

## **TRUTH OR MEMORY: After the South African TRC, or when the Politics of Forgiveness gives way to Politics of Power/Dominance**

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*The past is never past.  
The past is always present*  
Bruce Springsteen<sup>1</sup>

*The law is also memory; [it] records a long-running conversation, a nation arguing with its conscience.*  
Barack Obama<sup>2</sup>

*The past is foreign country, they do things differently there.*  
Leslie Poles Hartley<sup>3</sup>

Abstract:

This essay looks at some of the ways the South African polity has reacted to and integrated/resisted the legacy of its Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The ideological struggle for the national discourse originated in the reconciliation and democratic constitutional process, but after the Mandela era the changes in discourse have raised questions around nation-building, particularly the 'rainbow' nation and the place on non-racialism as a foundational concept in an integrated society. and the changes in political discourse regarding him is significant in assessing the legacy of the TRC. Drawing on Anderson's Imagined Community, and the debates around myth, shaped by the concept as introduced by Roland Barthes, the paper comes to the conclusion that the mythical power of the founding narrative has been challenged by the way in which the political processes of the South African State have developed. This has consequences for the idea of nation building and reconciliation, and ultimately raises philosophical question regarding the will to power, and the will to truth.

This essay does not aim to be a comprehensive analysis or the critique of the TRC, and looks at the impact of the changing political landscape of the last decade and its impact on reconciliation and 'nation building'. Focusing on the post democratic reconciliation

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<sup>1</sup> Television Documentary 2009

<sup>2</sup> Dreams from my Father

<sup>3</sup> The Go-Between 1953 See Penguin Notes. Often quoted as "The past is another country, they do things differently there."

politics, on the basis of the impact and legacy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission this is but a small snap shot of the painful and yet vibrant history of South Africa.

### History and Memory

*The powerful and sombre tones of the Carl Davis music for the television series World at War is a sound that embodies remembering and history, and encodes for me, the theatre of time. When I first heard them, and reflected on its black and white images of distress and destruction, my own country was embarking on a significant phase in its history of war, the 1976 Soweto riots– one imprinted on my memory in the images, smoke and teargas, with the sound of gun fire and police sirens. These sirens also recall an older memory – of lying in bed as a child in the 1960’s, and hearing the factory siren, which announced the night curfew for blacks to leave the legally defined white group areas in apartheid South Africa. I am still haunted by the memory of these sounds – conflicting emotions in the cauldron of memory: of being tucked up in bed, with suburban comfort and out there is some kind of ‘other’, kept at bay by mysterious systems, beyond the understanding of a child, in a way reflecting something Unheimlich. We are all marked by time, and we cannot escape our particular insertion in history.*

### INTRODUCTION

This essay is concerned with the content of the spaces, both physical and mental, which still reflect the nature of South Africa’s divided past, and looks at the legacy of the TRC as one mechanism seeking to bridge the gap. The foundational myths of the past, which for many South Africans have shaped their understanding of race, culture and identity, have been challenged by the liberation struggle, and then the process of democratization and reconciliation, but the foundational narrative of the new South Africa is has not succeeded in producing a new and collective identity. The TRC and the new constitution were the first steps on that road, but we have not yet come very far. Memory and belonging, recalling the truth of the past and reflecting the current bonds of social solidarity is still fractured and fractious. Ricoeur writes about personal memory and collective memory ( 93 ), and it is my view that the different communities should reflect much more on their own and the shared sense of identity: not nearly enough critical and effective debate in South Africa takes place on these issues, and controversies often impede rather than foster debate.

The foundation of South Africa’s new order is the Constitution, which specifically states that it is a bridge from the troubled past to the democratic future, with reconciliation

through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), as a starting point. The South African TRC process is one of the biggest and most comprehensive attempts to expiate the past and acknowledge the pain and suffering of those oppressed, while attempting to create a framework based in law to deal with the legal position of the perpetrators.

There is an extensive (and burgeoning ) literature on the TRC, and research on its role, achievements and the limitations of its process, as well as its limitation against the broad background of achieving its goals, and playing its role in achieving reconciliation after decades of the divisive and racist policies of race. Some of the problems are that it was set up to deal only with gross human rights violations, in the period of political struggle between 1960 - 1994 – so that it covers those violence and repressive actions that went beyond what even the apartheid legal system formally sanctioned.

