DECONSTRUCTING MUSEUMS AND MEMORIALS IN PRE- AND POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

by

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Declaration

I declare that *Deconstructing Museums and Memorials in Pre- and Post-apartheid South Africa* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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(Ms Tamara L Meents)   Date

Summary

Title:

Deconstructing Museums and Memorials in Pre- and Post-apartheid South Africa

Summary:

This study examines the ways in which museums and memorials within South African society commemorate events of the past. Various examples of museums and memorials are chosen and identified according to the ways in which they embody postmodern or modern thought. Postmodern and modern museums are deconstructed according to various post-structural tenets so as to arrive at a broader understanding on how they are able to remain a continuously relevant and vital part of contemporary society.

List of Key Terms:

Post-structuralism; Structuralism; Postmodernism; Modernism;
Deconstruction; Différance; Signs; Hierarchical Binaries; Othering;
Bricoleur; Engineer; Metaphor; Reconstruction; Text; Narrative;
Meta-narrative.

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Preface

I would like to thank the people who have been instrumental in my studies.

Firstly, to my supervisor Professor Frikkie Potgieter, for his invaluable patience and support, and for providing me with a tremendous amount of guidance throughout the entire course of this study.

Secondly, thanks go to my family and friends who have supported and encouraged me along the way.

This study in its nascent form evolved from a wish to gain a deeper understanding on the necessity for commemoration, be it personal or communal, after a traumatic and life-changing event. It is for this reason that I dedicate this study to my grandparents, survivors of the holocaust.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 AN INTRODUCTION TO COMMEMORATION WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA

Academic studies on commemoration are both relevant and timely as they come at a time in which South Africa as a nation can be described as defining and re-defining itself against the backdrop of apartheid. There is a significant need to find vital ways in which to commemorate the past, as many official museums from the past, established before and during apartheid, no longer seem relevant in the post-apartheid landscape; their capabilities and the ideals for which they once stood have become outdated and no longer endorse the views of the present. Seen from a certain perspective, the content and ideals that are embodied in these monuments and memorials have become outlandish reminders of a past that is distasteful to many South Africans. Seen from another perspective, one that this study argues for, even these outdated monuments can retain contemporary relevance.

This study investigates the notion of commemoration within the post-apartheid landscape and explores the question of what enables various memorial sites, both "old" and "new", to remain relevant and vital within society. As demonstrated in historian Mumford's (1938:438) statement when he pronounced "the death of the monument", monuments within contemporary society can very often turn into sites that solidify the past, and close themselves off from the public. Historian Young (1992:272) states of Mumford's vision: "the very notion of the museum and memorial resists the very notion of commemoration, which is the potential for renewal and rejuvenation". By this one can see that Young differentiates between "the museum and memorial" and the process of "commemoration". The very idea integral to commemoration, which suggests an ongoing remembering of the past, implies a continual and active process. For Young the museum and memorial cuts off this process of commemoration, rendering it useless and

irrelevant.

I investigate the notion of a memorial site that *is* able to embody the possibility for "renewal and rejuvenation". I support the view that for a process of commemoration to remain valid and relevant within contemporary society, the memorial site should be a self-reflective site that is receptive to as well as enables continual regeneration. For this to happen, I argue that commemoration must allow for the possibility of the continual creation of meaning and interpretation from its public. In my view this would mean the potential for the public to interact and engage with the memorial site. The site then does not remain a two-dimensional closed and rigid exhibit of past events, but instead becomes a three-dimensional site that is open, engaging and flexible to the public's views and thoughts.

In this way, this study argues for a memorial site that is able to remain receptive to its viewers as opposed to a museum that reduces its viewers to passive spectators. Young (1992:72) states "the surest engagement with memory lies in its perpetual irresolution". This study emphasizes that this statement lies at the heart of an engaged and open commemoration, an "irresolution" that defies closure as well as definition; a commemoration that is constantly *in the making*. This challenges a notion of the memorial site that asserts an illusion of permanence and continuity, wherein the past is solidified into one truth.

Novelist Kundera (1988:25) states of truth in his work entitled *Art of the novel* (1988), "the world of one single Truth and the relative, ambiguous world of the novel are moulded of entirely different substances. Totalitarian Truth excludes relativity, doubt, questioning; it can never accommodate what I would call the *spirit of the novel*" [emphasis in original]. Similarly, the memorial site that enables an active and vital commemoration encourages "doubt", "ambiguity"

and "questioning", by offering a space in which multiple dialogues can take place.

The need for a mode of commemoration that enables a process of "doubt" and "questioning" is one that this study endorses. This is particularly important as South Africa stands at a point where a certain white-washing of the past can be seen as a means of creating a redemptive and inclusive future with the grand aim of nation-building. Grunebaum-Ralph in her work *Re-placing pasts, forgetting presents: narrative, place and memory in the time of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (2001), argues that the atmosphere created by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission profoundly affected the heritage industry in South Africa. She writes (2001:199):

> The official consecration of cultural and political heritage sites such as Robben Island resonates with a new commemorative ethos on the basis of which the remembrance and celebration of a past projecting values of an inclusive and polyphonic 'multiculturalism' is promoted as an underpinning to new public histories.

I examine the ways in which the process of commemoration is one that is able to remain open to the narrative of the people and the individual without becoming lost or redundant within a fixed ideology; be it apartheid discourse or the discourse of the "polyphonic" New South Africa. This study focuses on how commemoration is able to remain a vital and enriching process that resists suppression or closure *at any point*.

For the memorial site to remain open within society, I argue for a postmodern approach to commemoration. The postmodern approach would allow the text of the museum and memorial to remain receptive to the possibility for interpretation and refute the modern notion of closure. In this way the site

would remain an engaging site within the community. The postmodern view of commemoration encourages the participation of individuals in the production of its meaning. Visitors to the memorial site are actively involved in the process of commemoration, as opposed to the modern notion of commemoration wherein visitors are on the passive receiving end of information.

I believe that the need to approach commemoration from a postmodern rather than modern view is particularly significant in the new South Africa, as the postmodern approach provides us with a very different experience to that of official apartheid discourse where truth was disseminated as sacred and absolute.

It is for this reason that this study argues for a postmodern approach to commemoration, as it seeks to expose the notion of commemoration that conceals beliefs and ideologies behind the mask of objectivity and one truth. My understanding of the postmodern view of commemoration is that it is able to encourage the participation of individuals in the production of its meaning as opposed to the modern notion of commemoration wherein individuals receive immediate and unquestionable truths. According to postmodernism, there are various authentic representations of the past. Provisionally stated, one can say that there is not one objective truth to the past, yet there are various ways in which one can describe and commemorate the past.

In investigating the postmodern notion of commemoration that is able to remain a process that encourages various narratives and interpretations of the past, this study explores the relevance and central role of language in our thinking and understanding of reality and the past. I look at post-structural language theories, as a means to arrive at a fuller and deeper understanding with which the museum and memorial is able to remain a site that encourages

the *process* of change. I will now prepare the ground for an explanation of post-structural language theory which follows in the next chapter. In so doing I will briefly explore how post-structural theories of languages are able to recognize the vital role that language plays in our thinking and understanding of reality.

According to post-structural thinkers, language inherently affects the way we understand and conceive of the world and in this way directly mediates and orders our sense of history and reality. All human experience is subject to language as language structures our interpretation of the world. Derrida states that language shapes us: "texts create a medium through which we understand our reality" (Derrida in Degenaar 1986:60).

It is proposed that language is not simply words on paper, but can also be applied to artefacts such as buildings and paintings, and in this dissertation I apply it to the sphere of commemoration within museums and memorials. One way in which a person makes signification is through what she/he creates. A monument's meaning comes from its making, culture, syntax, and from the immutable qualities of humans. I therefore propose that language can be extended to all symbolic significations that create meaning, such as museums and memorials. The post-structural explanation of the way discursive language functions as a system of signification can be applied to memorials and museums.

The process of commemoration is shaped through what has been written or spoken about events of the past. Young states in the introduction to his work *Writing and rewriting the Holocaust: narrative and the consequences of interpretation* (1990) "what is remembered of the Holocaust depends on how it is remembered, and how events are remembered depends in turn on the texts now giving them form". These texts can take the form of personal

diaries, biographies, historical documents or oral recordings of accounts of the past. They may also take the form of visual images, such as photographs or various relics from the past within a museum, which in turn are arranged and explained utilising language. One can say therefore that history is thus inaccessible without the use of language. Events of the past remain unattainable without the language with which to remember and record the past. I argue that in this way history and language are intrinsically connected; the past can only be represented through language. As Sapir (1949:162) states:

> Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the social activity as ordinarily understood but are very much at the mercy of a particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection… We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.

Without utilising discursive as well as visual language to commemorate the past, we have no access to past events. Thus our interpretation of past events is integrally tied to the language utilized to record it.

Language becomes central and crucial to our understanding of the ways in which museums and memorials commemorate the past. Stated otherwise, although artefacts and documents from the past such as monuments and books exist in the present, what counts is the manner in which we interpret such objects from the past, and for interpretation to take place, we in a manner of speaking, do so *through* the language we use in the present. What Wittgenstein (2009:177) says of context: "the use of a word is the way it is used in the sentence structure" denotes that the meaning of a word is dependent on its context. This applies equally to memorials in that the

meaning of a memorial is its use in a context. This emphasizes that not even objects from the past have an authenticity that transcends the present. The meaning of the memorial site is integrally tied to the way in which contemporary culture approaches the site.

The recognition that language shapes and creates our reality as well as how we represent the past, means that we do not receive immediate truths of our reality or our past. Post-structuralism recognizes that all our experiences and interpretations are mediated through language, including our notion of history, as well as our representation of it. In one of post-structuralism's most-quoted phrases, Derrida declares in his *Of grammatology* (1998), "there is no outside-the-text" (1998:158). While Derrida is principally interested in revealing the internal contradictions of philosophy based upon binary divisions, his statement also suggests the impossibility of finding an external and objective truth, not only in a philosophical sense but also in terms of a historical reference.

