discussed.

The apartheid regime in South Africa, which lasted from 1948 to 1994, was characterized by racial ideologies that not only caused segregation between but sought to dehumanize people from races that were not classified as white. A prime example of this would be when detainees from races not classified as white under apartheid often disappeared without a trace or record of where they were laid to rest. Thus, excluding their families from having any knowledge about their loved one’s whereabouts and ensuring that they would not be able to mourn or deliver a proper burial. However, the abolition of apartheid rule in South Africa provided an opportunity for the previously marginalized groups to enquire about their loved ones who lost their lives during the liberation

⁶ South African government, ‘Correctional Services Minister’, (22 Mar 2013).

⁷ South African government, ‘Correctional Services Minister’, (22 Mar 2013).

⁸ South African government, ‘Correctional Services Minister’, (22 Mar 2013).

struggle. The TRC, established in 1996, became a platform and departure point for many of these enquiries. The TRC's mandate period stretched from March 1961 to May 1994 and was set up in order to facilitate the transition from a racially based system of separate development to a non-racial South African state practicing democracy.⁹ Chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and deputy chairman, Alex Boraine, the Commission operated on the basis of restorative justice which emphasised “mechanisms to restore victims and survivors, through reparations policy, state-led acknowledgement of suffering, and a condemnation, together with the transformation, of the system that implemented such widespread forms of abuse.”¹⁰ This was done through hosting public hearings where the victims or their families would testify as well as the perpetrators of the abuses.

South Africa to a certain extent modelled this process based on truth commissions established in Latin America where countries emerged out of either authoritarian rule or rule by dictatorship.¹¹ However, South Africa was the first country to include an amnesty clause in its mandate. This of course was an attempt at to confront and reconcile past injustices in a manner that would assist nation-building so that a unified country would emerge. Although for the families of the Robben Island prisoners, according to Tongo- Cetywayo, the TRC had not been of much assistance to them “some of these families were amongst the thousands who made application as victims of gross violation of human rights through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), but due to limited time and specific mandate given to the TRC, not all the application[s] were investigated.”¹² However, after a few years their cases would be investigated.

The dissolution of the TRC signalled the birth of the National Prosecuting Authority's (NPA) Missing Person's Task Team (MPTT) which came about as a recommendation from the TRC's work. As part of the recommendations and mentioned in the Introduction to this mini-thesis, the MPTT was established around 2004 and their focus is on ‘tracing’, ‘exhuming’ and ‘identifying’

⁹ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Volume 6 (Cape Town: Jutas, 2003), chapter one.

¹⁰ E. Stanley, 'Evaluating the Truth and Reconciliation Commission', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 39, 3 (2001), 526.

¹¹ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Volume 6, chapter 4, 2.

¹² N. Tongo- Cetywayo, 'Preservation and interpretation of intangible cultural heritage in sites associated with cultural significance. A case study of Robben Island Museum/ World Heritage sites', Unpublished Paper (2018), 3.

the bodies of the remaining missing person's cases submitted to the TRC.¹³ In other words, they worked closely with the families of apartheid victims in order to ensure that their remains are located and returned for a dignified reburial.

Through the combined efforts of the NPA's MPTT, the RIM and the relatives of those who died under apartheid, an enquiry into the deaths of twelve former Robben Island prisoners materialized in 2007 when their names were found in the Stikland Cemetery registers. Following this, an exhumation process was put in place in an attempt to restore dignity to the deceased ex-prisoners buried at Stikland Cemetery, also known as Bellville Cemetery. The exhumation process was met with various challenges that eventually led to it being called off and the erection of a memorial was opted for instead.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the significance of the exhumation and reburial which did not take place as well as to discuss the way in which the commemoration of the ex-prisoners took place. This chapter will also provide an overview of Stikland Cemetery. An account about the prisoners will be provided and a look at the exhumation process and its outcomes will be followed by the memorialization of the prisoners. This chapter also aims at exploring the practices of exhumation and reburial conducted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Missing Persons Task Team. It will trace the establishment of these organizations as well as draw on the specific case study of the twelve Robben Island prisoners to outline its practices. The case studies drawn upon reflects the missing state of the liberation fighters and aims at discussing the importance of their stories as well as to highlight any controversies arising from them.

The statement "How much your death matters reflects on the value of your life" by Madeleine Fullard, the head of the Missing Persons Task Team (MPTT) was made in relation to the significance of the deaths of liberation struggle veterans.¹⁴ It alludes to the idea that their deaths should be remembered because of the sacrifices made during apartheid so that generations after

¹³ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines: Missing Persons and skeletons in South Africa', in *Human Remains and Identification*, ed. E. Anstett and J.M. Dreyfus (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 188.

¹⁴ M. Fullard, *Time*, Manuscript. 19 August 2016, 1.

could live in a democratic South Africa free from racial oppression. This notion clearly reflects the situation at Stikland, where a call was made to memorialize the twelve political prisoners because of their contribution to the struggle against apartheid. However, this very notion can be problematized because it downplays who and what these people meant for their loved ones, as they are being commemorated as struggle heroes and the role they played in their loved one's lives is lost. Once again, similarly to the point made about Flora's identity in Chapter One, regarding a blurring of the boundaries of what they were- struggle veterans and political prisoners- with who they were.¹⁵ This limits the scope for commemorating the prisoners outside of the framework of the political, thus, evoking the concept of missingness yet again and the silencing of everyone else who does not fit into the trajectory of the grand narrative of nation building and a unified post-apartheid South Africa.



Part One: The Failed Exhumation

Even though exhumations were not part of the TRC's mandate, the Commission "undertook a number of exhumations [fifty in total] with the aim of providing healing to the families of victims."¹⁶ As Nicky Rousseau points out, the TRC's exhumations "coincided with the internationalization of exhumation and missing person's work."¹⁷ Thus, the Commission's exhumations were to be conducted in a similar manner of that of the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF) who not only conducted exhumations in their country but in many other countries as well. The EAAF pioneered the application of forensic study within the context of human rights.¹⁸ Clyde Snow briefly mentioned in Chapter One, is "the forensic anthropologist famed for his identification of the remains of Tutankhamun and Josef Mengele's skull", who had

¹⁵ J. Edkins, *Missing: Person's and Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), viii.

¹⁶ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Volume 6, chapter 4, 1.

¹⁷ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines: Missing Persons and skeletons in South Africa', 178.

¹⁸ C. Moon, 'Interpreters of the Dead: Forensic Knowledge, Human Remains and the Politics of the Past', *Social and Legal Studies* 22(2) (2013), 149.

“established the EAAF in 1986 and trained the team in forensic techniques for the location, exhumation and identification of the disappeared.”¹⁹ What this meant was that he could influence the type of forensic study that was to be applied in their line of work as “he consolidated his ‘osteobiographic method’ in which he developed and advanced a set of techniques to elicit the ‘biography’ of a crime from a set of human remains”.²⁰ What this means is that the remains are set up in a way to convey evidence of past injustices and clearly speak the language of the scientific experts, as discussed in Chapter One and Two.

In the previous chapters, the archaeological project undertaken during the exhumation and subsequent scientific study of the remains has been critically discussed. At Vergelegen Wine Estate, a success story, the archaeologists and the community worked together to ensure that the reburial of Flora would take place was told. The archaeological project at Vergelegen was praised for their work on the remains called Flora and for their construction of her narrative. On a deeper analysis there seemed to be little to no community engagement during that time. Thus, the archaeological project at Vergelegen went down unquestioned, however, the farm workers became interested in their work and asked to rebury Flora. In terms of the debates emerging from Prestwich Place, Vergelegen may have been contested if it happened post- Prestwich.

In the case of Mapungubwe, the remains unearthed at the site saw the emergence of various claimant groups who opposed further archaeological study in favour of reburial. This interaction was narrated by archaeologists, particularly Innocent Pikirayi, who described a shift from what had occurred at Prestwich Place. Here Pikirayi argued that the archaeologists and the different claimant communities worked together to ensure that a reburial would occur and that archaeologists would have the option to conduct further scientific study on the bones if permission was granted.

Although, he claims that much of the concern of the bones was due to issues of land claims, which

¹⁹ C, Moon, ‘Interpreters of the Dead’, 151.

²⁰ C, Moon, ‘Interpreters of the Dead’, 151.

saw claimant communities drawing on their ethnicities to gain favour. This of course in a sense reaffirmed racist ideologies concerning ethnicity and its past.

Nonetheless, the scientific study of remains conducted by the MPTT, is seemingly unproblematic. Nicky Rousseau and Ciraj Rassool have each highlighted the issue of scientific study and its association with a racist past and examined why this has no impact on the work carried out by the MPTT. Ciraj Rassool's article "Human Remains, the Disciplines of the Dead, and the South African Memorial Complex", traces the work and legacy of archaeologists and anthropologists in South Africa. He argues that within post-apartheid South Africa, the disciplines of the dead (referring to archaeologists, anthropologist and human biologists working with human remains) have tried to move past their associations with racial science and the unethical practices of grave robbing and other means of procuring remains.²¹ He referred to various examples such as the case of Sara Baartman and the remains of Khoekhoe people who have undergone years of racial science and the demeaning exhibition of their bodies to audiences as well as in museums. Of course, this debate had been at the forefront of Prestwich Place, where community members opposed scientific study.