Designed to overcome the impact of the excesses of the apartheid policies, it did not aim to address the bigger questions regarding the nature of colonialism and the destruction wreaked by the imposition of capitalism and colonialism on the country. Some analysts are critical of the process regard the narrow focus as insufficient to create the framework of reconciliation and social justice.

One of the problems is that the telling of history is not, and cannot, be commensurate to the lived suffering and loss of people, which leaves us with a narrative, whose origins and authenticity requires interrogation. This asks of us to reflect on the truth and myth in the processed shaping the elusive national identity.

## MYTH

Campbell and Kean states ( 9 ) that “. . .the purpose of myth is to make the world explicable, to magically resolve its problems and contradictions.” Basing my work on Barthes<sup>4</sup>, in relation to myth, some of his ideas can be relied on to lift out the functioning of myth, not least the concept that myth is depoliticised speech ( Barthes 157) He argues that this speech stripped of politics is what enables the myth to appear as ‘natural’ and this characteristic is what enables this kind of speech to function as founding narrative of society, it is lifted out of the arena of struggle, so to speak.<sup>5</sup> Where the exercise of power has not been disguised, the form of speech or sign will appear political, disclosing its goals and this will negate the mythical quality which would have provided it with an ideological weightlessness.

Campbell and Kean further relates the ideas of Ronald Wright (1992) , that “Myth is an arrangement of the past . . . in patterns [that] create and reinforce archetypes so taken for granted, so seemingly axiomatic that we live and die by them.” They remind us that myths make up the narratives in cultures that explain complexities and banish

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<sup>4</sup> While not necessarily adopting the structuralist model.

<sup>5</sup> I disagree with Barthes’ idea that myth is principally a concept referring to bourgeois society, and that the “left’ does not have myth, or at best provides a clumsy myth. The distinction left and right is somewhat 20<sup>th</sup> century, and if there are differences in the utilisation of myth between left and right, it may be attributable to the nature of the power exercised by the political processes related to the differing ideologies.

contradictions. ( 9 ), and refer to Barthes that we should interrogate the ‘falsely obvious’ and be aware of their ideological function, not least because:

“. . . myths alter the past by endowing the shifting, complex processes of history with the appearance of something ‘natural’ and ‘eternal’.”

These functions also refer us to Eagleton (1983, in Campbell & Keane 14 ) where he defines ideology as “those modes of feeling, valuing, perceiving, and believing . . . [that] connect us to the wider structures of power in society in ways that contribute to the reproduction of social power.”

We should also interrogate

“myths and ideologies we see lines of power that have structured and given preferences meanings to particular renditions of the past and privileged certain groups as a result. This is not, however, a simple corrective, for that would imply that a ‘myth’ can be opposed by a ‘truth’. When in fact, culture is more usefully viewed as a series of dynamic and contested forces and interpretations.”  
(Campbell & Kean 10 )

The ‘new’ South Africa has taken its time to come about – in critical theories and whole range of disciplines in the 1980’s, a lot of academic energy went into preparing for the “post-apartheid” society, and the heady days of the 1990’s following the release of Nelson Mandela and the political negotiations started the discourse of new South Africa. The political processes and constitutional conventions created expectations of a break with the past, and a new create a discourse of a new start. According to Ricoeur, “ The beginning is historic. . . the origin is mythic.” (140) To capture this new beginning emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu coined the phrase of the ‘rainbow nation’, but it other than an new sense of multi coloured togetherness, and a relieved optimism, its content has always been as ethereal as a rainbow.

David M Engel ( 1993) also agrees that origin myths

“. . . connect past and present, clarify the meanings of important events, reaffirm core norms and values, and assert particular understandings of social order and individual identity.”

Heasley (2005 10) specifically notes that Anderson has observed: “that there exist myriad styles of imagination”, and Heasley concludes that “the veracity of a national myth is not essential to its importance to a nation; however it is critical that enough people in the polity accept and internalize this myth to make it salient.”