With this is mind, through a post-structural lens, this study argues that by not propagating for one single and objective truth, but by allowing for differing narratives and accounts of the past, we are able to open up our memorial sites so that they are able to remain sites of rejuvenation and change. As will be explained, it is through post-structuralism that museums and memorials are able to become open and engaging sites that encourage the process of renewal.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

This study divides various South African memorials and museums into two categories, modern memorials and museums and postmodern memorials and museums. In each category there are certain defining characteristics. Briefly

put, in the former, the museums and memorials attempt a closure of the past, and in the latter, the museums and memorials allow for differing interpretations of the past.

Various deconstructive techniques are employed so as to investigate how the museums and memorials embrace or challenge modern ideologies. What is significant within this study is the notion that where postmodern museums are generally in themselves deconstructive, modern museums are also able to remain relevant and vital sites when approached through the post-structural lens. It is for this reason that in deconstructing various examples of modern museums, the process of deconstruction becomes one of reconstruction. In this way I will show that the modern museums explored, manage to remain a pertinent and valuable focus for debate within the public sphere.

This study focuses on the following three deconstructive strategies, which are applied to four memorial sites:

1. The notion of Derrida's hierarchical binaries is explored and how this is played out within the South African Museum (SAM) as well as the exhibit entitled *Miscast: negotiating the presence of the bushmen* (Miscast) curated by Pippa Skotnes, and opened in April 1996;
2. The notion of "little" narratives as embraced within the District Six Museum, which counter the totalising meta-narrative of official apartheid discourse;
3. The post-structural idea of metaphor and the potential for different sign signification within a text. This deconstructs the previously official text of the Voortrekker Monument and allows for a potential reconstruction within the Voortrekker Monument.

By investigating these memorial sites through these three deconstructive strategies, I investigate how memorial sites within South Africa are able to

embody the process of revitalisation and rejuvenation. In so doing these sites are able to remain relevant and integral to contemporary society. What is significant to note, as I will demonstrate, is that the memorial itself does not alone remember. It is the participation and projection of memory into the space that makes it a living memorial.

This study demonstrates by looking at the typically modern examples of the SAM and the Voortrekker Monument that the material from which the monument is constructed, is chosen to withstand the ravages of time. This assumes that what the monument contains and commemorates will remain everlasting in its form. But as Mumford (1938:438) has asserted, the consequence of a monument's unyielding fixedness also results in a demise over time. The fixed and rigid image created in one period's ideologies and brought over into a new period appears outmoded, strange and irrelevant to a contemporary society's values, and thoughts, as can be seen in these two memorials. Thus modernism's claim that in its fixedness, the monument can be regarded as eternally true is deconstructed.

What I search for is a commemoration that is able to be open to the various contexts within which the memorial finds itself. In other words a commemoration that is able to allow for the possibility for rejuvenation. By applying post-structural tenets, I explore how a monument, memorial or museum enables this. Post-structural views of language allow us to accept the monument's impermanence and allow for its transformation over time and in space, and thus they refute the self-defeating premise of the modern monument.

The District Six Museum is a clear example of this, as the Museum welcomes the transitory nature of memory. This study explores the way in which the public participates in the ongoing creation of the space. By challenging the

fixedness of the modern museum, memorial or monument, the District Six Museum does not negate the place and need for memory and commemoration. Instead it questions the illusion of permanence that the modern monument endorses. It challenges Nietzsche's (1985:17) "monumental history" which is a critical view on history that buries commemoration. The District Six Museum, as will be discussed, remains open and flexible to the needs and interpretations of the present. In a sense it embodies what happened to the District Six area itself, as it embraces the impermanence and temporality of form over time and in space.

1.3 HIERARCHICAL BINARIES AS PLAYED OUT IN THE SAM AND THE MISCAST EXHIBIT

1.3.1 Choice of Memorials

The first example of a modern museum that I examine in chapter three is the SAM. In this study, the SAM museum is utilized as a way to demonstrate the way in which the museum exhibits the Khoisan in a racially biased manner. The postmodern Miscast exhibit in return questions the means and modes of the SAM's commemoration of the Khoisan. Both the SAM and the Miscast exhibit, together demonstrate my argument that it is through a continual engagement from the public that the memorial remains a vital and significant force within society.

1.3.2 The Problem

This study investigates one particular diorama within the museum that reflected the Khoisan culture and their way of life in a remarkably realistic manner. Within the diorama, the Khoisan were presented as if living within their "natural" habitat. They were depicted in various stages of hunting or gathering food within simulated natural, desert-like surroundings. These dioramas were represented in the Natural History wing of the SAM, which

also represented the animal kingdom. Simultaneously, European culture was depicted within the Cultural wing of the SAM. By grouping the Khoisan with elements of the natural world, the Khoisan are depicted as inherently "other", situated not only outside of Western society, but also outside humankind.

This study then analyses an exhibition entitled Miscast that attempted to counter the stereotype of the Khoisan people, as represented in the SAM. I examine one photographic exhibit that depicted elements of Khoisan culture traditionally not represented in museums such as the SAM. Within the photographic exhibit similarities within Khoisan culture to contemporary Western culture were represented, such as depicting members of Khoisan communities attending church gatherings, as well as joining the South African army.

By focusing on their similarities, and affinities to society, the photographic exhibit attempted to re-integrate the Khoisan into South African contemporary life. In this way, the exhibit attempted to challenge the inherently hierarchical binaries set up within the SAM, wherein the Khoisan were depicted as different and inferior to white European culture.

1.3.3 The Argument

What comes to the foreground in chapter three is the notion of how to represent the "other" within society. By smoothing out differences and arguing for the idea that universally we are all the same at the core, the Miscast exhibit suggests as I will argue, a "denial of the other" (West 1996:211). The resentful and negative reaction of the public to the Miscast exhibit further suggests that an "ethics of difference" needs to be worked out within a successful commemoration. Instead of denying (as in the SAM) or assimilating (as in the Miscast exhibit) the "other", I argue for a viable mode of commemoration that would enable a celebration of difference, which at the

same time does not create and enable hierarchies.

1.3.4 Relevance of the Memorials within South African Society

This study investigates the notion of hierarchical binaries, how they are played out in the SAM and in turn are challenged by the Miscast exhibit. This is particularly relevant for the role of commemoration within South Africa, considering that we have the opportunity to engage with the various cultural groups that form an integral part of South Africa. Chapter three attempts to understand how memorials commemorate events of the past while at the same time not imposing a rigid and uncompromising view of these events. By comparing the SAM and the Miscast exhibit, as well as exploring the reaction of a discerning public, I argue for an ethical and moral high ground in a process of commemoration that is able to remain open to interpretation and engagement.

1.4 "LITTLE" NARRATIVES EMBRACED WITHIN THE DISTRICT SIX MUSEUM

1.4.1 Choice of Memorial

Chapter four investigates how the creators of the District Six Museum, certain of their duty to remember the district, are sceptical of the assumptions underpinning traditional forms of commemoration. Their need to create a memorial site that would challenge the authoritative and oppressive nature of apartheid is embodied in the museum's discourse. Instead of fixing memory in a traditional display, the public is actively involved in the making of the memorial site. This process affirms the process of renewal and rejuvenation that renders a museum vital and relevant to society.

1.4.2 The Argument

Chapter four investigates the District Six Museum as an example of how commemoration is able to embrace the multi-faceted "little" narratives, in response to the overarching meta-narrative of ideology. I look at Lyotard and his theories on meta-narratives as well as the necessity for "little" narratives. This chapter attempts to arrive at a deeper understanding on the value of individual narratives within a postmodern commemoration.

1.4.3 Relevance of the Memorial within South African Society

Chapter four demonstrates that within the District Six museum, the plurality of stories projected cannot be unified to form one overarching story that would constitute so-called "history". This view enables us to think in a new way about history outside the confines of modernism's meta-narrative. This is particularly significant in the post-apartheid landscape wherein the need to respond to a more inclusive and just history, addresses past inequities in ways that do not repeat the injustices of the past. The significance of the Museum's reliance on the memories of former residents for its narrative, as will be argued, forms an important and affirmative example of commemoration within contemporary South African society.

1.5 THE VOORTREKKER MONUMENT – A RECONSTRUCTION THROUGH METAPHOR

1.5.1 Choice of Memorial

Chapter five examines the Voortrekker Monument as a means of exploring how a memorial that was constructed with a very specific ontology and teleology can still remain relevant in a very changed contemporary South Africa. I explore this notion through the post-structural approach to metaphor. I explore how the old symbols of the Voortrekker Monument have been weakened over time; their meaning and signification are no longer pertinent

to post-apartheid South Africa. Yet, through what I name a metaphorical approach, the old symbols of the Voortrekker Monument form new significations within contemporary society.

1.5.2 The Argument

Chapter five demonstrates how an open-ended commemoration allows the Voortrekker Monument to take on new relevance despite the loaded connotations of the site. This chapter investigates how a post-structural approach grants the viewer to the site not only the ability to create new signification but more significantly the ability to transform the old symbols of apartheid into a deeper understanding of the past. In this way, the modern symbols of apartheid, which seemed redundant, can be re-worked and applied to the memorial site within contemporary society.

I argue that this can be done through the post-structural notion of metaphor. In this way chapter five explores the Voortrekker Monument as a site that represents a shift from the modern view that art signifies a pre-existing meaning to the view that art is a catalyst for the invention of new meanings. The Voortrekker Monument is able to remain a site that encourages interpretation and the creation of meaning. By exploring two events that took place at the Voortrekker Monument during the 1990s, I apply the post-structural notion of metaphor to the site that enables for new and different significations to be created.