In terms of the TRC and MPTT, Rousseau argues that previously scientific study of remains "produced cause of death and the individual identities of apartheid's violated and dead bodies in the service of the Nation", but the TRC and MPTT's "has been uncontroversial."²² The MPTT's work is largely depicted as humanitarian and thus the critique of scientific study does not seem to carry the same implications it did in previous years and highlighted during the Prestwich Place contestations. Thereby causing Rousseau to argue that the work of the MPTT is "doubly ironic, given that the sanctioned work on skeletal remains of apartheid's dead includes techniques of identification that continue to assign markers of race."²³ Therefore, evidently the work of the MPTT

²¹ C. Rassool. 'Human Remains: Disciplines of the Dead and the South African Memorial Complex' in *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: Economies, Histories, Infrastructures*, ed. D.R. Petersen, K. Guava and C. Rassool (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 133-156.

²² N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines', 189.

²³ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines', 189.

also produces the same injustices of past racial studies.²⁴ Thus, according to Rassool the MPTT as well as the TRC has allowed, “physical anthropology, reframed as forensic anthropology... to present itself as able to deliver the missing body from its history of violation and death and to humanise it through identification, disinterment, and reburial in family cemeteries.”²⁵ The implication of this, as we will see is that “the absent and missing body was produced as evidence, testifying from the grave to apartheid’s atrocity, and later, individually identified, produced as the nation’s hero on whose body freedom rested.”²⁶

The TRC’s first exhumation was not undertaken because of pressure and pleas by the victim’s families but followed the disclosures made by the security forces. This seemed to be the start of a trend whereby the TRC would fashion their exhumations based on perpetrator accounts that may be contentious with regard to whether full disclosure was made or not. Apart from relying on perpetrator testimonies, the MPTT also made use of extensive scientific study as pointed out above. It would appear that the use of forensic expertise is generally accepted in the context of humanitarianism, whereas the previous chapters has played out the critiques of forensic study.

The case of Ntombikayise Priscilla Khubeka, who was abducted and murdered by six members of the Port Natal Security Branch is an example of how perpetrator testimonies can be contested through forensic study. Their testimonies relayed different versions of that fateful night when Khubeka was murdered. One may wonder whether or not anything they told the Commission had an ounce of truth in it. The applicants unanimously claimed that her body had been dumped near her home. Contrary to their statements her remains was found near an informal settlement far from her home.²⁷ Furthermore, the TRC was also able to contest the manner in which she died through the work of the forensic specialists assigned to the case. It was found that she had been shot whereas her perpetrators claimed that she had died due to ‘natural causes’. In effect, the

²⁴ N. Rousseau, ‘Identification, Politics, Disciplines’, 189.

²⁵ C. Rassool, ‘Human Remains: Disciplines of the Dead’, 156.

²⁶ N. Rousseau, ‘Identification, Politics, Disciplines’, 194.

²⁷ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Volume 6, chapter 4, 14.

perpetrators' statements proved to be unreliable and they were not granted amnesty. Thus, it would be science that proved the violent death of Khubeka.

However, the similarities between the EAAF's methods and the TRC's conduct of early exhumations can be said to apply only in writing but not in practice, due to the number of mistakes made by the TRC. This was most visible as the TRC's exhumations lacked the involvement of professionals in the fields of Forensic Anthropology, Archaeology and Pathology, the South African police forensic unit were part of the process but their job was to facilitate the excavation of the grave and had the responsibility of taking photographs of the findings.²⁸ It should come as no surprise then that an audit by the Commission reflecting on their exhumation work revealed many controversies not only in their conduct but in their methods as well. In their 1999 audit, the TRC found serious corroboration issues in at least 20 percent of the cases they examined.²⁹ These corroboration issues led to corpses being incorrectly identified and families given the wrong remains. Thus, the TRC's faulty exhumation procedures "raised the prospect of causing untold anguish for the affected families, undermining the objectives of a truth commission to provide healing through techniques of truth recovery and reparation."³⁰ However, the Commission cannot be solely held accountable for all the irregularities that took place during exhumations as some policemen were not very cooperative with them and by letting families identify skulls proved to be disastrous. In effect, the TRC recognized the errors of their ways and expressed that "exhumations are a powerful mechanism to break the silence and establish truth, they can also do great harm if not conducted properly."³¹ Nonetheless, the Commission also compiled a list of lessons and recommendations for future exhumations. This is evident in the case of Stikland, where controversy surrounding exhumation also occurred.

²⁸ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines', 179.

²⁹ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Volume 6, chapter four, 60.

³⁰ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines', 179.

³¹ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Volume 6, chapter 4, 111.

The MPPT also frame their work to a certain extent with that of the EAAF as pointed out previously.³² The task team has also employed one of the EAAF forensic anthropologists, Claudio Bisso, on a permanent basis to assist with investigating and exhuming the apartheid dead in South Africa. Although, the MPTT has modelled itself after the EAAF as “a team that sees the physical and the forensic work of exhumation and identification as one aspect of a wider collaborative and restorative process with families”, the MPTT’S primary condition when conducting exhumations is the same as the TRC’s whereby their main focus is on a political context.³³ Thus it can be argued that, following Jay Aronson, “the TRC and the MPTT have failed to engage with a broader constellation of missing person’s.”³⁴

Furthermore, both the TRC and MPTT appear to favour the exhumations of guerrillas particularly MK ones although this would later shift, particularly after the Gallows Project which will be discussed. According to Rousseau, all the “TRC exhumations [in particular] were of guerrilla bodies even though they did not constitute the majority of persons reported to the TRC”.³⁵ This seems to suggest that both the TRC may have been one-sided when selecting which cases were to be investigated and which remains were to be exhumed. The same can be said about the MPTT although it denied that they favoured guerrillas in their selection.

The case of Phila Ndwandwe also known as Zandile, her MK alias, depicts how the TRC has favoured guerrilla bodies and how useful perpetrator testimonies are to the Commission as their account led to the discovery of her remains. Prior to the amnesty hearings not much about Ndwandwe’s whereabouts were known apart from the fact that she was suspected to have become an informer of the police and it was believed that they were hiding her.³⁶ However, once the hearing occurred, her perpetrators would narrate what had happened to her. After they abducted her in

³² The MPTT worked alongside the EAAF who were established to examine over 9000 cases of disappeared person’s in Argentina between 1973 and 1983. The EAAF have managed to recover and return the remains from over 100 cases of the disappeared in Argentina and have gone on investigate cases in 30 different countries that are based in the four continents of Latin America, Asia, Europe and Africa. C. Rassool, ‘Human Remains and Disciplines of the Dead’, 140.

³³ N. Rousseau, ‘Identification, Politics, Disciplines’, 188.

³⁴ J.D. Aronson, ‘The Strength’s and Limitations’, 266.

³⁵ N. Rousseau, ‘Identification, Politics, Disciplines’, 184-185.

³⁶ D. Tutu and M. Tutu, *Made for Goodness: and Why This Makes All the Difference*, (London: Rider Books, 2010), 74.

Swaziland, they took her back to South Africa where she was interrogated and left naked for 10 days before they killed her on the Elandskop farm in KwaZulu-Natal.³⁷ She was abducted after two members of her unit had set up a meeting with her and pretended to be loyal to the liberation cause while working for the state security forces by relaying information to them. However, the two askaris (liberation struggle members turned police informers) were not expected to testify at the TRC as the Commission “decided not to force the policemen to divulge the names of the two askaris who had betrayed Phila as they were not directly linked to her murder”.³⁸ This decision, however, was not welcomed by her family members as they felt that the askaris were responsible for her death. Their disclosure of their unjust acts against Ndwandwe and the indication to the TRC where they had buried her resulted in her perpetrators receiving amnesty. What is most apparent in Ndwandwe’s case is that her exhumation was a political spectacle and a prime example of the reconciliation framework that the TRC wanted to put in place by granting amnesty to her perpetrators and providing Ndwandwe with a dignified reburial.

The Stikland case differs remarkably to that of Khubeka and Ndwandwe. In celebration of their 15 years declaration as being a world heritage site, the Robben Island Museum embarked on a research project to commemorate those who died during incarceration at the Island.³⁹ The enquiry into the deaths started in 1997 through interviews with ex-political prisoners, perhaps this was done due to the TRC not being able to assist the political prisoners’ families. These interviews gave insight into the conditions of the prison as well as provided names of individuals who died while serving out their sentences. Apart from an oral history approach, archival research took place as well but was unsuccessful in locating the graves of those who died. However, in 2008, the RIM was contacted by the Mvalwana family who were enquiring about the death and burial of their father and grandfather, Zincwasile Mvalwana, a former Robben Island Prisoner. The grandson of

³⁷ D. Tutu and M. Tutu, *Made for Goodness*, 74.

³⁸ M. Du Preez, *Of Warriors, Lovers, and Prophet’s: Unusual Stories from South Africa’s Past* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 210.