Anderson writes that: “The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them. . . has finite, if elastic, boundaries beyond which lie other nations.” (quoted in Heasley 2005 10 footnote 5)

In the case of South Africa, the process of the negotiated settlement, produced some efforts of reconciliation through the TRC, which is linked to the Constitutional process, which has support and legitimacy, and which in the absence of shared founding myths

has to bear the whole force of uniting the country and its varied communities and individuals.

Other than this commitment to the law, there are very limited current mythical speech which functions to bind "the nation" together. It is interesting to note what Charles Taylor writes that the law defines "...community as those whose freedom it realizes and defends together. . ." (in Drache 7). This warns us that the forces of social solidarity and the imagined community requires not only that imagination, but also that the functioning of legal rights and the legal system will have to be performed in order to sustain the unity of the community.

## HISTORY

We are also the prisoners of history<sup>6</sup> and South Africa consists of a complex mix of populations, with a complex history, much of which has not yet been sufficiently regarded, despite some important museums documenting the previously displaced histories<sup>7</sup>. From the early colonisation (17<sup>th</sup> century), the settler history (17 and 18<sup>th</sup> century), the dawn of the truly British Empire and the struggle for control of the resources (19<sup>th</sup> century) all form the backdrop for the 20<sup>th</sup> century, marked by apartheid, as well as its dismantling.

The vision of apartheid was to limit black political power to separate ethnically defined "nation states", four of which were given nominal independence by South Africa, but these states did not receive any international diplomatic recognition.<sup>8</sup> These political forces, has made the idea of 'nation building' a contested project, given that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century its goal was to built separate, and according to most analysts, artificial nations, utilising the old divide and rule approach. Suspicion around 'nation building' efforts is one of wide spread attitudes which is found in many communities and individuals.

Faced by the winds of change, and the Marxist inspired decolonisation struggles in the second part of the 20th century across Africa, South Africa politics was sucked into the whole Cold War power struggles and debate. In some way what Hobsbawm calls the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Stefan Collini The Independent 14 September 2002)) the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Soviet dominance created the conditions for the democratising of South Africa.

Thus with slavery, colonialism, race, settler nationalism, shaped by ideas of National Socialism, exceptional mineral wealth and industrial development which benefited a few,

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<sup>6</sup> "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please, they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past." Karl Marx (nor adopting the Marxist model)

<sup>7</sup> Slave Museum; the District 6 Museum (Cape Town) and the Apartheid Museum (Johannesburg); Hector Peterson Memorial (Soweto)

<sup>8</sup> These ethnic politics of the apartheid state, has made ethnic nationalism unacceptable to the ANC government, and tensions between different black language groups are underplayed and denied in the current politics. The ethnic issues in the power struggle between Thabo Mbeki and the new party Leader and South African President, Jacob Zuma ( Xhosa – Zulu) are regularly denied by the party.

decolonisation, rebellion of oppressed black minority, issues of other minority and oppressed racial groups, South Africa is the stage for battles around a whole range of grand narratives, and each has a complex history and struggle involved. For individuals who live in the language and social communities who are the protagonists in these grand narratives, it is difficult to know the truth, or a truth about the political history in which they and their families are weaved, and accounts of perpetrators and victims are narrated and recorded.

One of the issues which still has to be effectively negotiated is the relationship between the identity as a 'South African', as it stands in relation to other identity markers – including the particular ideological use of both 'white' and 'black'<sup>9</sup>. Out of the founding documents of the liberation politics and the struggle against Apartheid, the Freedom Charter of 1955 is important, because it stressed an embracing understanding of South African, even if the liberation movements themselves struggled over time towards a non-racial position. By the 1990's and the political settlement process, the position had developed towards a non-exclusionary, position, accepting all races and languages into the unified and new South Africa.<sup>10</sup>

For this essay I have related these identity questions without a deep theoretical foundation, and each and all of these should be interrogated from a critical perspective, and their connection to the powerful forces of colonialism, slavery, industrial capitalism, modernity and the impact of the 20<sup>th</sup> century wars and the Cold War. Many of the components of these identities, and the struggles for (*and the struggles against*) a unified South African identity, probably, it is clear that of the many struggles which shaped South Africa, have the quality of myth, as Barthes describe it, because for many people in South Africa these divisions and categories represent a 'natural division', simply how things are, and in this may still represent the lingering power of the apartheid discourse elevated to uncritical acceptance of created divisions.