By allowing for different and unusual events to be held at the Voortrekker Monument, the site encourages us to *re-think* the Monument. The tenets of the Monument are re-negotiated into contemporary society. Thus, the site is not seen on the one hand as holy and sacred, and on the other hand as outmoded, but rather as integrally part of the text of history.

1.5.3 Relevance of the Memorial within South African Society

This chapter proposes that for an affirmative approach to a museum or memorial, we do not need to tear down or disregard our memorials; we can affirmatively reinstate them into contemporary discourse. By utilising the "old" symbols of apartheid, in this case the Voortrekker Monument, and applying different signification, the site is able to challenge and denaturalize the viewer's assumptions. This is particularly relevant within the democratic South Africa, where symbols of the past are able to be re-appropriated within society.

1.6 CONCLUSION

In summary, the starting point for my thesis is the question of how a community commemorates its past in a way that it is able to continuously remain a potent and engaging force within society. The apparent contradiction inherent in a traditional commemoration is that whilst memory operates on a variable and organic and at times fleeting level, the memorial, museum or monument operates on a seemingly unyielding and rigid level. The memorial, museum or monument attempts to concentrate and capture memory within the fixed and seemingly permanent material of its "walls".

Within the traditional monument, the events of the past are translated into a form that is hoped to endure with time, the assumption being that this memory will remain eternal and not be subject to change and transformation. Ironically however, this need to fix and eternalise the past might contain within it the seeds of its own destruction. The unyielding and rigid material of the traditional monument forces a closure of memory as society and its values and ideals transform and change over time. This idea regarding the transience of the monument is dealt with in historian Michalski's work *Public monuments: art in political bondage 1870-1997* (1998).

In the introduction Michalski's describes de Chirico's *Painting enigma of a day* (1914) as a work that depicts the typical modernist statue to a "Great Man". The monumental statue depicted appears to be carved out of marble and stands haughtily, with his right hand turned to the audience. On examining the painting more carefully one views fissures and tensions within the work. The area in front of the statue is empty, and there is no audience to be seen. The proud statue is thus addressing no-one; he stands alone in a seemingly deserted land. The marble statue that strives for immortality, and the seamless progression of contemporary values and beliefs, appears to become obsolete; an outdated and superfluous monument irrevocably stuck in the past. This public monument steeped in a modernist ideology, whose end Chirico was depicting, is indicative of the modern museum and monument movement that I will explore in this dissertation.

This research then is an investigation on how a mode of commemoration would allow for both the flexibility of memory whilst acknowledging the temporality and changeability of meaning and ideals over time.

As will be argued, a post-structural approach applied to both postmodern and modern museums enables the monument, memorial or museum to remain a relevant memorial site within society. By embracing and celebrating memory's temporality and contingency as well as the changing nature of ideals over time, a post-structural approach to memorials refutes the self-defeating assurance of a modern approach to commemoration. Commemoration is then sustained by the sense of temporality within meaning and memory. In post-structuralism's acknowledgement of the contingency and temporality of all meaning and memory, it re-energizes the very idea of the monument itself. Nora (2007:57) states of traditional memory:

If we accept that the most fundamental purpose of the *lieu de memoire*

> is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalise death, to materialise the immaterial… all of this in order to capture a maximum of meaning in the fewest of signs, it is also clear that the *lieux de memoire* only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications.

The post-structural approach to commemoration, as this study will demonstrate, allows for the potential for transformation, and the possibility for continual re-interpretation. It is in this way that commemoration is sustained within society while simultaneously remaining a vital and effective force.

Among the literature that contributed to my study is Young's *The texture of memory* (1994), which discusses the ambivalent face of memory as well as the need for a commemoration that does become outdated over time.

Berlatsky's thesis *Fact, fiction, and fabrication: history, narrative, and the postmodern real from Woolf to Rushdie* (2003) provided valuable background to the research. The work explores the contested relationships of memory, history, and collective memory and the problems raised by these categories in our postmodern world. This work provides clarification with regards to different modes of commemoration within contemporary society, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of a postmodern commemoration. Although Berlatsky's research explores the negative aspects of a postmodern commemoration, an aspect I do not, the research also explores how commemoration is central in advancing the political interests of peoples. This is particularly valuable to my research as it covers the same ground in investigating how a nation protects itself from the effacing powers of an "official" and totalising history.

Post-structuralism forms the basis for this research. *The postmodern history reader* by Jenkins (1997) provides various focused readings on different

aspects of the postmodern. Post-structural theorist Derrida informs much of the discussions on post-structuralism and deconstruction. Various writers have provided much understanding on Derrida's work, such as Norris' *Deconstruction: theory and practice* (1991).

Various post-structural thinkers have informed and have been influential in my research on deconstruction within commemoration. Munslow's *Deconstructing history* (1997) has been particularly useful. His insights into the notion of history as an untenable empirical exercise form a significant influence on this paper.

Smith's *Jacques Derrida: live theory* (2005) is of particular significance to this research as it forms the basis of my argument for a positive commemoration within post-apartheid society. Smith's research investigates the affirmative aspects of postmodernism, particularly how they relate to the notion of the "other" within society. Smith investigates how postmodernism's openness toward the "other" is at the heart of the postmodern theory on textuality and as I intend investigating, is crucial to understanding the value of deconstruction within the contexts of museums and memorials in the new South Africa.

The following chapter analyses the constructs of structuralism and post-structuralism. I will then explain how post-structuralism can be utilized within the sphere of commemoration and employed to arrive at a fuller understanding of the exchange between events and their subsequent interpretations, as well as the various ways language leads us toward variable meanings of past events.

Chapter 2: Post-Structuralism and Commemoration

2.1 STRUCTURALISM

Dooley & Kavanagh in their work *The philosophy of Derrida* (2007) quote a statement that Derrida had made in an interview: "I have only one project, my first desire is not to reproduce a philosophical work or a work of art: it is to preserve memory" (2007:17). For Derrida, the work of preserving memory stands in contrast to traditional modes of commemoration which think in terms of recollecting and preserving the past in *its fullness.* For Derrida however, no matter how we try to accurately access the past, the work of commemoration is always haunted by "traces and absences" (Dooley & Kavanagh 2007:17).

Derrida (in Dooley & Kavanagh 2007:17) states that it is impossible to recollect the past fully and totally, for our recollection of the past is always structured through language that inherently contains within itself traces, *différance* and deferral. I will explore this post-structural view of memory. In order to do so I will first examine the influence of structuralism on post-structuralism. I will then turn to various deconstructive terms and explore how they are integral to the concept of memory and how they apply to the field of commemoration.

Structuralism aims to explain particular events in terms of underlying structural laws (Dooley & Kavanagh 2007:31). In other words, singular units of meaning are not to be seen as self-enclosed identities but rather they are to be understood according to their inter-relationship within the supposed determining structural laws (Dooley & Kavanagh 2007:31).

In the field of structural linguistics, Saussure, the structural linguist and the

founding father of structuralism, wanted to move beyond the limitations of nineteenth-century linguistics, which had traditionally concentrated on grammar and the historical development of languages (Dooley & Kavanagh 2007:31). He challenges the traditional model of understanding language in terms of what language is about and what it corresponds to in reality, wherein language assumes a transparent correspondence between the sign and "reality" (Dooley & Kavanagh 2007:32). Saussure states that the meanings of words are determined by the internal structures of language as a whole, rather than what language corresponds to.

What an individual word refers to, according to Saussure in his work *Course in general linguistics* (1959), is completely arbitrary. According to structuralism, language is viewed as a system of signs; where the sign consists of two components: the signifier, the visual component, and the signified, the conceptual component. South African philosopher, Degenaar (1986:59) states that the connection between signifier and signified is conventional and arbitrary. The signifier does not automatically point to a signified, but linked by conventional rules alone. Literary critic and theorist, Norris (1982:04) states that Saussure's assertion on the arbitrary nature of the sign led to Saussure unravelling the link that common sense dictates exists between words and the objects they supposedly seek to describe. Norris (1982:05) continues to state: "far from affording a 'window' on reality or a faithfully reflecting mirror, language brings along with it a whole intricate network of established significations".

We utilize language as if it were transparent and as if meanings and intentions exist prior to it. However meanings are bound up, according to Saussure (1959:117), in a system of relationships and difference between signs that effectively determine our habits of thought and perception. By this, Saussure (1959:117) asserts that meaning is not inherent in a sign but is

rather a product of a sign's position in a set of relationships. This view of language can be supported by the example that it is only possible to point to an abstract term such as "hunger", by referring to what "hunger" is not or is like. Thus the meaning of the word "hunger" is indicated by its place within the language network. To give another example, the concept of a dog or a cat, or a virtue or a crime, obtains its value relative to the values of all the other linguistic units. The sign's position and meaning is characterized by virtue of its difference from other signs (Degenaar 1986:59). Thus the structure of language becomes vital in arriving at a fuller understanding of the meaning of a sign.

To explain further, take the word (the signifier) "hunger" and ask someone who has never learnt what it means – s/he would not be able to intrinsically know and understand this word. This is because for Saussure words (signifiers) only mean something relative to other signifiers (Jenkins1997:42). According to Dooley & Kavanagh (2007:31), Saussure's most radical innovation is his claim that meaning is constituted in a system of differences. Language does not comprise separate units, each having their own meaning. The meaning of a word or sign is determined according to its difference from other words or signs within the system of language as a whole. It is only by making distinctions of what a thing is not or is similar to, that can we identify what a thing is.

According to this theory, individual units of meaning are not to be understood as self-enclosed identities, but according to their interrelationship within the totality of structural laws that determine them (Dooley & Kavanagh 2007:31). The meaning of a word or sign is determined according to its difference from other words or signs within the system and structure of language. In this way, no signifier has a complete identity or meaning. It always contains within it the

trace of every other sign within the system of language (Dooley & Kavanagh 2007:31). As Saussure (1959: 117) states:

> In language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences *without positive terms.* Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system. The idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other sign that surrounds it.