³⁹ N. Tongo-Cetywayo, *Restoring Dignity to the 12 Political Prisoners who died During Incarceration at Robben Island*, Robben Island Museum: Department of Arts and Culture, (2014), 3.

Mvalwana, at a young age, had been told by one of the family's elders that his grandfather had been buried at Stikland Cemetery. This would prove to be pivotal information and

prompted a need for an intense research in order to help the families to find the graves of their loved ones, which in return will help them towards healing, reconciliation, peace and finding closure to their suffering. This research is also in line with what the museum is aiming to communicate to its million visitors – namely truth, reconciliation, peace, transformation and nation building.⁴⁰

Once again, this reaffirmed the grand narrative of nation building in correspondence with the mandate put forward by the TRC.

The MPTT liaised with the City of Cape Town and found several names matching that of the Robben Island prisoners and then informed the RIM. It was the RIM who then continued with the search locally and in 2009, requested permission to explore their burial registers in an attempt to locate Zincwasile Mvalwana as well as other prisoners who may have been buried alongside him.⁴¹ During their search, they discovered the names of Zincwasile Mvalwana and eleven other prisoners namely: Jimmy Simon, Mountain Langben, Lameki Kula, Mlungisi Mqalu, Frank Mani, Rueben Laiwa, Solomon Makisi, Matinise Batyi, Siphon Khhalipha, John Poni and Charlie Mkele in the Stikland Cemetery burial registers.⁴² Following the discovery, relatives of the deceased prisoners were informed by the RIM about the possible location of the graves at Stikland Cemetery. The relatives then expressed a need to have the bodies exhumed in order to provide a dignified burial to their loved ones.

Although, the political affiliations of the Robben Island prisoners are not overtly stated, it would appear that most of them were ANC and PAC members.⁴³ Their political backgrounds do not seem as important compared to the cases of Khubeka and Ndwandwe, nor did the case of the political prisoners rely on perpetrator accounts. It is evident that Stikland presents a unique case but still has similar features as previous cases. The perpetrator in this case is evidently Robben Island in

⁴⁰ N. Tongo-Cetywayo, 'Restoring Dignity', 6.

⁴¹ N. Jassiem-Marcus, 'Memorial for missing prisoners', (2013).

⁴² N. Jassiem-Marcus, 'Memorial for missing prisoners', (2013).

⁴³ N. Tongo-Cetywayo, 'Restoring Dignity to the 12 Political Prisoners who died During Incarceration at Robben Island', Robben Island Museum: Department of Arts and Culture.

its past iterations as a space of imprisonment but that has now been reimagined as a space that “is a universal symbol of hope, solidarity and transformation, a site of spiritual reflection, healing and pilgrimage to the majority of people of South Africa and international people who were touched by its notorious history”.⁴⁴ Its notorious history in this case, would be the dehumanization of the prisoners.

The prisoners were arrested during the 1960s and were sent to Robben Island during 1962 and 1963. Due to apartheid laws and regulations, the remains of the prisoners who died during incarceration on the Island during that time, their remains had not been sent home and only a few records were kept about their death and burials. Thus, these men were buried as paupers leaving families without a clue about their remains whereabouts for over 40 years.⁴⁵

In 2010, the MPTT sent an application to the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) to exhume at Stikland. Although, the Stikland case was investigated long after the TRC had disbanded, the exhumations at Stikland seems to have similar issues to that of the TRC’s early exhumations. Due to the lack of a layout plan, City Parks was requested to determine the approximate position of the graves at Stikland Cemetery.⁴⁶ Following this, three excavations on site began. However, “despite extensive digging, the archaeologists reported that they had not been able to successfully locate and positively identify any of the remains for exhumation purposes.”⁴⁷ The remains that were uncovered at Stikland Cemetery did not match with any of the prisoners. However, the MPTT had managed to positively locate some of the prisoners’ remains but this too had certain complications. This is evident in the case of Siyeta Simon, whereby the MPTT were sure where his remains were but could not exhume as there were two other bodies buried on top of him.⁴⁸ Coupled with this, the soil conditions were entirely different, and the sandiness of the soil meant ongoing possibility of the sides collapsing. However, six years later, the MPTT would be

⁴⁴ N. Tongo-Cetywayo, ‘*Restoring Dignity*’, 2.

⁴⁵ S. Phaliso, ‘Forgotten for 40 years, pauper graves of 1960s Island prisoners uncovered’, (2009). Available Online From: <http://westcapenews.com/?p=836> [Accessed: 15 May 2016].

⁴⁶ City of Cape Town, ‘Memorial to be built in Stikland Cemetery’, (2013).

⁴⁷ City of Cape Town, ‘Memorial to be built in Stikland Cemetery’, (2013).

⁴⁸ S. Phaliso, ‘Forgotten for 40 years’, (2009).

able to exhume bodies that were buried on top of each other, this of course meant that the soil conditions may have been workable.

Between December 2016 and January 2017, the remains of fourteen Pan African Congress military wing (POQO) members were exhumed by the MPTT as part of the Gallows Project which has seen a total of 83 exhumations. The deceased POQO members were political prisoners who were sentenced to death by the apartheid government and were buried in pauper graves at the Mamelodi West cemetery, east of Pretoria. Clearly, there is similarities between the Gallows Project and the RIM one. The prisoners were executed at the then Pretoria Maximum Prison gallows which hung “more than 3 500 prisoners between 1902 and 1989 – 132 of those were political prisoners”.⁴⁹ These exhumations form part of the Gallows Exhumation Project launched by Minister Michael Masutha in 2016, aimed at recovering the remains of the political prisoners who were hanged prior to the suspension of the death penalty in 1990. At least 60 PAC members were hanged in the 1960s. Nine of the fourteen PAC members that were exhumed arise out of the period of intense political protest in Paarl in 1962 when members of Poqo based in the single men’s migrant worker hostels in Mbekweni township undertook a series of campaigns and attacks on suspected informers and white residents.⁵⁰ The period of protest culminated in a mass night time march on the white town of Paarl in November 1962 in which two white people were killed. In all, nine people were killed by the PAC protesters that year. A total of five PAC protestors were shot dead by police.

However, the bodies buried on top of Siyetela’s at Stikland may not have been in any way affiliated to the Robben Island prisoners or the Island itself, which may have resulted in not exhuming his body. Nonetheless, in February 2011, the MPTT informed families that they would end the exhumation process. According to Fullard, “excavating at the site had been difficult because there was no map to guide them, and people who worked at the cemetery during the 1960s had died”.⁵¹

⁴⁹ M. Fullard, *Time*, 3.

⁵⁰ IOL News, ‘PAC members remembered’, (31 August 2017), <https://www.iol.co.za/south-africa/pac-members-remembered-890487#subNavMenu>. Accessed 12 November 2018.

⁵¹ P. Nombembe, ‘Honour for missing 12’, (2013) Available Online From: <http://www.timeslive.co.za/thetimes/2013/02/14/honour-for-missing-12> [Accessed: 20 May 2016].

Furthermore, the environmental conditions made it tough as well due to the quality of the sand and issues with water tunnelling. Thus, Fullard pointed out that the MPTT “didn’t recommend any further excavation because every time we excavate we disturb and change the landscape”.⁵² However, the NPA had recommended that further digging could take place once a historical map has been located but this has not yet materialized.

Part Two: The implications of no exhumation and the reburial script.

For political reburials, the question of “Who is to be included in or excluded from the new national society that is being made?”, is of utmost importance.⁵³ As mentioned above, liberation struggle veterans are usually part and parcel of those who are included in the national society and its narrative. For Rousseau there exists a reburial script which is followed regarding the funerary practices emerging from the work of the TRC and has made its way into the work of the MPTT as well. This script was evident during a 1997 TRC broadcast. Here, Rousseau points out that:

In May 1997, the public broadcaster provided extensive coverage of the first reburial ceremony, rerunning images of the exhumations themselves, showing scenes of skeletal remains – long bones and, most dramatically, a skull, material witnesses from the grave – emerging from the rich brown earth – scenes that journalist Max du Preez predicted would ‘be one of the strongest visual memories of the Truth and Reconciliation process.’⁵⁴

Although, the script in relation to funeral practices have been recorded long before the TRC, however the practice of reburial “has come to be a moment of celebrating the guerrilla, and inscribing the individual identified guerrilla into the pantheon of heroes: the coffin, draped in the organization’s flag, is often guarded by veterans in military fatigues, accompanied by songs of the guerrilla movement.”⁵⁵ Phila Ndwandwe’s reburial ceremony revealed insights into the preference to exhume guerrilla remains as well as the transformation of guerrillas into national hero’s. Her

⁵² P. Nombembe, ‘Honour for missing 12’, (2013).

⁵³ M. Fullard, *Time*, 6.

⁵⁴ N. Rousseau, ‘Identification, Politics, Disciplines’, 180.