## TRC

The goals of Truth Commission has been described by Leebaw ( 98 ) as:

“1) to counter denial and promote accountability; 2) to expand dialogue and open spaces to previously marginalized or silenced people; and 3) to alleviate volatile emotions associated with trauma and the desire for revenge.”

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<sup>9</sup> Black can mean all the groups that are not white, but then it can also be used as African, not including the members of groups who are either mixed or from other heritages, other than white.

<sup>10</sup> To solve the language status issue, the Constitution elevates all 11 languages to the position of 'Official Languages' – but this is a paper tiger, trying to gloss over the very real difficulties in achieving such equivalent official status for all 11, and in particular the fact that investing resources in the previously disadvantaged African languages to create equivalent academic and cultural institutions is a tall order for a relatively poor country, with many pressing social needs. The natural dominance of English because of its use and a world language is of great concern to those who want to protect their indigenous languages, and the loss of prestige and institutional support for Afrikaans, at school and university levels being a burning issue.

The legacy of this process is can be summed up in the following points:

Firstly, its process enables the agreement of the interim Constitution (1993) and the Final Constitution 1996 – this document has enabled the country to move on from its apartheid past, and has gained significant legitimacy in the eyes of most South Africans, even where the third generation rights are still far from being realised for most people, and the implementation of the affirmative action and black economic empowerment goals (sanctioned by the way in which the equality clause is drafted) has led to significant dissatisfaction among whites, who perceives themselves ( and sometime really are) excluded from job opportunities, tendering contracts and other benefits.

Secondly the TRC process, although not fully engaged by many of the whites, (even where they were victims of violence for which liberation soldiers applied for amnesty) and especially not by some members of the Military, and Security Police, but despite this – it is my view that many white South Africans have come to accept that abuses, and gross human rights violations were committed in furthering the state policies of apartheid, and that many of the beneficiaries (but certainly not all) have come to the understanding that there actions were unacceptable and that they violated the rights and dignity of black South Africans. Survey research by James Gibson indicates the acceptance by the majority of South Africans that Apartheid was a crime against humanity.

Thirdly, while not without flaws and limitations, the TRC has addressed the needs of some victims of the state-led oppression of the apartheid system, and that the amnesty process has created the space for some of the perpetrators to come forward, and admit their actions, identifying where victims are buried and bring some relief and closure for the families of these victims. The 21 519 victim statement were found to evidence of 30 384 violations, with almost half declared to be gross violations of human rights, in terms of the reference framework of the TRC. (Van der Merwe and Chapman 152)

Leebaw writes ( 105 ) that

“As reconciliation became a concern for human rights and transitional justice advocacy . . it was redefined to encompass not only the goals of stabilizing and legitimating state authority, but also the aspiration of political community based on consent and shared norms.”

Coundouriotis ( 848 ) notes that the TRC sought to assert the power of through which to restore the dignity of the victims which had been stolen by the illegitimate regime of apartheid. Looking at the impact of the TRC, it is necessary to distinguish between the experiences of the individuals who faced their abusers, the families who heard about the deaths of their loved ones, whose remains were located and returned for burial because of the process, and the impact of the hearings on the wider communities.

The Constitutional processes, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) were understood as mechanisms which would provide for a transformed future in South Africa, but as Leebaw ( 2008 117 – 118) writes:

” . . the assumption of a linear, progressive transitional path has informed the view that if transitional justice institutions succeed in reinforcing approval of compromises and negotiations that frame political change, they will also contribute to the long term goal of cultivating political community based on the principles of human rights and the rule of law.

Instead, as Sriram has observed, “transitional situations. . . are dynamic” and transitional compromises are better understood as serving ‘interim purposes’, rather than permanent goals.” ( Leebaw 2008 118)

The relationship between the Chair of the Commission Bishop Tutu and the ANC government took a battering, when the ANC rejected conclusions regarding human rights abuses in its disciplinary camps, and legal action ensued, with the deputy President (Thabo Mbeki, by then President of the ANC) not attending the handing over of the documents to President Mandela in 1998.

About the South African TRC Ricoeur concludes ( at 484 ) “ . . it is perhaps expecting too much from this unprecedented experience to ask to what extent the protagonists progressed along the path toward genuine forgiveness . . . inviting us to consider the limits inherent in a project of conciliation like this.”