In summary, structuralism argues that our knowledge of the world is shaped and conditioned by the language that serves to represent it (Norris 1991:04). Structuralism's crucial discovery is that the language network is the precondition for the understanding of the meaning in a sign and that language is a differential network of meaning (Norris 1991:24). Thus, there is no evident one to one link between signifier and signified, between the word and what the word seeks to represent, but rather the signs in the language network are dependent on other signs for meaning.

2.2 POST-STRUCTURALISM

Where structuralism and post-structuralism start to differ is where Saussure made certain reductive efforts. In an attempted to provide an order and stability to language Saussure draws a distinction in his work *Course in general linguistics* (1959) between the terms *langue* and *parole* (1959:142). *Langue* can be described as a "system of rules" and *parole* would be the "event of speech" (Glendinning 1998:113). *Langue* is then language minus speech. It is the part of language that the individual cannot by her/himself either create or change. It is essentially a structure which one must accept in its entirety if one wishes to communicate (Glendinning 1998:113).

Saussure states (1959:235) "[l]anguage (langue) is necessary for speech

(parole) to be intelligible and to produce its effects; but the latter is necessary for language to establish itself; historically the fact of speech is always prior".

For post-structuralists this is problematic as it embarks on an analysis of language based on the distinction between linguistic systems and linguistic events. Derrida states (2004:25): "[i]f one rigorously distinguished *langue* and *parole*, code and message, schema and usage, etc. and if one wishes to do justice to the two postulates thus enunciated, one does not know where to begin, nor how something can begin in general, be it language or speech". For Derrida one of the problems with the *langue* and *parole* distinction is as Glendinning (1998:114) puts it, a "chicken and egg" situation where one does not know where to begin and if one presupposes the other.

For Saussure (1959:142) there exists an origin and centre to language thereby implying an underlying order to language. This was a position that did not hold true for post-structuralism, as Saussure's position states that *langue* implies a super-structure, an origin or centre from which *parole* can be measured.

According to Derrida in his article *Structure, sign and play in the discourse of the human sciences*, that appears in his work *Writing and difference* (1966), he states that there is no centre or order to language, as he writes: "it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no centre, that the centre could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the centre had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play" (1966:197). Derrida states that there is no such regulation in language, such as a super-structure that organizes the entire structure (1966:197). Post-structuralism refuses to accept Saussure's idea of *langue* that orders or regulates *parole* (Norris 1991:03). Thus, according to Derrida, a blind spot in Saussure's writings is

the idea that language is a signifying system, a *langue*, which exceeds or underlies individual speech *parole* (Norris 1991:27). According to post-structuralism there is no watchful "eye" that looks over the language network.

From a post-structural perspective, Derrida (2004:23) accepts Saussure's theory that meaning in a sign is a function of its difference from other signs within the structure. Derrida takes it even further and replaces the term "sign" with that of "trace" (Dooley & Kavanagh 2007:34). In this way, the meaning of any word is not determined by its own internal essence, but is always composed by the consequence of the differential play of traces (Dooley & Kavanagh 2007:31). According to Derrida (2004:23), "the play of differences supposes, in effect, syntheses and referrals which forbid at any moment, or in any sense, that a simple element can be present in and of itself, referring only to itself". Whether in verbal or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element (Degenaar 1986:95).

Thus, Derrida's position claims that no signifier is an island that inherently contains meaning. Words carry meaning in a play of differences without definite closure so that a final meaning is always deferred (Jenkins 1999:43). New chains of significations come into being fresh with new meanings. Consequently this situation enables for new possibilities that are never fully satiated or fixed.

In this way the changeability of language can be understood as a positive aspect of post-structuralism as it points to the never-ending creation of new meanings (Jenkins 1999:42). In this dissertation I will evaluate this as a positive aspect in the context of commemoration, as the labile characteristics of language can be interpreted as celebrating the possibilities for continual change and renewal.

According to Jenkins (1999:43), Derrida does not think that we can reach an end point of interpretation, a final truth. For Derrida all texts exhibit *différance*; they allow multiple and variable interpretations (Jenkins 1999:43). This brings me to another implication for the notion of *différance* within the discourse of commemoration, which is the idea of interpretation and variety of meanings within commemoration.

If meaning is a function of differences between terms and every term is but a mode of differential relations, then each term refers us to other terms from which it differs and to which it is in some kind of relation. These relations are infinite and all have the potential to produce meanings (Degenaar 1986:90). In this way language begins to involve the user of language in an infinity of relationships which can produce variable meanings in time. When there is no fixed point of reference, when there is no sign "referring only to itself", then there is no way in which to guarantee finality, and this allows for interpretation and flexibility (Degenaar 1986:90).

Post-structuralism emphasizes this power of interpretation, where each sign is interrelated with other signs and emphasis is on the process of interpretation as opposed to discovering a fixed set of meanings. The process does not consist "in the grasping of the idea but in the adventure of discovering the labyrinth of links that constitutes the meaning of the signs within the text" (Degenaar 1986:68). In this way, we do not *discover* the meaning or truth behind the word, but rather *invent* meanings as we utilize the word in variable contexts.

Thus, in the context of commemoration, the postmodern museum allows for the possibility of interpretation. We do not approach the postmodern museum as a site to discover the truth of the past, but rather to invent and interpret the past in the context of the present. Rather than focusing on and propagating

founding truths, the postmodern memorial site allows for a multiplicity of interpretations of the past. The postmodern museums I research embody this interpretive nature of the past in terms of the present and challenge the modern notion that a museum and memorial can successfully attain a closure of the truth of the past.

As certain events and narratives will be displayed and commemorated, there necessarily implies a process of inclusion and exclusion, as not all events of the past can be relayed and represented. However, the crucial difference, as will be explored between a modern and postmodern commemoration is in the self-reflexive awareness inherent in the postmodern process of commemoration. The modern memorial sites I explore conceal or mask this process of exclusion. They attempt to present the past as a remembered whole or *fact*. The postmodern memorial sites I explore acknowledge and explore this transitory and variable nature of commemoration, whose emphasis is on engagement and interpretation.

I would like to add at this point that the deconstruction process should not be taken to mean that "anything goes" and that the process of interpretation of the past is cut loose from any criteria (Smith 2005:04). Deconstruction is on the contrary concerned with dismantling with the goal of assembling (Smith 2005:10). In this way deconstruction is essentially concerned with institutions – in breaking open institutional frameworks, not for the sake of anarchy, but with a view to more just and fair institutions (Smith 2005:10). Thus, the modern museums that I explore are deconstructed as a means to arrive at more just and inclusive commemoration that more ably reflect the current period of democracy and change in the context of South Africa. According to Smith (2005:10), deconstruction is ultimately an affirmative method, looking for disruptions so as to open up institutions to another way of thinking about community and our responsibility to the "other" in society.

In my analysis I will deconstruct institutions as a means to explore the ways in which museums and memorials within the South African context commemorate the past in ways that embrace the "other" within society and thus create a more inclusive space that addresses former injustices and allows previously excluded voices to speak.

In summary, post-structuralism means a deconstruction of the modern notion of the possibility of accessing a reality outside of language. Following Saussure, Derrida (1996:201) states the impossibility of attaining this final truth, where memory is able to clearly access the truth of the past. This is particularly relevant when applied to the field of commemoration, as the modern notion that the museum or memorial corresponds to history *as it actually happened*, is deconstructed. As Rorty (1981:140) states, "…a certain framework of interconnected ideas – truth as correspondence, language as picture, literature as imitation – ought to be abandoned". Similarly, memorials as objective truth should also be deconstructed in this instance, where the modern museum, as this study demonstrates, attempts to present the past as a complete and whole recollection of past events. The postmodern museum I explore acknowledges the impossibility of a one and final truth.

The museums and memorials I investigate in my study look to commemorate a national past, that is to say an aspect of South African history. What is relevant in my study is to arrive at a mode of commemoration that does not insist on accessing the whole and entire truth of what happened and presenting this as fact. But instead arrives at a process of commemoration that focuses on the individual and various stories of the past that together make up a collective past. This mode of commemoration does not close itself off, either to other narratives or to future and potential interpretations. It is a

process of commemoration that is at once ongoing and inclusive.

In this section, post-structuralism was introduced as a theory and deconstruction as a tool of post-structuralism. Applied to the field of commemoration this means a deconstruction of the modern notion that museums and memorials correspond to the reality or truth of the past.

I will focus on the difference between modern and postmodern museums arguing that in the former, theory and practice attempted a closure of meaning and interpretation, and in the latter, commemoration becomes a "happening" of inter-relationships between the signs that constitute it. I will argue that in postmodern museums the emphasis is on the active participation of constructing the meanings of a text and in this way commemoration does not become a staid or fixed representation of a past. Even though it can be said that every interpretation is a form of closure, the difference in the postmodern museum is that this is not masked or hidden but is openly acknowledged and in this way such closures await to be deconstructed yet again.

2.3 DECONSTRUCTION AND COMMEMORATION

I will now isolate certain deconstructive strategies and provisionally explain how they can be applied to the sphere of commemoration. I will later utilize these deconstructive strategies so as to deconstruct and interpret examples of commemoration. First I turn to Derrida and his theory on the deconstruction of hierarchical binary oppositions.

2.3.1 Deconstructing Hierarchical Binary Oppositions

According to Jenkins (1999:44), Derrida in his work exposes many traditional philosophical oppositions in which one pole of the opposition dominates the

other. According to Derrida, binary oppositions become problematic when hierarchical binaries are created. Derrida uses the phrase "violent hierarchy" to show that there exists no peaceful co-existence of terms within hierarchical oppositions, wherein one term holds the upper hand over the other (Jenkins 1999:44).