⁵⁵ N. Rousseau, ‘Identification, Politics, Disciplines’, 190.

reburial was highly publicized as it was broadcasted on television and many high profiled people such as the then President Nelson Mandela attended the funeral. Mandela's presence at the funeral certainly signified the importance of the funeral and he proclaimed Ndwandwe as being one of the "heroes" of the South African nation that "did not die in vain".⁵⁶ Ndwandwe at that time was the only female guerrilla whose body was exhumed not only indicating her importance in the armed struggle but she can be heralded as one of the most important female figures in the history of South Africa.

Her reburial was not only a spectacle for the public but provided an opportunity for her then nine-year-old son to meet his grandparents for the first time. Ndwandwe's son, Thabang, was awarded with her medal of bravery by the president for the sacrifices she made during the armed struggle and her involvement in the liberation movement.⁵⁷ The powerful images presented at the reburial not only confirmed the importance of a guerrilla status but the short documentary on Ndwandwe's life that was broadcasted on television also confirmed these sentiments. The TRC compiled the documentary that depicted Ndwandwe's exhumation and the events leading up to it. In the documentary, her family found out about her whereabouts when they attended the Amnesty Hearing of her case. The exhumation of her remains seemed to be a traumatic experience for the family as it confirmed that she was indeed dead and seeing her remains was difficult for her family to grasp.

A blue plastic bag was found around the waist of her remains. One of her perpetrators recalled that she had worn it as a panty to maintain her female dignity.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, the documentary provided the opportunity for Phila's family to construct a personal narrative of her. They described the type of person that she was and explained how her disappearance had impacted on them. Her ex-lover and a former Mk militant, Bheki Mabuza also shared his views on Ndwandwe and constructs her as being a tomboy with a good sense of humour. Furthermore, he

⁵⁶ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines', 183.

⁵⁷ D. Tutu and M. Tutu, 'Made for Goodness', 74.

⁵⁸ M. Du Preez, 'Of Warriors, Lovers, and Prophet's', 210.

revealed the he looked after their son after Ndwandwe had disappeared. The documentary certainly spoke volumes about how she was robbed of being a mother to her relatively new-born baby. Ndwandwe's reburial and documentary highlights the importance of having a guerrilla status and can be argued that it overshadows all other disappeared victims who were not militants or had no political affiliation.

Thus, through showcasing this the "TRC exhumations can thus arguably be seen to produce both the nationalist discourse and the need for 'best practice', confirming the script suggested by the dominant literature on transitional justice and exhumation noted earlier."⁵⁹ In terms of Stikland, a different script emerges, due to the fact that the exhumations that occurred had failed thus resulting in no reburial. According to Rousseau, the reburial script can undergo several changes, although the TRC and MPTT are not involved in the reburials. She argues that

it would seem to be the rescripted political funeral for which families now yearn as an appropriate format – or more particularly the struggle funeral rescripted as official funeral, a more ceremonial and tightly scripted affair of state – in which the nation is enjoined to celebrate those who had lived and died for freedom.⁶⁰

However, in the case of Stikland, there was no reburial but the narratives of the twelve prisoners at Robben Island followed a similar script to the cases that had conducted a reburial. Part of this reburial surfaces, emerges the question of "Who is responsible for these deaths, and how should the guilty be brought to justice?"⁶¹ Robben Island itself became the perpetrator of the crimes against the prisoners. The oral history interviews conducted by the RIM Research Unit, has been particularly useful in creating a sense of the manners in which these political prisoners suffered during incarceration. A dominant theme across the interviews related to the poor living and working conditions on the Island as well as the relatively inhumane attitude expressed by the authority when dealing with the prisoners, particularly the sick ones.

⁵⁹ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines', 185.

⁶⁰ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines', 191.

⁶¹ Verdery, K. *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 111.

According to Sedick Isaacs, a former captive, stated that “if you want to see the doctor...you have to prove that you were indeed sick”.⁶² This process entailed just accepting any medication that was provided by the medical professionals and also allowing them to exert physical force on you. Perhaps one could compare this to Foucault’s *‘Birth of the Clinic’* where he writes about who owns the authority over life and death. His argument may be essential in understanding the manner in which the dead body is scrutinized. In his writing, he indicated that the medical gaze that medical experts have over their patients is also “about space, about language, and about death; it is about the act of seeing, the gaze”.⁶³ This depicts the scrutiny that their patients had to endure as they were examined for all kinds of bodily symptoms. As Foucault argues that, the 18th century relationship between the patient and their disease revolves around questions of “What’s the matter with you” but by the 19th century this question evolved into ‘Where does it hurt’.⁶⁴ This for him indicated the emergence of modern medicine.

Indeed, it is no surprise why many prisoners opted to suffer through their ailments instead of seeking medical assistance. Another ex-prisoner, James Ngqondela, noted that “it was mainly being exposed to the brutal conditions that made our comrades to die in prison...Food was horrible...it was on Robben Island that I noticed that people have a tail at the back- because of the skeletal bodied we had at time due to malnutrition”.⁶⁵ In relation to the findings of the conditions of the 12 ex-prisoners, it was discovered through various documents that each of them had died due to natural causes ranging from pulmonary diseases such as tuberculosis, asthma and oesophageal or lung cancer. Some diseases were not listed. We can apply Foucault’s argument to the same scrutiny spoken about the dead body. He argues that the dead body has become a privileged site for understanding and knowing the living. This is in relation to the evidence the dead body produces such as being a symptom of disease. Thus, it would seem as if the prison conditions had directly

⁶² N. Tongo-Cetywayo, *‘Restoring Dignity’*, 7.

⁶³ Z. Crossland, ‘Of Clues and Signs: The Dead Body and Its Evidential Traces’, *American Anthropologists*, 111(1) (2009), 145.

⁶⁴ Z. Crossland, ‘Of Clues and Signs: The Dead Body and Its Evidential Traces’, 145-146.

⁶⁵ N. Tongo-Cetywayo, *‘Restoring Dignity’*, 8.

impacted on the health of the prisoners and the lack of medical assistance and care only made matters worse. Perhaps through this lack of medical care, power was being exerted by the state, as they clearly did not care about the wellbeing of the prisoners. Therefore, as Foucault argues, the body is fabricated into the practices of disciplinary and sovereign power. These notions of power began with sovereign power which was likened to that of God but with the secularisation of society sovereign power shifted to the people in authority and led to disciplinary power as well. This presents the question of who has the power over life and death. Based on this it would appear that the state had the power and enforced it through the conditions at the prison.

As already mentioned above, the families of the Robben Island prisoners enquired about the deaths of their loved ones in the post-apartheid era. However, recovering the dead is not always an easy situation, as physical conditions and time seem to play an important role in this. According to Fullard, the MPPT struggles with “time, the past we seek is frozen, the bones are immobile, wherever they may be. A skeleton disintegrates so slowly that a year won’t make a difference. There are no lives to be saved now. These deaths took place twenty, thirty, forty years ago”.⁶⁶ For the remains, time does not seem to matter. However, for the families, time plays a pivotal role. For many of these families the 40-year wait was too long as many had already passed away or have grown old and sick. Thus, playing out Fullard’s point about the relationship between time and death. She points out, that although the remains will still be there:

within a few years we learn that everyone and everything else is. We’re all departing, corroding, in a relentless entropy. Everything around us is disintegrating, decomposing. Each place we go, everything we touch and every person we meet is unstable, dying off. Our cases may be decades old, but we are in a breathless race against time. Impermanence is our most deadly foe.⁶⁷

This of course speaks to the idea that the work of the MPTT may also come to an end once there are no more families or perpetrators to assist with the cases. Nonetheless, the race against time was

⁶⁶ M. Fullard, *Time*, 5.

⁶⁷ N. Tongo-Cetywayo, *Restoring Dignity*, 9.

clear in the Stikland case. Lameki Kula's (one of the deceased prisoners) sister, Nowethu Sigiba, mentions how she developed high blood pressure at a young age due to her brother's incarceration and death as he was the family breadwinner.⁶⁸ This was not an uncommon occurrence during apartheid, but what made matters worse was that families could not receive reparation after the death of their loved ones at Robben Island due to a lack of knowledge of their whereabouts and in general, a lack of documentation. After apartheid several families were able to receive reparation from the TRC as they had set up a Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee which assisted victims and their families financially and emotionally. However, for many families of the twelve former prisoners, this had been a long-awaited process. One of the deceased prisoner's family in particular had to wait until 2007 before they could receive a special pension's lump sum payment for their father's service during apartheid.⁶⁹

Apart from receiving monetary reparation, for many families the location of the graves provided peace of mind. In particular, Zincwasile Mvalwana's son is a good example of this as he expressed "I am happy to be here today to finally get to see the grave of my father".⁷⁰ Unfortunately, he passed away within two weeks after he visited his father's grave site. Another case saw the RIM Research Unit having to pursue the family of John Poni. They experienced difficulty contacting Poni's family, but this had not stopped them from trying. They sent notices to many churches and even requested various radio stations to mention that they are looking for John Poni's relatives.⁷¹ After several months, a woman named Dokazi Poni had told them that she did not know John Poni personally but her grandfather did, it was his brother. It is clear that the location of the graves of the ex-Robben Island prisoners has played an important role in the lives of their relatives.