Michael Ignatieff holds that “ all a truth commission can achieve is to reduce the number of lies that can be circulated unchallenged in a public discourse, ( in Van der Merwe & Chapman 147) and although Gerhard Mare has stated that the TRC had all but disappeared from public discourse by 2005, the six volume final reports have played a role in shaping some aspects of the reconciliation in South Africa. The question is, what is next, what comes after a TRC?

In the conclusions of the TRC the goal is set to develop memorialising projects, and I will look at the Freedom Park, and the way it has been perceived, later in the essay.

#### RETURN TO A POLITICS OF POWER

The striking difference between the Presidencies of Nelson Mandela (1994 – 1999) and Thabo Mbeki (1999 – until his recall by the Party in 2009) is captured by Gevisser (707) who relates that Mandela spontaneously said in Afrikaans on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1994 at his inauguration

*“Laat ons die verlede vergeet! Wat verby is is verby! (Let us forget the past! What’s done is done”).*

The rhetoric of Mbeki in 1999 was very different:

*“The memory of apartheid is fading and perhaps there is too much forgiveness. I think we should be angry about our history of enslavement of our people, about colonisation, and angry about apartheid.”*

One can also read this change into the two nations concept which President Mbeki elaborated at the opening of parliament in 1998. Political and politicising processes and the policy choices made by the governing has been interpreted by some as undermining the commitment to reconciliation, and some of their foreign policy decision have been described as undermining human rights and efforts to promote social justice.<sup>11</sup>

The way in which Black Economic Empowerment and affirmative action have been implemented in practice, has allowed minority groups to raise questions about the commitment to equality for all, and for the ideas of non-racialism<sup>12</sup>.

At the heart of the problem are issues which the TRC could not solve: Coundouriotis writes that (852):

“In a situation where racism and its explicit denigration of groups underpins the political structure, asserting the dignity of one’s culture, whether through cultural or political nationalism, becomes urgent.”

This however raised the thorny issue of the functioning of nationalism and the myths attendant upon it, and the political effect, the exclusionary forces at work which then draws the protective boundary around this stigmatised group, and the denigrated identity. The urgency through which the identity is protected raises risks of shunning those outside it, and when it becomes interlinked to a political power structure, there can be problematic consequences

Mbeki’s “Two Nation” Speech:

In his speech at the opening of parliament in 1998, as deputy President, Thabo Mbeki specifically addressed the issue of “Reconciliation and Nation Building”. He started by outlining the constitutional role of reconciliation and unity in diversity, stating the goals of non-racialism (amongst others), but went on to make the finding that at that time we were not making progress as rapidly as we should: while calling for the building of a common nationhood and shared destiny, he introduced the notion of “two nations” which for many marked out the departure from the Mandela politics of forgiveness, to a very different approach;

“South Africa is country of two nations . . . one nation is white, and prosperous, . . .the second is black and poor. . . .

He went on to argue that this constituted a material base which reinforced the notion that we are not one nation but two nations, and he continued, “and neither are we becoming one nation.”

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<sup>11</sup> The policies of the ANC government in relation to Robert Mugabe and Zimbabwe, its stance on Burma in international forums, and its apparent agreement with the African Union, opposing the International Criminal Court about Sudan, decisions reportedly based some notion of solidarity with Africa, or with developing nations *vis-a-vis* the West, has raised questions about the content of its understanding of human rights and social justice.

<sup>12</sup> Each of these a challenging topic on its own.

While the disparities between different groups can be economical and sociologically quantified, and there are real problems which had not been overcome in 5 years of democracy ( and it now can be added in almost 15 years of democracy ) - the effect of the 'two nation' speech was political, and in sense marked the end of the rainbow myth. The rainbow myth certainly had to be scrutinized much more critically, and the debate should have moved to a more critical and self reflective process, but by creating the stark contract between white and black nations, Mbeki reinforced the divisions of the past in political discourse, which does not critically reflect on the complexity of what either white or black means in the South African society. This is the kind of 'obviously false' which Barthes warned require further interrogation and an awareness of its ideological function. This ideology of two nations had, in my view a chilling effect on achieving the goal of non-racialism. In order to achieve this goal, there has to be critical discussion debate, and much more analysis, and the new kind of politics of power stifled debate.