Derrida argues that hierarchical binary oppositions are the way in which natural, free-playing horizontal signifiers are organized into fixed and aligned vertical structures (Jenkins 1999:45). Derrida in his work *Of grammatology* (1998) sees Western meanings as fixed into hierarchical binary oppositions where the one term is privileged over the second term. Examples of these would be man/woman, white/black, heterosexual/homosexual, rationalism/irrationalism, mind/body, reason/emotion. In the discourse of history, the following are examples of binary oppositions: true/false, absolute/relative, objective/subjective, fact/fiction. These oppositions once created are structured vertically so that the first terms are privileged. So what is privileged is not just man, but white, heterosexual, rationalism, mind and reason and in the discourse of history that which is privileged is associated with truth and fact is objective and absolute.

Consequently Derrida (1998:lix) does not assume that these binary oppositions are natural but are rather artificial constructions and he works to deconstruct them. By insisting on the play of *différance* in language, Derrida (1998:lix) offers a way in which these hierarchical binaries can be deconstructed. The notion of *différance*, the idea that the subject is constituted only by the fact of his relation to an outside, an "other", is an affirmation of plurality and difference, opening up spaces for others within the community to speak otherwise.

Deconstructing binary stabilities into what Jenkins (1999:47) terms "playful"

stabilities is a way of returning language to its horizontal, egalitarian and democratic possibility. For, as Jenkins (1999:44) states, deconstruction is a political project, in that the deconstruction of these vertical binary oppositions is crucial as they authorize the social hierarchies of Western elitism. Deconstructing binaries opens up society to potential democratic justice, where society demands responsibility to the "other".

Jenkins' theory supports my view of commemoration within the South African context in that under apartheid, society became walled off by rigid boundaries of exclusion and marginalization. Artificial hierarchical binary oppositions were set up into vertical and hierarchical structures of power that privileged white society over black society.

In this section I introduced Derrida's concept of binaries as such hierarchical binary oppositions authorized the racial hierarchies of apartheid that were embodied in pre-1994 museums and memorials. By deconstructing these hierarchical binaries within the museum and memorial it opens up contemporary South African society into potential democratic justice, where responsibility and recognition to the "other" in society is facilitated and encouraged.

This dissertation explores the South African Museum (SAM) as an example of a modern museum that represents the past in terms that emphasize the hierarchical binaries propagated by apartheid society. I will then look to the *Miscast: negotiating the presence of the bushmen* (Miscast) exhibit as an example of a postmodern memorial site, and explore how the exhibit attempts to resolve hierarchical structures of dominance.

I will now look at another deconstructive theory, which is that of Derrida's *bricoleur* and the *engineer*. Both the *engineer* and artificial hierarchical

binaries order past events according to an ideology, whilst insisting on and proclaiming the inherent truth claims of such hierarchical ordering. Deconstructing artificial hierarchical binaries and Derrida's theory of the *bricoleur* seeks a view of the commemoration of past events where we are made aware of the inherent subjectivity of the process of commemoration.

2.3.2 Setting Up Derrida's *Bricoleur* Against Apartheid's *Engineer*

There are similarities between Derrida's theory on hierarchical binary oppositions and his theories on the *engineer* and the *bricoleur*. Hierarchical binaries impose an order on events and create artificial hierarchies between past events and people, so too the *engineer* attempts to re-construct history according to her/his ideology, whilst proclaiming the inherent truth-value of this re-construction of history. According to the post-structural approach to history, this is an artificial notion that suppresses different narratives.

Derrida in *Writing and difference* (2001) speaks of the term the *bricoleur*, and states that according to Levi-Strauss, (the originator of the term) a *bricoleur* is someone who uses "the means at hand" (1978:285). That is, the instruments he finds at his disposal (those that are already there) that had not been conceived specifically for the task for which they are to be used and to which one tries to adapt them. If, therefore, one calls *bricolage* the inevitability of borrowing one's concepts from the text of a heritage, it must be said that every discourse is *bricolage*. In this way it can be said that the ordering and re-ordering of objects that commemorate the past or artefacts that draw from past events in the context of a museum or a memorial, is to use Derrida's term *bricolage*. In this way it is not about accurately accessing the truth of the past, but instead it is the performance, the *process* of commemoration that is significant in the postmodern museum.

Derrida (1978:285) develops this idea further with his concept of the *engineer* who Levi-Strauss opposes to the *bricoleur*. The *engineer* is the one "that constructs the totality of his language, syntax and lexicon". In this sense, Derrida (1978:285) states that the *engineer* is a myth, and is "a subject who is supposedly the absolute origin of his own discourse and would allegedly create it out of nothing". As soon as we cease to believe in such an *engineer* and permit the concept that every finite discourse is bound by a certain *bricolage* and that the *engineer* is a product of *bricolage* then the notion of the *engineer* is broken down and is deconstructed (Derrida 1978:285). Thus, the *engineer* does not become the origin from which meaning is created, but rather the *engineer* is himself embedded and implicated in the text of history. In this way meaning of the text is context bound.

Thus, according to modern constructs, the memorial and museum is viewed as a monument with its own autonomy – an unchanging, self-enclosed structure of meaning and in this way it appears to stand as the *engineer* of history. In contrast, the postmodern museum embodies Derrida's *bricoleur*, where the text of the museum is seen as an ongoing happening in which signs and the traces of signs make themselves available to the reader for the adventure and process of understanding and interpreting the text (Degenaar 1986:98).

In viewing history as a process of *bricolage*, it is to say that history is determined by traces and remainders of the past; these traces and remainders are themselves neither presences nor origins as they too are constituted by traces and remainders of the past. It is this limitless and fluid condition that I would propose constitutes history and commemoration. This is a condition wherein we never really know where to start or end our accounts of past events. Even though for the purposes of interpretation we do create temporary classification, yet significantly within the postmodern context we

recognize their provisionality and conditionality.

Additionally, we readers and writers are ourselves part of this process of the general and unbounded logic of traces and remains. We are ourselves integral to the text of history. Thus to the question of where should we begin and end our accounts, Derrida's (1998:Preface) answer is "wherever we are: in a text already…". It is in this context that Derrida states "there is nothing outside the text" and consequently that all history is "text" (Jenkins 1999:52).

In Derrida's (1988:148) words:

> What I call 'text' implies all the structures called 'real', 'economic', 'historical', 'socio-institutional', in short, all possible referents; another way of recalling once again that 'there is nothing outside the text'. That does not mean that all referents are suspended or denied or enclosed in a book… .But it does mean that every referent and all reality has the structure of a 'différantial' trace and that one cannot refer to this 'real' except in an interpretive experience. The latter neither yields meaning nor assumes it except in a movement of 'différantial' referring.

So since other texts are also involved in the text it can also be described as an inter-textual event, and therefore the text has no stable or limited identity.

To bring this idea of *bricolage* back to the discourse of commemoration, the text of the museum and memorial can be viewed as a system of signs that is in constant flux, where interpretation is variable and infinite and has the potential to produce alternative meanings (Degenaar 1986:83). There is no end point in history, no point of origin, but history is a process of *bricolage* where signs and traces constitute a constantly shifting space where new elements come in and out of focus.

This realization will keep one from ascribing the text of the museum and memorial autonomy. Derrida (in Royle 1979:64) states that a text "is

henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing…but a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces". In attempting to elucidate the underlying codes of museums and memorials, within post-structural language theory, it is therefore significant to acknowledge that the post-structural concepts and tools are always a process, an open-ended practice of reading, rather than a closed method convinced of and restricted to its vision or ideals (Norris 1982:30).

In drawing distinctions between modern museums and postmodern museums, one can compare the *engineer* and the *bricoleur* to the modern and postmodern museum respectively. In modern museums, past events are presented as fixed and absolute, the museum is governed by the rigid rules of the *engineer* based on one founding originating principle, ideology and subsequent truth claims. Postmodern museums on the other hand are a product of *bricolage* – they are inevitably and unavoidably layered and varied. I will investigate the District Six Museum as an example of a museum that utilizes the process of *bricolage*. The District Six Museum utilizes Derrida's notion of *bricolage* by challenging apartheid's *engineer*; the single authoritarian voice that organizes history according to one homogenous viewpoint.

In this section I have introduced Derrida's theory on the *bricoleur* and the *engineer*. I have applied Derrida's deconstructive theory in the context of commemoration, specifically in the case of the District Six Museum, where the postmodern museum commemorates the past by embodying the post-structural theories of the *bricoleur*. I explore the District Six Museum as an example of Derrida's *bricoleur*. The District Six Museum presents history as situated and interpretive, and the emphasis is on the engagement and dialogue of the public, that allows for an open-ended process of commemoration. In this way, the museum enables an ongoing and vital

process of commemoration.

The post-structural openness to interpretation leads me to explore another post-structural construct, namely that of the idea of metaphor. The post-structural theories on metaphor further allow for interpretation within different sign significations.

2.3.3. The Monument as Metaphor

In chapter five I investigate how a memorial site can remain a relevant and engaging site within contemporary society, despite its strong association with a questionable past, through the post-structural idea of metaphor. According to Sarup (1993:47) a metaphor is the "substitution of one set of signs for another". Through the use of metaphor, this allows for the liberation and the continual possibility of creation through different sign significations.

Sarup (1993:55) states:

> Metaphors can be productive of new insights and fresh illuminations. They can promote unexpected or subtle parallels or analogies. Metaphors can encapsulate and put forward proposals for another way of looking at things. Through metaphor we can have an increased awareness of alternative and possible worlds.

In this way, one can say that through the use of metaphor we have the possibility for alternative creation, new understanding and interpretations of texts. By applying a metaphorical approach to commemoration, it allows memorials and monuments to be loosened from the grip of outdated or redundant ideologies.