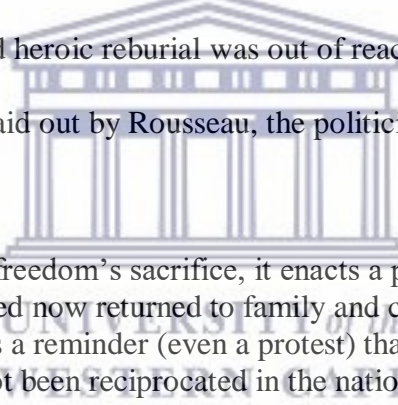
⁶⁸ N. Tongo-Cetywayo, 'Restoring Dignity', 11.

⁶⁹ National Treasury Republic of South Africa letter to Mr. Langben, 'Special Pensions Lump Sum Payment', 20 March 2007.

⁷⁰ N. Tongo-Cetywayo, 'Restoring Dignity', 11.

⁷¹ N. Tongo-Cetywayo, 'Restoring Dignity', 10.

Having already mentioned that the exhumation process had not been successful, its impact on the family members however has been tremendous. In the early stages of the enquiries into the death of the prisoners, the RIM “believed that had finally solved the riddle, with families being ferried to the island to see where their loved ones were incarcerated and where announcements of planned exhumations were made”.⁷² Due to the exhumations not going as planned, the family’s hopes of recovering their loved ones remains were diminished. Robben Island Research Officer, Nolubabalo Tongo-Cetywayo, had also informed the families that the exhumation process may even take longer than 10 years as the previous government had made their job difficult by not keeping record of the relevant documentation for their search. However, the exhumation process was eventually called off in 2011. The news was not received well as many families had hoped to finally rebury their loved ones close to their homes and give them a dignified burial. At this point one, one could argue that the politicized and heroic reburial was out of reach for the Stikland families.⁷³ Of course, according to the script as laid out by Rousseau, the politicized and heroic reburial



calls for a recognition of freedom’s sacrifice, it enacts a proper burial so the missing and unjustly buried now returned to family and community may rest; but in this, it also functions as a reminder (even a protest) that the family bequest to the nation *yet to be* has not been reciprocated in the nation *now present*.

But the Stikland families have lost out on receiving the remains of their families and thus felt like they could not gain closure. The RIM CEO had sympathized with the families and explained that “in African tradition when someone dies family members mourn for the death; perform cultural rituals; and bury the deceased in a dignified and respectful manner. These families are in essence, in search for restoration of human dignity”.⁷⁴ He also mentioned that a meeting would take place in order to find a suitable way forward. The suitable way forward emerged in the form of a spiritual repatriation ceremony and memorial at the Stikland Cemetery.

⁷² P. Nombembe, ‘Honour for missing 12’, (2013).

⁷³ N. Rousseau, ‘Identification, Politics, Disciplines’, 193.

⁷⁴ N. Tongo- Cetywayo, ‘Restoring Dignity’, 12.

However, the demands made by the families leading up to the way forward, follows the script mentioned by Rousseau. Rousseau argues that the script is not as visible with the MPTT as it was with the TRC. She points out that the script takes place after the exhumation as it still gains media coverage.⁷⁵ Of course, the script follows gaining recognition for their loved one's contribution to the liberation struggle, this would include the exhumation and reburial being televised. The families want the closure from having their loved ones heralded as heroes, in a heroes' burial where the South African flag would be draped over their coffins and they would receive a medal for their duties to the country. Even though the MPTT is not directly involved in the reburial processes they are involved in the handover ceremony. As seen in the case of Stikland, the handover ceremony arguably stood in for the lack of positive exhumations as well for the reburial. One could say that the handover became a spectacle similar to that of a reburial. According to Rassool, the handover ceremony is "tied to practices of disinterment/exhumation, forensic identification, and reburial – was now channelled into a spiritual memorial framework of ancestors and indigenous knowledge".⁷⁶ The handover ceremony thus allows for the merging of culture with the funerary practices laid out by the TRC and MPTT. Rousseau highlight's that the handover ceremony even "acquired a status of its own, and in most instances takes place at the premier postapartheid memorial site, Freedom Park".⁷⁷ As mentioned in the first chapter, Freedom Park is a site celebrating those who fought against apartheid. In terms of Stikland the handover ceremony did not take place here but at the cemetery itself. This was an instance of a new script being written.

Part Three: Locating the missing Prisoners

More research needs to be conducted on Stikland Cemetery as well as its memorial site, at present the most elaborate work on the cemetery has only been conducted by Nolubabalo Tongo-Cetywayo. Nonetheless, my journey with Stikland cemetery began in 2016 as an Honours student at the

⁷⁵ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines', 185.

⁷⁶ C. Rassool, 'Human Remains: Disciplines of the Dead', 144.

⁷⁷ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines', 190.

University of the Western Cape (UWC). At the time, I was enrolled in a Visual History course, where I had to write a research essay on a site in Bellville. Due to my Forensic History background, the cemetery seemed like the obvious choice. I was part of the Forensic History reading group since 2015 until the beginning of 2018, as part of this group, our main point of enquiry focused on debates surrounding the TRC, MPTT and thinking about the issue of human remains inside of South Africa and outside to a certain extent. Since then and during that time, much of my research has focused on questions surrounding the remains of slaves but has now extended to different contexts. Thus, Stikland Cemetery appealed to my interests because of the remains of the 12 prisoners and their impact on the living.

Finding information regarding Stikland Cemetery was a rather difficult and time-consuming task. However, it provided an opportunity to embark on a research journey. A trip to the National Library in Cape Town city centre was in order. With high hopes and expectations, only two articles matched the search query of this chapter. The earliest article came from 29 October 1889, in *'Die Burger'*. Through numerous rewinding and forwarding on the micro-film newspaper clipping, a two-line sentence under the births and deaths column mentioned a burial that had taken place at Stikland Cemetery. Refusing to be put off by this, the second article was viewed with much enthusiasm. It was dated the 13th of January, 1948 in the *'Cape Times'*. However, a thorough search could not locate the supposed section on the graveyard. Disappointment was about to settle in but a visit to Cape Division of the National Archives in Roeland Street hindered this. A search on their computerized system located a folder on the cemetery and after a thirty-minute wait, a box containing six files was happily received despite only one being relevant to the question at hand regarding the burial of the 12 prisoners. The Bellville Public Library had also featured in this journey, however, only two articles were found in their special collections section. Interaction with Robben Island staff had provided a set of seven images and a booklet at the time, but I have now received an unpublished paper written by Tongo-Cetywayo. Furthermore, another set of images photographed by the head of the MPTT, Madeleine Fullard was forwarded and documents relating to the prisoners were obtained from Nicky

Rousseau. Lastly, internet searches provided a number of online newspaper articles and a few photographs related to the topic.

The previous designated whites-only Stikland cemetery has experienced many environmental changes during and after the apartheid regime. In a 1947 letter to the Town Clerk, the secretary of the Board of Trustees to the Cape Peninsula Cemeteries requested the establishment of a new cemetery at Stikland. Later on in that year, the *Cape Times* reported that the new cemetery would provide 'adequate burial ground to accommodate the Cape Peninsula's dead for the next 200 years'.⁷⁸ The cemetery was estimated to be ready for use by October 1947, with 'trees and flowering shrubs' as well as '10 different allotments each sub-divided into 46 plots and 312 graves' accompanying it.⁷⁹ However, it would seem as if Stikland is no stranger to vandalism and damage. In 1977, it was reported by '*Die Burger*' that a number of gravestones had been vandalized in the cemetery. Another article, dated 23rd of October 2002, outlined issues such as uncut grass, skew gravestones and broken photographs that still characterized the conditions of the graveyard. It would seem then from this article that vandalism and damage has been an ongoing crisis at the site. However, the environmental conditions since 2002 as mentioned above indicate a turn to revamping the cemetery. These improvements were said to take place through employing more cleaning staff as indicated in the 2002 *Cape Times* article mentioned above. In recent years, specifically 2013, one may couple the vast improvements with the fact that it now hosts a memorial to the former twelve political prisoners from Robben Island.

⁷⁸ Cape Times., '*Sufficient Graves for 200 Years*', Roeland Street Archives. (14 July 1947).

⁷⁹ Cape Times., '*Sufficient Graves for 200 Years*'. (14 July 1947).



Figure 8: The entrance at Stikland (Bellville) Cemetery
(Photographed by Robin-lea Karating)

Before entering the cemetery (figure 8) one sees various signs of life featuring a water fountain surrounded by greenery and fully bloomed flowers that indicate the beauty and growth of nature. Greenery seems to characterize the graveyard; tall lush trees are a prominent feature throughout Stikland Cemetery. The beauty of the cemetery is reminiscent of the beauty at Vergelegen, in terms of the way nature is on full display. The trees and flowers are not the only indication of life at the cemetery, as ants seem to have built a permanent home there for themselves and terrorised visitors to the site, as they climb and bite our skin. Thus, Stikland Cemetery has not only become host to the dead but provided a platform for the manifestation of life as well. This is particularly true when thinking about the memorial itself, as it not only reminds us of the death of the prisoners but allows us to be constantly reminded about their life, their struggle for the freedom of the oppressed majority under apartheid. However, a shooting range opposite the cemetery seems to disturb this tranquillity of life and death. Peace and quiet are usually terms used to describe the atmosphere of graveyards, the final resting place for the body and soul. Thus, the presence of the shooting range seems to be in direct conflict with the perceptions of cemeteries. Apart from this, the burial of the ex-political prisoners at Stikland and their memorialisation presents instances of the prisoners being in a state of missingness.