In the complex history of South Africa, the idea of one black nation is the political ideology of the ANC, formed in opposition to the divisive colonial and apartheid policies, but in the manner utilized it shaped an oppositional binary, already encoded by our past, and the foundational myths of the past, getting in way of a new foundational discourse, which could unite South Africans without denying the social reality of inequality and the goal to eradicate them.

#### NATIONAL SYMBOLS AND IDEOLOGIES

It cannot be denied that South Africans are obsessed with sport, and it plays a major role in shaping our imagined (and contested) national identity. The appearance of Nelson Mandela at the Rugby World Cup in 1995, wearing a Springbok jersey played an important role in creating an openness for a 'new' South African identity – in my rural town, there were white kids on the back of 'bakkies' (utilities, pick up trucks) charging up and down in celebration of the South African victory, even the next day in really cold weather – but flying the new flag. I remembered thinking at the time, there is hope for a non-racial, united future. But as McKaiser writes in the Business Day (July 2009), now 14 years later, in the run up to the FIFA 2010 Soccer World Cup, that there is a risk in the "One Nation" diet: It can lead to a false, and unsustainable sense of national unity: there is an "explicit rehash of the rainbow nation narrative . . . [giving] the illusion that race relations are solid." They are in fact expressed through advertising campaigns of the corporate world, and he concludes: "we should stop faking unity."

In 2009 there is in fact no unifying myth, because myth operates with a kind of force, has inherent power, and there is none in this shallow commercial discourse, we are not united citizens of a complex but communicating polity, just consumers of empty rhetoric, a kind of kitsch,<sup>13</sup> which is not commensurate to the challenges of our past, its lingering divisive myths and we lack the cultural tools needed to bring about authentic reconciliation and

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<sup>13</sup> With the prospect of a whole year the same kind of faked-national-unity-through-sport advertising discourse relentlessly pouring over the South African consumers, until the World Cup in June July 2010 (unless the crisis at the public broadcaster spares us from more advertising)

social justice in the long term, where (as Taylor says in Drache 7) the law will serve the community whose freedoms are realized and defended together.

As time moves forward, it is not so much the deniability, but the relevance of this oppression of the past that becomes an issue: When one is talking about those who actually perpetrated abuses, and the supporters of the regime that sanctioned these abuses, there are complex issues: Beatrice Sandberg, in relation to the War and the Holocaust or Shoa writes that for a long time it was a taboo topic “. . . because they were associated with feelings of guilt and shame on the perpetrators side, and suffering and sorrow on the part of the victims.” The problem is that the history of the oppressor, is also history, it is also a truth, and the question is who has the power, or who should have the power to suppress and make choices regarding that discourse, and this process calls for engagement, and critical debate: not selective amnesia. Examples are the naming of places, and the artifacts and monuments of that past.

In South Africa, the TRC played a role in the constitutional process, and at some level it changed how a significant number of South Africans who supported apartheid policies and participated in the execution of those policies think about it in retrospect, but the beyond this, many issues remain open and unconsidered.

Many white South Africans would however agree with the removal of names that are offensive and culturally insensitive, and many of the streets bearing the names of apartheid politicians are have been changed and conveniently forgotten. There are however place names which have a cultural resonance for the settler community, and the loss of which fuels a sense of exclusion, leaving them feeling diminished. Whether these issues, like the name of the South African capital Pretoria, located in the metropolitan area of Tswane, can be resolved, and create a sense of unity becomes an argument about history, and where it is resolved through the exercise of political power, which may satisfy the legitimate demands of the political majority but leaves the potential for a counterpublic. (Drache 7) For many black South Africans, the terms “Pretoria” and “Apartheid” are linked, and the public broadcaster (SABC) has been referring to the capital as Tswane, but this has not legally been registered as the name of the capital, prompting protests from those groups who regard Pretoria as the historical name reflecting their history.

The political and legal identity of the new South Africa is shaped by the Constitution, and to a limited extent this provides a founding narrative and national myth and identity – but in my view it is rather thin. Even where one is critical on nation building, and the generation of problem solving myths in the collective identity, the absence of shared norms, and the inability to find focus points of social solidarity carry risks for the cohesion of a society.