The post-structural notion of metaphor is applied to the Voortrekker Monument in the fifth chapter. By utilising the process of metaphor, the Monument is transformed from a monument that strongly encapsulated and

embodied Afrikaner nationalist ideology, to one that is able to signify new meaning within the post-apartheid landscape. This is significant to my study as it demonstrates how the Voortrekker Monument has been transformed from a sacred carrier of truth (national Afrikaner ideology) to one that serves to show the provisional nature of truth.

In this way the text of the Voortrekker Monument ably demonstrates how the text of a museum or memorial is able to be re-read and revitalized within contemporary society, through the approach of different sign significations. In chapter five I demonstrate how two events that occurred at the Monument in the 1990s, one where Mandela spoke at an inauguration and the second a fashion show that was held at the Monument, allowed for the text of the Monument to be read differently in new and creative ways.

I explore how post-structuralism enables a process of new sign signification through a metaphorical understanding. What is significant within this understanding is how a modern memorial or museum, when approached through a post-structural lens, is able to be revitalized and rejuvenated. At this point, what I would emphasize here is the positive aspect of the post-structural approach. I am interested in deconstructing modern memorials so as to *reconstruct* the memorial, so that the memorial is able to offer society new meaning and potential for a possible future.

In the following sub-section I will look at Derrida's post-structural theories on *repetition* and *interpretation* and explore how Derrida demonstrates that the meaning of the work is not solely contained within and dependent on the creator of the work, but is continually open to interpretation and even *misinterpretation* by the viewer of the work. In chapter five I will look at how this applies to the reconstruction of the Voortrekker Monument.

2.3.3.1 Deconstructing the Author as Central to the Text

Dooley and Kavanagh (2007:35) examine how Derrida in his lecture *Signature event context*, delivered in 1966 (and later included in *Writing and difference* 1967), explores the traditional notion of how the author clearly communicates her/his intentions to a determinate receiver. Similarly I compare how Derrida deconstructs the modern idea of the author of a text to that of the historian as the author of the text.

Chapter five demonstrates that it is possible to revitalize old modern texts within contemporary society, through a post-structural approach. This last chapter is significant in my dissertation where I would emphasize that deconstruction is not simply a method for unmasking certain modern and ideological practices but is also a relevant tool for *reconstruction*, so as to rehabilitate these texts within contemporary society.

Chapter five examines how Derrida deconstructs the modern notion of the author of a text. By utilizing the term *dissemination*, Derrida challenges the modern view of a work that presupposes a single interpretation. This autonomous interpretation is said to originate from the author of the work and to be, upon reading the work, found by the reader. In contrast Derrida states that the text always contains the possibility for different interpretations. The single and original intention of the author and the fact that this is organized around a single determinate reading is deconstructed by Derrida. In this way, re-interpretation of the text is encouraged. The notion of re-interpretation is embodied in Derrida's coinage of the term "iterability".

In *Signature event context* (1966), Derrida uses the term "iterability". This is similar but not exactly like the word reiteration. Reiteration means a repetition, whereas "iterability" means repetition with the potential to produce something new. This is particularly relevant where meaning of the past is always open to

the potential for new interpretation Thus, to say that something can be repeated, with the potential for new meaning, is to say that meaning, solely contained within the intention of the author, is thus deconstructed. Repetition and re-interpretation can function in the absence of the author's original intention.

In this way it can be said that meaning in the text of the museum and memorial always contains within itself the possibility of repetition, interpretation and perhaps transformation. The original intention of the author/curator can not guarantee the meaning of the text.

This is significant in the field of commemoration, wherein I propose that modern museums and memorials always have the possibility of reinterpretation and transformation, despite a loaded or contentious past. A museum that encourages active engagement from society, by not closing off meaning in the text, is open to transformation.

When an author writes a book, it is always possible that the book can be interpreted otherwise, in ways the author did not intend. Similarly, when a curator arranges pieces in a museum, the idea that its message will be "accurately" and successfully received is not a certainty.

In summary, I have looked at how the modern notion regarding the vitality and centrality of the author to the text is deconstructed by Derrida's "dissemination" and "iterability". I will utilize these deconstructive constructs to explore how the Voortrekker Monument, despite the authors' original intentions and founding ideology has managed to remain a relevant and essential memorial site within the post-apartheid South African landscape.

Chapter 3: The Process of "Othering" and "Difference"

3.1 ON HOW PRE-1994 MEMORIAL SITES EXEMPLIFY HIERARCHICAL BINARY OPPOSITIONS

In this chapter I will explore the South African Museum (SAM) exhibits of the Khoisan people and culture, as an example of a modern museum that embodies hierarchical binaries. I will then explore the *Miscast: negotiating the presence of the bushmen* (Miscast) exhibit as an attempt to deconstruct the hierarchical binary oppositions set up in the SAM Khoisan exhibits.

In deconstructing hierarchical binaries, I will consider the concepts of "othering" and "difference" in both memorial sites. Whilst binaries exist within society, we need to be vigilant of creating hierarchies out of these binaries. I will explore how the SAM in the apartheid context, to an extent utilized the concept of "difference", where "white" culture is presented as different to Khoisan culture. However in doing so the SAM also sets up and instils hierarchical binaries, of white versus Khoisan culture, where the former occupies a privileged position.

In response to this, the post-apartheid Miscast exhibit attempts to overturn the hierarchical binaries as set up in the SAM. One photographic exhibit within the Miscast exhibit reacts to what the photographer perceives as a negative and racial process of "difference" within the SAM dioramas, and thus attempts to challenge the SAM by utilising the process of "othering". This process of "othering" emphasizes the similarities of the Khoisan, and their assimilation within contemporary South African society and Khoisan cultural differences are purposefully overlooked. In this way the hierarchical binaries within the SAM are challenged in the hope of being dismantled.

I propose that whilst utilizing this notion of "difference" as a means to create

and instil hierarchical binaries, is problematic, the concept of "difference" within society should not be diminished or disregarded. The surface aesthetic of "little" differences is what enables society to remain colourful and interesting, however what I would argue against is a notion of "difference" that justifies ontological differences. I explore how the idea of "othering" as an attempt to smooth over differences has potentially negative consequences in society whilst the idea of "difference" positively acknowledges variation and diversity within society with potentially constructive consequences.

I will now explore how historian Davidson viewed the SAM Khoisan dioramas as a negative and potentially harmful approach to Khoisan history and culture and how she would propose that displaying the Khoisan through the process of "difference" is inherently problematic.

3.2 THE SAM – INSTILLING HIERARCHICAL BINARIES

According to Davison (2005:185) the SAM was deeply embedded in a project which reified scientific notions of racial difference, giving certain practices of visual sorting and categorisation a legitimacy that injected into the public consciousness notions of racial inferiority, thus setting up hierarchical binaries of white over black culture. According to Davison (2005:185) in South Africa, the literate upper and middle classes of industrialized nineteenth-century Europe represented a pinnacle of civilisation, a concept that was affirmed by their perception of non-literate and non-industrial cultures as "primitive" or "un-civilised". A conceptual boundary existed between "them" and "us". This distinction found tangible expression in the grouping of the Khoisan with natural history in the SAM and the European culture within the cultural history museum (Davison 2005:185).

For much of its history, the SAM collected indigenous culture, and in doing so, Khoisan culture was generally treated as part of the natural history of the

country, situating it in a timeless and static past (Davison 2005:185). At the same time, especially from the 1950s, the SAM began displaying the triumph and supposed superiority of white culture over black culture, serving to give greater legitimacy to the prevailing system of apartheid (Davison 2005:185). As historian Rankin (1995:61) describes it: "...antitheses were constructed, of primitive as opposed to civilised, of nature versus culture". This was most clearly exemplified by the splitting in two of various museum collections in the 1960s, where white culture was presented in the South African Cultural History Museum, whilst black culture was coupled with natural history in the SAM.

These "antitheses" can be read as hierarchical binary oppositions where a hierarchy is set up as a means to represent a "true" account of history in absolute and fixed terms. Meaning is fixed in hierarchical binary oppositions, wherein terms such as "white culture", "civilized" and "culture" are all privileged over terms such as "black culture", "primitive" and "nature", thereby enabling the process of racial difference to be represented as historical fact. By dividing the natural exhibits from the cultural exhibits, a process of separation was set up that covertly propagated a system where one term is privileged over the other.

As Derrida states (1982:213): "Metaphysics – the white mythology which reassembles and reflects the culture of the West: the white man takes his own mythology, Indo-European mythology, his own 'logos', that is, the 'mythos' of his idiom, for the universal form of that he must still wish to call Reason." This refers to the idea that Western thought is regarded as rational and reasonable and the "other" is perceived as mythical and irrational. This idea is played out in the separating of the two museums, where in the one museum white culture is presented as inherently superior and cultured and in the other black culture is equated as primitive and irrational.

Situating the lifelike Khoisan casts as objects of display allows for the visitor to occupy a privileged position, where the visitor "is markedly distinct from the objects on display" (Shannon & Steven 1999:70). Such representational constructs assisted, according to Davidson (2005:185), in clearly delineating the space between the visitor and the displays; the visitor perceives her/himself in direct opposition to the primitive otherness of the Khoisan displays. Davidson sees this process of "differing" as problematic and implicit in creating and implementing hierarchical binaries within the SAM. Davison (2005:167) points out that "not only were the Bushmen objects of curiosity, they were also a source of gratification for the Victorian public whose self-esteem was enhanced relative to the spectacle they observed so avidly".