Jenny Edkins provides a useful understanding of the concept of missing as well as its categorization. For her, there is an intriguing connection between politics and the missing.⁸⁰ This is particularly true when thinking about the reasons relating to the pauper burials of the prisoners' at Stikland Cemetery. As part of their system of oppression, the apartheid government had used pauper burials as a means to cover up the atrocities caused. In this way, enquiry into the deaths during apartheid rule would be a very difficult task. Thus, by being buried in a pauper grave it would seem as if one automatically takes on the identity of the missing. The MPTT works within the framework of how the TRC defined missing persons. However, the TRC's definition of missing automatically gives the impression that it is less serious violation as their category refers to people who went missing during periods of political unrest, during a state emergency or after political rallies.⁸¹ It also included violations whereby a soldier went missing during battle or was kept as a prisoner by rival groups. Indeed, the ex-Robben Island prisoners' do not fall into this category of missing, however conceptually they are described as missing. This is due to the fact that their families had not known what happened to them after their incarceration at the Island. The failed exhumation and the lack of a grave marker, however, the alternative approaches sought by the RIM and the families appears as an attempt to recover their past and rehumanize the prisoners.

After intensive consultation took place between the relevant parties in an attempt to decide on an alternative approach to restore the dignity of those who passed on. Thus, it was decided that the best way to pay homage to the prisoners was through spiritual reparation and the erection of a memorial. During the exhumation and after the representatives of the families were invited to a pilgrimage visit to Robben Island as well as to Stikland Cemetery in order to reconnect with the deceased loved ones.⁸² According to Cetywayo "ordinary people have used the site for healing and finding personal closure in dealing with their painful past."⁸³ Thus, Robben Island has been reimagined as a space for pilgrimage. The first pilgrimage visit took place:

⁸⁰ J. Edkins, *Missing: Persons and Politics*, Introduction, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 14.

⁸¹ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, 32.

⁸² City of Cape Town, 'Memorial to be built in Stikland Cemetery', (2013).

⁸³ N. Tongo- Cetywayo, Preservation and interpretation of intangible cultural heritage, 3.

On the 27th May 2009, [where a] public consultative process took place in a form of pilgrimage where families from various areas of Eastern Cape i.e. Port Elizabeth, King William's Town, Stutterheim, Mdantsane, Uitenhage, Ngcobo and Queenstown were invited to the island, for a spiritual journey in order to be reconnected spiritually with their loved ones. Some former political prisoners were also invited to the pilgrimage to give contextual background about the possibilities of deaths in prison. Bellville Municipal office, particular the Stikland Cemetery officials were amongst the guests'.⁸⁴

Clearly, the pilgrimage visits became a spectacle and can arguably be seen as part of the process of national building and writing the narrative of the exhumation and reburial script. More pilgrimage visits took place between 2009 and 2010 and these would arguably stand in for the reburial. But not much is mentioned concerning how the Stikland families experienced this. Although, a description concerning the pilgrimage visits from the Robben Island ex-political prisoner's families is not available, one can speculate that it could be similar to a prison tour offered to tourists. Although, it has been mentioned by Tsongo-Cetywayo that a ritual was conducted at the site, she does not specify what or how the ritual is conducted. Nonetheless, my experience from a Robben Island tour came back in 2016 as part of my Public History and Tourism class. The Robben Island tour begins at the Nelson Mandela Gateway in the Waterfront, where we collected our tickets and hopped on board the ferry taking us to the Island. Boats are the only means of travel used to visit the Island.⁸⁵ The sea definitely plays a major role in the comfort of the boat ride. My experience of the boat ride was definitely not one I would like to remember.

Nonetheless, my most vivid memory of my visit to the Island revolves around Nelson Mandela and his prison cell. This definitely seems like the primary objective of the tour as it has been described as "Robben Island's famous, or rather infamous, as the holding place for the imprisoned Nelson Mandela".⁸⁶ The marketing of Nelson Mandela as they key figure at the Island is evident throughout the tour. Starting at the pickup point of the boats- the Nelson Mandela Gateway,

⁸⁴ N. Tongo- Cetywayo, Preservation and interpretation of intangible cultural heritage, 5.

⁸⁵ N. Solani, Memory and representation: Robben Island Museum 1997-1999, (MA thesis. UWC: 2000), 81.

⁸⁶ Cape Town Tourism, 'Robben Island', (2016). <http://www.capetown.travel/products/robben-island-museum> [Accessed: 19 October 2016].

the images at the Island, the narratives on the tour and of course the Nelson Mandela prison cell as the go to site at the Island. Thus, silencing the narrative of the other inmates.

My particular tour officially started not on the boat but on our arrival at the Island once seated on the bus used to visit the Island. The bus tour is also known as the village tour and our tour guide on the bus (Lwellyn) was a former resident on the Island and he explained much of the history of the site, its natural and structured environment as well as the political struggles against apartheid. The Island particularly focuses on the period between 1960 and 1991, however, Lwellyn's narrative started as early as 1408 when the Island was used as pantry by Bartholomeus Diaz. After Lwellyn provided a history of the uses of the Island during various era's we moved on to the Sobukwe House. Although we had not toured the house, our guide explained who Robert Sobukwe was, his political affiliation, why he was imprisoned at the Island as well as the terms of his imprisonment. However, Solani points out that the museum has been accused of marginalizing the history of Robert Sobukwe and his former party Pan Africanist Congress because of their ANC-centeredness.⁸⁷ One could entertain this point, as many of the narratives told at the Island revolve around the history of Nelson Mandela and the ANC also a visit to the Sobukwe house is optional whereas a visit to Nelson Mandela's prison cell is a must see and heavily promoted on the tours.

The tour around the Island was not as significant as the tour at the maximum security prison. Although, the narrative at the Lime Quarry again depicted the importance of Nelson Mandela. It was described as the place where the struggle heroes worked particularly Mandela, where the prisoners taught each other and were bonds with warders were made at times. However, the Mandela narrative here focuses on his bad eyesight due to the intense labour conditions at the site and he is also celebrated for leaving the first stone in front of the quarry during the reunion tour of the Island by the prisoners in 1995. Thus one may argue, "in this space, the manner in which its context is presented, leaves one with the impression that its significance lies with Mandela having worked there, the way he led the struggle from this space and the relationship he developed with the

⁸⁷ N. Solani, 'Memory and representation', 91.

prison authorities”.⁸⁸ This Mandela centred narrative is evident during the prison tour as well. For Garuba “by using ex-political prisoners as guides, the audience expects or is led to expect that the narratives will bear traces of the personal experience of the ex-prisoners in all its authenticity and truth”.⁸⁹ The tour guides are expected to provide information concerning the displays in the museum as well as to narrate aspects of their experience at the Island itself. However, it would seem as if they are expected to relay the experiences of Mandela as well.

Once the village tour ended, we stopped at the prison and met up with our prison tour guide Jama, a former political prisoner who told us he was imprisoned because of his role during the Soweto Uprising. He spent 5 years at the prison. There appears to be a debate surrounding the use of scripts by the Robben Island tour guides. Solani and Garuba share different viewpoints on whether the tour guides make use of scripts. For Solani, scripts do not exist as prisoners rely on their own experiences, interactions with other former prisoners and through reading literature they are able to provide a narrative of the prison. However, for Garuba “the idea of pre-scripts, of nationalist narratives and usable pasts, may account for the narratives of the tour guides”.⁹⁰ Thus, it would appear in this instance that the tour guides serve the interest of the Museum as well as the Government, as the Robben Island narrative is one of the liberation struggle which has become part and parcel of our national history. Furthermore, we are told about the everyday life of the prisoners- their diet, recreational activities as well as the conditions of the prison. However, as the tour progressed from section F to section B, the shift from the general narration of the prisoner’s moves to Mandela’s narrative once again. In the courtyard, in section B, we look at photographs of Mandela and others we are then told that he had a garden here where he started writing his autobiography “*Long Walk to Freedom*” and then we proceed to his cell where each tourist is given the opportunity to take a photograph. Throughout the tour, Nelson Mandela is depicted as the hero

⁸⁸ N. Solani, 'Memory and representation', 92.

⁸⁹ H. Garuba, 'Museums, mimesis, and the narratives of the Tour Guides of Robben Island'. In Noëleen Murray et al, *Desire Lines: Space, memory and identity in the post-apartheid city* (London: Routledge, 2007), 5.