One of the recommendations of the truth Commission was the building of public memorializing projects. The Freedom Park in Tswane (Pretoria?) is a striking complex with walls bearing the names of those who died for freedom in our various struggle,

appropriately taking history way back before the advent of colonialism, and the 'discoveries' of the merchant crusaders of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century.

One of the issues which developed around this memorial was the exclusion of the names of the soldiers who died while fighting for the South African Defence Force, defending apartheid, occupying Namibia and invading Angola. ( Baines 214 ) The fact that the names of Cuban soldiers who died in Angola fighting the SADF are commemorated raised particular ire among certain groups. Although my first reaction was to agree with this exclusion, I came to reflect on the problem of building national memorials which specifically excludes members of a particular community, who died fighting for what they believed in. The matter has become so politicised, that it undermines the idea of one nation coming together, something already under threat by the political style of the previous president ( Thabo Mbeki)

Ironically, this memorial and the Voortrekker Monument are on hills facing each other outside Pretoria ( In Tswane) In one of the major daily Afrikaans newspapers, the view was expressed that the exclusions is a denial of the bigger ideal of the Freedom Park, that of "inclusivity and respect for each other's history" ( Tim du Plessis Beeld 19 March 2009, my translation) I was quite shocked by the vehemence in which opposition was expressed<sup>14</sup>, and the author coming to the conclusion that this memorialising project is : " "the ANC Theme park, the "Disneyland" of its history."

These, and other controversies show that the nature of the post-conflict resolution in South Africa will have to move on from the TRC, and find ways to manage these disagreements that will achieve a sense on integration and unity, in reality, even if it must be done through myth.

## CONCLUSION

Drache ( 10 ) writes that " Creating a successful politics of inclusion is a high maintenance high risk activity . . . the causal links between the politics of forgiveness and social justice are not easily forged.

The way forward he offers draws on the ideas of a politics of self-recognition ( referring to Yves Charles Zarka and Charles Taylor ( Drache 11) Because of what he calls 'counterpublics', (which can also operate a global level) the state " no longer holds a monopoly on official remembering, . ." ( 12) .

Finding the balance in processes of reconciliation , through dealing with counterpublics, and the debates in the society, is as I hope to have shown, complicated by the ongoing

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<sup>14</sup> In a reply to this column, Louw commented on the fact that South African have learned to live 'ironically' and not to express views which they feel that others may perceive as politically incorrect. In some ways it is progress when people do not express stigmatizing views of other groups and cultures in public discourse, but if it becomes a hidden language, a private discourse in which the foundational myths of the previous regime can continue to flourish, with only progressive compliance feigned in what is perceived in the public domain, then true reconciliation and unity can never become viable.

political discourse in a society, and it may be necessary to remind ourselves of the words of Ricoeur (1989) we need to “. . . avoid compounding the excesses of combat with the excesses of justice.”

In the end, the citizen/reader will also be confronted with the challenges to identity, without being offered a neat solution. In discussing Foucault, Habermas (in Kelly 58) quotes from Foucault’s “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”:

“Where the soul pretends unification, or the self fabricates a coherent identity, the genealogist sets out to study the hegemony. . . The analysis of descent permits the dissociation of self, its recognition and displacement as an empty synthesis, in liberating a profusion of lost events.”

Habermas comments on the fact that this Foucauldian attack on historiography is an approach which “excludes the idea of reconciliation”; it denounces the kind of history “that attributes a form of reconciliation to all the displacements of the past.” (Kelly 60) There is no totalising history in this approach. Such forms of critical knowledge which reject the possibility of a reconciled and tabulated history, but debates around dissolving the historical subject is very academic and of little use to people who are still struggling to reconcile the violence of their existing identities into a newer collective identity.

Without new foundational narrative myths the new identity will struggle to come into being, and yet we need to be critical of those very myths, because they are manufactured by the social and political discourses, expressing ideologies of the wider structures of power in society (Eagleton 1983, in Campbell & Keane 14 )

The successful application of a mythical founding narrative may enable the processes of reconciliation and create conditions in which to work for social justice but it is also possible that shaping such a totalising national discourse may not a realistic project for history, or for the state, and that truth commissions cannot in fact provide the Truth, let alone reconcile.

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