Thus according to Davidson (2005:185), by solely focusing on the cultural differences of the Khoisan, the SAM is one that draws on previous texts such as the public displays of living "bush people" at the shows in London and Europe in the mid-nineteenth century. These strikingly life-like Khoisan dioramas recall the sensationalism and voyeurism surrounding the live exhibition in London and Paris of Saartje Baartman, the "Hottentot Venus". The figures in the SAM point towards these previous spectacles of prejudices, where these objects of display were presented as "freak shows" and highlighted the supposedly alien physical and cultural characteristics of the "bush people".

Another problem for Davidson (2005:185), with the SAM Khoisan dioramas, is how the Khoisan physical features were copied in minute detail and displayed through a series of plaster casts. The lifelike figures in their total realism gave tangible form to stereotypes of Khoisan physical difference and according to Davidson (2005:186), helped shape societal consciousness and further politically motivated racial hierarchies. The Khoisan dioramas in the SAM

perpetuated mental pictures of the Khoisan as a distinct and unique race at one with the natural landscape of the desert.

This is described by Coombes in her study *History after apartheid: visual culture and public memory in a democratic South Africa* (2003), where she quotes a label that described one of the dioramas:

> This diorama shows some activities of hunter-gatherers. The viewer should imagine that a large flock of birds has flown overhead and attracted the attention of the group. With the exception of a few in Gordonia, there are no Bushman living in the Cape. The figures shows here are PLASTER CASTS of living people aged 18-60, excepting the man making fire who was alleged to have been about 100. They were nearly all living in Prieska and Carnarvon districts. The casts were made by Mr. James Drury, modeller at the museum from 1902 -1942.

The insistence on enclosing the entire scene within an account of extinction emphasizes the image of a primordial people that no longer exist within contemporary society. Coupled with the fact that the figures are not merely illustrative but are from actual casts taken from living people, draws a connection to the technique of taxidermy, which is still the source for most natural history exhibits (Coombes 2003:222). This further alienates a culture to the realm of the animal world.

The casts are displayed in the contrived realism of a diorama, a construct of museum practice that mediates the memory of people classified as "Bushmen". The visual language of the diorama medium suggests association with nature – in other galleries fossils, animals and birds are similarly displayed. Thus according to Davidson (2005:186), such classifications embody an ideology of "otherness" that simultaneously presents an objective scientific investigation as well as propagates an essential ideology of separation between Khoisan and white/European culture.

Figure 1. *Bushman diorama* (ca 1985).

For Davidson (2005:185) then, the SAM provides an example of how the Khoisan dioramas are abstracted away from any historical and cultural context. Figure 1 shows a diorama of the Khoisan in the SAM, which depicts them in customary loincloths and holding traditional bow and arrows. However, by the time they were cast the Khoisan no longer wore traditional clothing made from animal skins, and had long been dispossessed of their lands. The Khoisan history of struggle, conflict and subjugation was not presented in the SAM but instead they were reduced to physical types and exhibited unclothed as examples of a "primitive race" (Davison 2005:185). In this way the Khoisan were fixed in an enduring portrayal of an idealized past that deprived public memory of their dispossession and decimation. Thus, a large portion of their history was suppressed and excluded in order to instil the SAM's official language of the past.

In summary, I have explored how the SAM dioramas, through a process of selection and classificatory grouping, set-up and instilled hierarchical binary

oppositions that situated the Khoisan as a primitive and primordial people, inferior to white, European culture. I have explored how according to Davidson (2005:185), this simultaneously de-humanizes the Khoisan people as well as facilitates the social racial practices of the apartheid state. Thus for Davidson (2005:185) the process of depicting a people or culture as different and separate to Western contemporary society has potentially harmful implications.

What is significant to note here is that whilst the SAM Khoisan exhibits were created within the apartheid context and therefore were created within a racially biased society, I would propose that the notion of displaying a people or culture as *different* must not inherently be seen as negative or harmful. I will explore this idea in the Khoisan's positive reaction to the SAM in contemporary post-apartheid South Africa. But first, I will now look at the Miscast exhibit and how the exhibit attempted to deconstruct the hierarchical binaries set up in the SAM Khoisan dioramas.

3.3 ON HOW POST-1994 MEMORIAL SITES DECONSTRUCT HIERARCHICAL BINARY OPPOSITIONS

In this section I will explore how the postmodern Miscast exhibit is an attempt to "re-integrate" Khoisan culture into South African contemporary society. This is done through a variety of different means within the exhibit, but I will specifically look at the photographs of South African activist and social documentary photographer Weinberg's photographic exhibition, entitled *Footprints in the Sand* that formed an integral part of the Miscast exhibit. Weinberg attempted to situate the Khoisan as fully assimilated within South African society. In this way specific cultural differences of the Khoisan culture are overlooked and instead the Khoisan are depicted as part of and integral to contemporary society, facing similar challenges of modern-day society.

The images are of daily contemporary life; images of men and women going about routine tasks of socializing, playing music, posing for television and film crews and dancing. What is significant to note is the absence of the recurring and recognisable stereotypes of "hunter and gatherer" in traditional loin cloths (Lane 1996:21). Even when men are shown hunting and women and children gathering, they are without the typical props of beads and leather loin cloths. It is the person that is represented, not the pose and stereotype (Lane 1996:21). In this way the photographic exhibit attempts to deconstruct the hierarchical binaries set up in the SAM dioramas, wherein the Khoisan are depicted as different and existing as apart from society. The person living behind the standard "bushman" mask is represented within the frame. This brings attention to the essentially human aspects, whereby the Khoisan are not depicted as exotic or estranged.

I will now explore how Weinberg depicted aspects of Khoisan life that were not depicted in the SAM. In so doing Weinberg attempted to challenge the idealized and popularized images exhibited in the SAM Khoisan dioramas.

3.4 DECONSTRUCTING THE MYTH

By depicting another "untold" version of the Khoisan past, Weinberg attempts to demystify popular stereotypes about Khoisan cultures. He seeks to demystify the popular images of the Khoisan as enduring symbols of the tribal hunter-gatherer. In deconstructing the popular image of the Khoisan, Weinberg attempts to position his photographs as a step toward the realization of what he calls an "alternative symbol" of the Khoisan, in opposition to "the art-worked, set-up, commercial image of the Bushman" (Bester & Buntman 1991:52). His images of the Khoisan as a "transient culture" are an attempt to reveal the complexities innate in their situation as a disadvantaged black South African minority marginalized within the socio-economic and political realities of both apartheid and post-apartheid South

Africa (Bester & Buntman 1991:53). In this way, Weinberg situates the Khoisan within contemporary South African society, by depicting scenes from their daily life.

In offering a new version, Weinberg's documentary project attempts to demystify the SAM's portrayal of Khoisan history. Weinberg endeavours to challenge what he calls "the romance of the Bushman" by countering both the mythologizing conventional images of the Khoisan such as "bare-breastedness, the wearing of skins, a 'click' language, exaggerated body profiles, and an emphasis on 'natural locations'" (Bester & Buntman 1999:53) as can be seen reflected in the SAM dioramas. These conventional images of the Khoisan serve to highlight the inherent difference of the Khoisan culture and history within contemporary South African society.

In *Young girl feeds goats, Kagga Kamma* (1996)*, as depicted in Figure 2*, Weinberg plays with the spatial separation between the meeting place at Kagga Kamma as a "stage" where the encounter is played out, and the hidden "backstage" to which the Khoisan group retreats after their performance (Bester & Buntman 1999:52). By exposing the backstage, through the inclusion of livestock, a plastic container, makeshift shacks, and "Western" clothing within an image of contemporary, everyday exchange, Weinberg attempts to challenge the stage on which this particular version of the Khoisan is performed. The "stage" in this instance, is the SAM Khoisan dioramas that represented a partial and selective version of Khoisan history and culture.
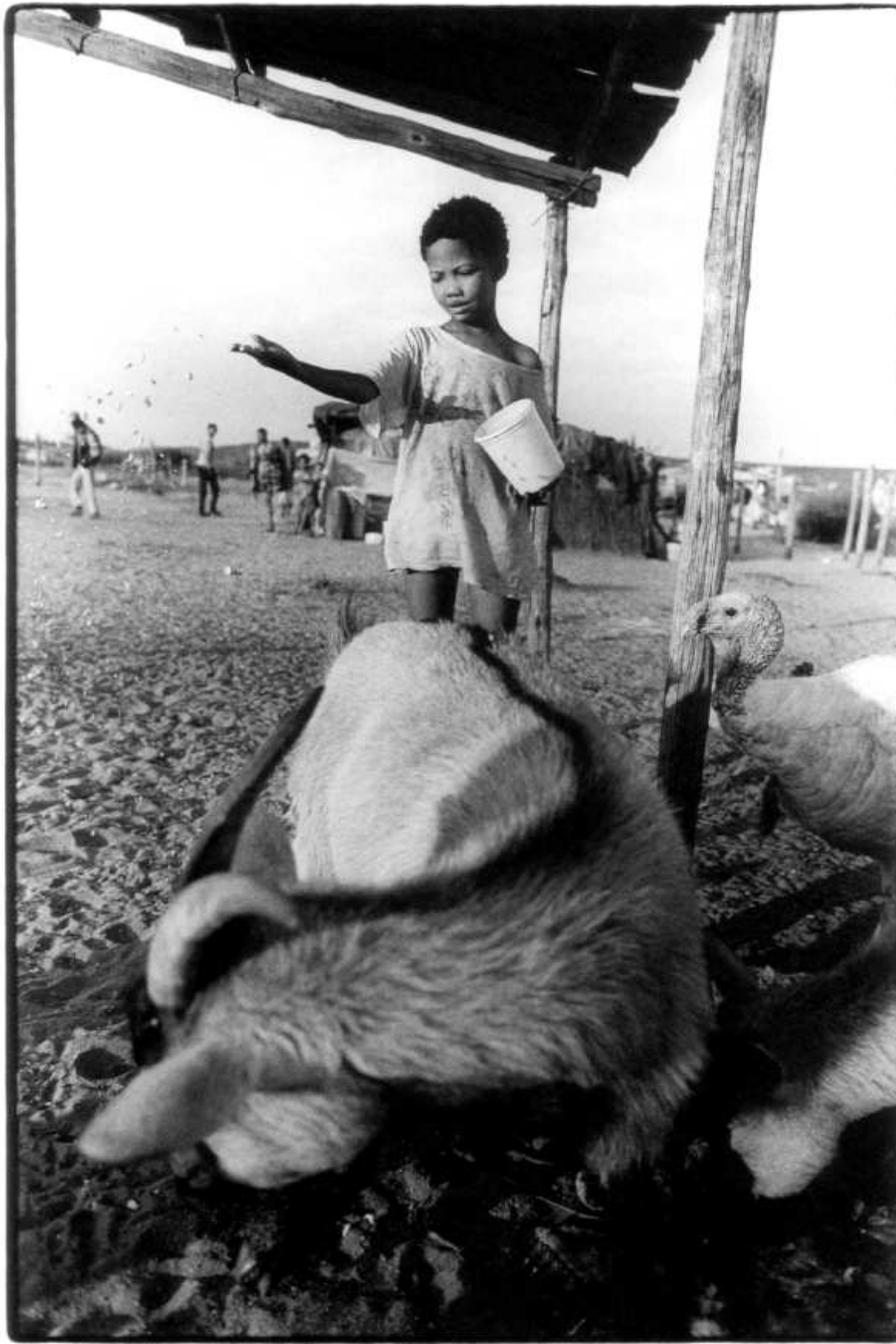
Figure 2. Paul Weinberg, *Young girl feeds goats, Kagga Kamma* **(1996).**