⁹⁰ H. Garuba, 'Museums, mimesis, and the narratives of the Tour Guides of Robben Island', 18.

of the nation and the figure responsible for the reconciliation process the country underwent in order to eradicate apartheid. For Solani, Robben Island presents a space “of victory, nation building and reconciliation”⁹¹ due to the legacy of the struggle veterans and Nelson Mandela. I suspect that the pilgrimage tour may not have emphasised on the legacy and influence of Mandela at the site, but it would be difficult to imagine a tour of Robben Island without the narration of Mandela. Therefore, one could argue that, the focus on Nelson Mandela overshadows and reinforces the missing state of the ex-political prisoners buried at Stikland, as during the tour nothing was mentioned about them or the role they played during the liberation struggle.

However, a tour to the Pretoria Central Prison’s Gallows memorial may be an indication of what a pilgrimage tour could be like. The gallows was dismantled in 1996, but it was decided to restore it as a memorial museum and was declared a national heritage site and future plans include opening it to the public.⁹² The journey of the prisoners at the gallows began when they were called into the “feedback room” where an inmate was told he was going to be executed.⁹³ Most prisoners were told that they had seven days left to live before they would be hung. The executions were usually on a Friday at six in the morning. But before reaching their final destination, the inmates would climb the famous fifty-two steps. I was afforded the opportunity on 31 August 2017 to visit the museum alongside two fellow UWC students, Bianca van Laun and Brent Abrahams, Madeleine Fullard and the families of ten deceased PAC political prisoners who were in the process of being exhumed at the Mamelodi Cemetery by the MPTT. Due to the museum not being open to the public because of safety concerns as it is still part of the prison, we entered the site at the back entrance and walked all the way to the beginning of the exhibition. Due to the presence of the families, it did not feel like the usual prison tour and arguably could be seen as a pilgrimage visit similarly to that of the Stikland case. Tears flowed from the onset of the tour and became more intense as we moved

⁹¹ N. Solani, *Memory and representation*, 96.

⁹² IOL News, ‘PAC members remembered’, (31 August 2017), <https://www.iol.co.za/south-africa/pac-members-remembered-890487#subNavMenu>. Accessed 12 November 2018.

⁹³ IOL News, ‘PAC members remembered’, (31 August 2017).

from the chapel where families during apartheid could say their final goodbyes to their family members.

Following this, a chilling walk up the fifty-two stairs which are now numbered as part of the museum. This serving as a reminder of the prisoners literally walking to meet death, a painful experience for the families based on their body language at the time. We were told by the guide, a former prison guard that the prisoners wore a hoodie and dark prison clothes before entering the gallows. Once inside, “a gantry hangs from the ceiling with nooses attached”.⁹⁴ On the trapdoor floor of the gantry are footsteps painted in white, indicating where the prisoners stood before having the nooses tied around their necks. He explains that the trapdoor would open once the nooses were secured on the inmate’s necks.

The room now contains information such as their names and ages, a telephone placed on a table is also on display in the room signifying the last hope prisoners had as a simple phone “call from the president” could save them. However, “it rarely rang”.⁹⁵ Moreover, once the trapdoor opened:

the bodies would hang over the “blood catchment pit” – a big square shallow pool with a drain in the middle. In the corner of the room, you cannot miss a coffin with flowers on top but then you see the cold metal autopsy table in the next room. After the autopsy, the bodies were placed in plain brown wooden coffins and by 9am had been sent down in a lift to the chapel where their families could pay their last respects.⁹⁶

At this point, the visible sign of loss was present in the faces of the families and in the sound of their cries. The most difficult part about this is that the families could not open the coffins and would not know where their family members were to be buried. Thus, prompting the question “why trust that any grave contains what it’s supposed to?”⁹⁷ For the PAC families, this uncertainty has haunted them for fifty-years before the exhumation of their loved ones as it has served as confirmation for the actual passing of their loved ones. The prisoners entered a state of missingness,

⁹⁴ IOL News, ‘PAC members remembered’, (31 August 2017).

⁹⁵ IOL News, ‘PAC members remembered’, (31 August 2017).

⁹⁶ IOL News, ‘PAC members remembered’, (31 August 2017).

⁹⁷ M. Taussig, *Walter Benjamin’s Grave*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 4.

because their families were not able to identify their bodies or know about the whereabouts of their burial similarly to the Stikland case. Therefore, the exhumation and reburial of their loved ones not only confirmed their death but also provided an opportunity for the families to gain closure. The same can be said about the museum tour as the gallows museum presents a sense of authenticity, as one is able to immerse yourself into the shoes of the prisoners and feel connected to them through imagining what it would have been like to experience the harrowing act of being executed.

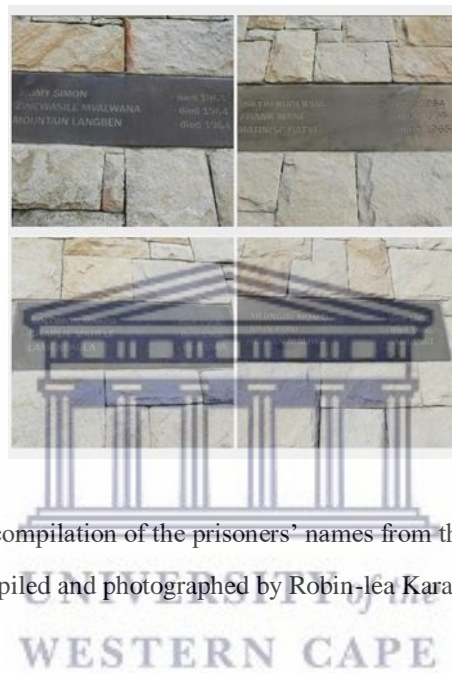
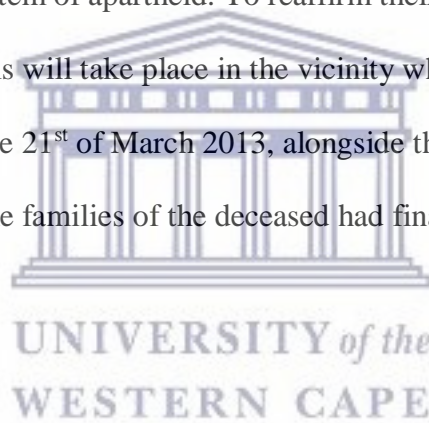


Figure 9: A compilation of the prisoners' names from the memorial.
(Compiled and photographed by Robin-lea Karating)

The issue of naming plays an important role in both prison exhibitions and is also visible at the monuments honouring the political dead at the cemeteries where they are lied to rest. The Stikland cemetery monument is based on the design at the Mamelodi Cemetery which commemorated the Pan Africanist Congress's comrades who were executed during apartheid. The conceptual design and layout of the memorial was decided upon by the RIM and that the pyramid design has both African cultural elements and Egyptian roots or connections thus it was best suited for the architectural design of the monument.⁹⁸ Furthermore, one may derive from the structure of the memorial that its size is meant to be a masterpiece indicating importance and hierarchy. It also serves, to create notions about bravery and ultimately to provide dignity to those who have been

⁹⁸ N. Tongo- Cetywayo, Preservation and interpretation of intangible cultural heritage, 9.

lost. Coupled with this, plaques with the prisoners' names as seen in figure 9, is also meant to rehumanize them, as argued in the previous chapters. However, according to Verdery "reburials revise the past by returning names to the nameless"⁹⁹ this of course did not happen in the case of Stikland. However, the plaque with names and the monument itself intends to fill this void. By adding their names to the monument, this can be seen as an attempt to stand in for the grave marker. Yet because they have a single name and a single body, they present the illusion of having *only one* significance. This, however, does not apply to the prisoners as they have also taken on a collective name as being memorialized as the twelve ex-political prisoners from Robben Island. They have acquired a collective name and share a collective remembrance that not only inscribes them into the memories of their families but also the nation as they are meant to stand in as symbols of the liberation struggle against the system of apartheid. To reaffirm their special status, the City Parks has declared that no further burials will take place in the vicinity where the prisoners were buried. The memorial was unveiled on the 21st of March 2013, alongside the names of the twelve political prisoners. After a 40 year wait, the families of the deceased had finally been able to gain some closure.



Conclusion:

For what seemed to be a never-ending cycle of mourning for many of the families of the twelve deceased ex-Robben Island prisoners', finally came to an end in 2013 when they were able to pay their last respects to their loved ones and commemorate their memories through the erection of a memorial. It was an uphill battle from the beginning, as a lack of documentation due to the previous regime seemed to hamper the hopes of ever discovering the location of the twelve 'missing' and deceased prisoners'. However, through the enquiries by the families and the efforts and research by

⁹⁹ Verdery refers to the nameless bodies found in mass graves as a result of the Yugoslav wars during the 1990's. For her, the nameless dead also become political symbols and through reburial their names are returned to them. K. Verdery, *The Political Lives*, 115.

the RIM together with the MPTT, the location of the prisoners was discovered in the Stikland burial registers.

Although, the subsequent exhumations have not proven to be successful it provided a closer step to the families gaining closure after a 40 year wait to finally know what had happened to their loved ones. However, the events that played out due to the lack of exhumation seems to follow a script as pointed out by Nicky Rousseau whereby the liberation struggle veteran would be inscribed into the national narrative through receiving a medal, having the country's flag draped on their coffin while high profile politicians and the press would be in attendance.¹⁰⁰ This would signal the moment whereby the liberation struggle veteran would be written in as a hero of the nation. The Stikland case would create a new script because of the special circumstances of not being able to have their loved ones disinterred. Because of this, a new script had to be written which would still provide closure to the families.

The erection of the memorial, thus, not only served as a means to restore dignity to the prisoners' but also acted as a means to preserve their memory and to honour and pay tribute to the sacrifices they made. It also provided peace of mind for their families who had been in mourning since their incarceration. Thus, the spiritual repatriation ceremony which took place before the unveiling of the monument served as a replacement for the exhumation and reburial but also become a spectacle and was inscribed into the notion of nation building.

However, similarly to the previous chapters, there are several moments which indicate the missing state of the ex-political prisoners. Through a comparison with the political prisoners who were executed at the Pretoria Central Prison, the Stikland political prisoners had not gained the same type of recognition. The executed prisoners would be part of a memorialization process which saw the Prison becoming a museum to commemorate those who were executed during apartheid. With regards to the Robben Island prison, it seems to commemorate the legacy of Nelson Mandela therefore hardly presenting any knowledge about the Stikland prisoners.

¹⁰⁰ N. Rousseau, 'Identification, Politics, Disciplines', 78.

In terms of the narrative on display at the Gallows Museum, apartheid is clearly made into the perpetrator in this narrative. However, in terms of Stikland, it would seem as if the Robben Island prison itself became the perpetrator. As discussed, the conditions of the prison such as poor hygiene and lack of medicine and food led to the deaths of the prisoners. This however, was one method of ensuring that the state had power over those who opposed the apartheid system.

The legacy of these political prisoners was framed in a way that commemorated them for their service to the nation and thus similarly to Flora's case, they became memorialized for *what* they are and not for *who* they were. Thus, the memorialization as political prisoners and former liberation struggle veterans has rendered them in a state of missingness as they are not able to be remembered outside of this labelling.



Conclusion

The introduction of this mini-thesis has particularly engaged with the narrative of Prestwich Place which was at the forefront of my Honours research paper. The discovery of the slave remains in 2003, at Prestwich Place, caused contests to arise between the developers of the site, archaeologists and the concerned community which claimed descendancy to the remains. Each stakeholder has provided their own opinion regarding the bones, with the developers wanting the bones to be moved elsewhere in order to continue with development, whereas the archaeologists wanted the opportunity to embark on scientific study on the bones which caused the descendant community to oppose both of this and called for the memorialization of the site which in turn led to the archaeologists not gaining permission to excavate further at the site. However, in the end, it would seem as if the developers were the victors of the contestations as the erection of The Rockwell apartments was completed and the remains were moved into an ossuary. My Honours Research Paper argued that through the contestations and the housing of the slaves at the ossuary the slaves went missing as they became invisible to our gaze.

This mini-thesis has used the concepts of missing and missingness to analyse the narratives of Flora at Vergelegen, the Mapungubwe human remains and the ex-political prisoners at Stikland Cemetery. Jenny Edkins work has been particularly helpful in gaining an understanding of the concepts of missing and missingness. While she does not provide a fixed definition of either concept, this mini-thesis has argued that the concept of missing and missingness relates to invisibility and loss or absence. The concept of missing is particularly highlighted through the loss of personhood and identity which has been underscored in all the chapters. Missingness has rather been utilized as the process of becoming invisible or lost, and throughout the chapters this process has been one that has recurred and been continuous.

The making of this thesis has involved site visits and engagement with all kinds of sources and people. All of these were meant to encourage the thinking about exhumation and reburial and

its implication for history writing. Visiting the Vergelegen Wine Estate on numerous occasions only left me with one thought- who was Flora? At the site, she has become ‘the slave foremother’, the symbol of Vergelegen’s long history slavery itself. The estate did not allow for the thinking about Flora outside of the realm of slavery even if this narrative is only on display at the homestead. Outside of the homestead, there is not a shred of Flora, no grave, no grave marker, just a signboard stating Slave Lodge in the middle of nowhere to put it crudely. What does this actually mean for Flora?

Chapter one of this mini-thesis has tried to trace the narrative of the remains-named Flora. It has shown that the reading of her remains has mainly taken on the voice of the archaeologists. Nicky Rousseau’s work on the popularisation of history projects in the 1990’s, has been used to discuss the way in which the archaeologists at Vergelegen used the narrative of slavery to popularize their discipline. This has become apparent through the panel dedicated to Flora inside the exhibition corridor. The way they have written about Flora indicates the popularisation of their work, whereby their work is put on full display. The cabinet containing artefacts from the archaeological dig that took place at the site, is testament to this as well. The emphasis on their work and their narration of Flora’s remains have made her missing, invisible to the gaze outside of her being a slave.

In relation to the debates that emerged out of Prestwich Place, Vergelegen has not seen contestations from a descendant community opposing the scientific study of remains, instead what occurred, was that the farmworker community emerged because of the reburial. The reburial was suggested by the archaeologists which ultimately saw the coming together of the farmworker community to remember slavery at Vergelegen instead of seeing Flora as an ancestor, which had occurred at Prestwich Place, where the concerned community saw themselves as the descendants of slaves.

The same can be said about Mapungubwe, where claimant communities emerged and attached themselves to the remains. However, their motives for this was based on claiming land.

This not only led to the re-emergence of categorizing the remains as ethnic but also led to their state of missingness. Chapter two, has focused on the making of the remains as ethnic and racial and has argued that these inscriptions have overshadowed the significance of the remains. The writing of the remains in racial and ethnic terms have been prevalent since the 1930s and has stood the test of time, as on-going land claims are still going on and are tied to the category of the ethnic.

Apart from this, the voice of Mapungubwe has arguably also been that of the archaeologists, like the situation at Vergelegen. However, the archaeologists particularly Pikirayi has argued that Mapungubwe has learnt from the Prestwich Place saga and has thus worked closely together with the claimant community in order to avoid similar contestations.¹⁰¹ This working together seemingly benefited the archaeologists more as Kashe- Katiye has argued that the remains were not reburied but simply archived.¹⁰² Thus, despite the reburial, the archaeologists have the option of furthering scientific analysis, due to the Mapungubwe remains being neatly tucked away in a fancy box, similarly to the Prestwich remains. This method of reburial not only benefits the archaeologists, but renders the remains missing as a visit to the Mapungubwe Hill, produced no sign of the remains, just as the grave of Flora, showed nothing but a vacant piece of land.

Nonetheless, the discovery of gold objects particularly the Gold Rhino, which not only became the symbol of Mapungubwe but have also led the remains to go missing as it is the narrative of gold and trade that is on full display at the Mapungubwe Collection and replicas of it at the Interpretative Centre. This was most visible, as only one panel is dedicated to the human remains at the Mapungubwe Collection which reinforces Pikirayi's claim that the archaeologists successfully worked together with the claimant communities to ensure the reburial of the remains. It hardly mentioned anything significant about the remains but rather submitted them into a narrative proclaiming the work of archaeology.

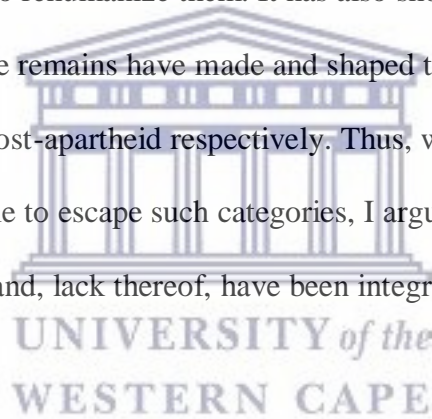
The final chapter is seemingly different from both the previous ones, as no exhumation or reburial took place. However, the spiritual repatriation of the twelve ex-political Robben Island

¹⁰¹ I. Pikirayi, 'What Can Archaeology Do for Society in Southern Africa?', 125.

¹⁰² X. Kashe-Katiya, 'Carefully Hidden Away', 76.

prisoners, appears to have been sufficient enough for their loved ones to gain closure. However, their narrative is also recorded in a way that makes them missing, as they are remembered as liberation struggle veterans and have seen their individual names disappear to take on this collective renaming. Although, the monument singles them out, it is only a signifier of the fact that they are collectively remembered and cannot move away from this. What is evident from this chapter is that the forensic work by the MPTT has not come under scrutiny in the same way that the archaeologists in the previous chapters have particularly that of Mapungubwe. Instead, the MPTT's work is framed as providing an opportunity for a dignified reburial to occur even if the remains are subject to the similar scientific enquiry.

This mini-thesis then has pointed out the many ways in which the remains in each chapter has gone missing despite efforts to rehumanize them. It has also shown that through the modes of memorialization embarked on, the remains have made and shaped the period of time, that of slavery, the precolonial and the post-apartheid respectively. Thus, while seemingly having become markers of time and not being able to escape such categories, I argue that the remains and their reburials, and in the case of Stikland, lack thereof, have been integral in constituting time and its forms.



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