This "stage" is deconstructed by Weinberg in that it is depicted to be merely a performance for a public on which an idealized Khoisan lifestyle is set up and

played out. The "stage" is contrasted with the "real" elements of everyday life that populate the photograph. These elements of "real", contemporary life are depicted in another work *A young girl on a swing, Schimdstdrift army camp, Northern Cape* (1993), as depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Paul Weinberg, ***A young girl on a swing, Schimdstdrift army camp, Northern Cape*** **(1993).**

The child in the photograph, *A young girl on a swing, Schimdstdrift army camp, Northern Cape* (1993) (Figure 3), is set against a backdrop of army tents, not only highlighting the transient lifestyle of the two Khoisan communities, the !Xu and Khwe, but also emphasizing their consistent inclusion in the South African National Defence Force base at Schmidtsdrift since 1990 (Bester & Buntman 1999:52). This image portrays the Khoisan as integrally involved in all elements of contemporary South African life.

Furthermore the image of *Preacher Robert, dances during a Zionist Church serrvice, Schmidtsdrift, Northern Cape* (1993), seen in Figure 4, illustrates the Khoisan participation in contemporary Christian life.

Figure 4. Paul Weinberg *Preacher Robert, dances during a Zionist Church service, Schmidtsdrift, Northern Cape* (1993).

These three photographs attempt to establish a space that is very different from the traditional images produced by the SAM. The nuances in these images suggest some of the individual circumstances and problems of the Khoisan at the tourist site and army camp. Rather than presenting an image of a primordial Khoisan community existing completely outside of Western society, Weinberg emphasizes the similarities of the Khoisan, for example, the Christian religion that this particular Khoisan community practise. By showing them as contemporary practising Christians, Weinberg challenges the SAM's traditional standardized depiction of a Khoisan culture with its unfamiliar traditions and supposedly primal beliefs (Bester & Buntman

50

1999:53).

Weinberg's expression of an "alternative" reflection of the Khoisan is mixed with an accepted "real" image of the Khoisan, as Bester & Buntman's (1999: 58) quote him:

> If this is the real situation the people are experiencing, I need to tell that story; it made it for me, more real, the fact that people could hunt and gather, collect vegetables and listen to the radio. So it was against that backdrop that I felt the necessity to tell something different, to see them in much more realistic contexts, and to show the issues that they really have to face.

Thus, Weinberg attempts to integrate a more whole image of the Khoisan way of life, not only depicting the uncontested symbol of hunter-gatherer lifestyle but also the struggles and triumphs of everyday contemporary life.

In summary, I have explored how Weinberg's photographs subvert the primordial images as set up in the SAM dioramas, by presenting a non-idealized aspect of Khoisan life. In this way, Weinberg attempts to reverse the hierarchical binaries set up in the SAM, by situating the Khoisan within contemporary contexts and facing current challenges and issues. Their daily routine and religious beliefs depict them as integrally involved in all aspects of South African society, as opposed to depicting them as existing in a timeless and primordial landscape as depicted in the SAM dioramas.

I will now look at how various members of Khoisan groups contested the photographs in the Miscast exhibit. Several of these members of the Khoisan community strongly contested the notion of depicting the Khoisan as merely another aspect of Western contemporary society. A strong nostalgia was thus expressed for a return to how the Khoisan were depicted in exhibits such as the SAM dioramas.

3.5 PUBLIC RESPONSE TO THE MISCAST EXHIBIT

The exhibit, which attempted to deconstruct the popular fantasy of the "noble" Khoisan hunter-gatherer, met with firm resistance (Shannon & Steven 1999:70). Quite a few Khoisan representatives, who were interviewed after having visited the exhibit, divulged the need for a continuity of romantic stereotypes of Khoisan as noble savages, existing apart from Western society, as represented in the SAM (Shannon & Steven 1999:70). Thus it can be seen that various Khoisan members would have preferred a celebration of their cultural diversity, as opposed to doing away entirely with "difference".

Many expressed anger about the fact that the pristine image of Khoisan was being compromised and spoiled by Weinberg's photographs of modern Bushmen living in poverty, drinking alcohol, and dressing in Western clothing. They believed that Weinberg's photographs of contemporary Khoisan soldiers, farm labourers; and Christian worshippers disturbed the traditional notion of Khoisan as survivors of the late Stone Age hunter-gatherer society (Shannon & Steven 1999:70). Thus, it was felt by certain members of the Khoisan community that the Miscast exhibit sought to undermine and devalue the cultural differences and uniqueness of the Khoisan. In this way, Khoisan cultural differences are no longer celebrated or recognized.

Another issue raised was resistance to the role of a white woman in depicting Khoisan history. This issue is discussed by Goodnow in her work *Challenge and transformation: museums in Cape Town and Sydney* (2006). The Miscast exhibit caused further controversy by demonstrating that a critical public cannot be represented by an outside author that attempts to deconstruct the past on behalf of a public still living it (Goodnow 2006:182). Skotnes tried to revise and resurrect an aspect of Khoisan history by documenting and

displaying aspects of a history that had not previously been depicted (Shannon & Steven 1999:70). She succeeds in bringing the public into open negotiation with its past, but is unable to transcend her own position as a privileged white European confounding her desire to erect a politics of deconstruction and resistance.

Skotnes herself is aware of her complex role as a situated interpreter of Khoisan history, as she states in her article *Civilised off the face of the earth: museum display and the silencing of the /Xam* (2001:314):

> I also tried to suggest that history is always fragmentary and incomplete, and that histories are, like displays, always temporary and contingent, endlessly able to be re-shaped by new insights…Thus history only begins and ends when its details are interpreted, and these interpretations are necessarily political.

This statement is further emphasized by a quote in the entrance to the exhibition which states "there is now no Native past without the Stranger, no Stranger without the Native. No one can hope to be mediator or interlocutor in that opposition of Native and Stranger…nor can anyone speak just for the one, just for the other". This quote highlights the complicated role of Skotnes as a curator of an exhibition on Khoisan history as well as her position as a white woman.

Thus, new hierarchical binary oppositions are in turn set up, where Skotnes as a white woman is placed opposite the subject, being Khoisan culture, and as the central narrator/curator of the Khoisan exhibit, she is perceived to occupy a privileged status. In an attempt to deconstruct the hierarchical binaries set up in the SAM, Skotnes inadvertently sets up new hierarchies, which are in turn challenged by a discerning public. Thus the difference between white woman/Khoisan as well as the differences between insider/outsider are acknowledged and explored. By acknowledging and

exploring these differences within the exhibit, the exhibit provides a way in which further meaning and insight is created.

In summary, I have explored how reaction to the Miscast exhibit was varied and have highlighted certain issues relating to binary oppositions. Interestingly, various members of the Khoisan community argued for a return to the ways in which the SAM presented Khoisan history and culture. Another issue was the opposition felt toward the idea of an outsider intervening on behalf of Khoisan. These responses emphasize that the binary oppositions of insider/outsider, white culture/black culture, and Western society/indigenous culture that exist within society cannot be under-valued or disregarded, as is evident in the conflicted reaction to the SAM and the Miscast exhibit.

The Miscast exhibit attempted to overturn and dismantle the hierarchies set up in the SAM, so as to allow for a different representation of Khoisan history and culture. As Degenaar (1987:14) states, "[i]t is then that re-writing becomes the opportunity to overturn hierarchies, to expose power-relations, to unmask prejudices based on the privileging of race, class, sex, culture and ethnicity, to become the voice of the silent cause of history".

However, what is significant to note here, is where in dismantling the hierarchies of the past, we are vigilant that we do not entirely do away with difference. What feminist Scott (1988:174) states on difference can also be to the notion of the "other":

> Placing equality and difference in antithetical relationship has, then, a double effect. It denies the way in which difference has long figured in political notions of equality and it suggests that sameness is the only ground on which equality can be claimed. It thus puts feminists in an impossible position, for as long as we argue within the terms of discourse set up by this opposition we grant the current conservative premise that since women cannot be identical to men in all respects,

they cannot expect to be equal to them. The only alternative, it seems to me, is to refuse to oppose equality to difference and insist continually on differences – differences as the condition of individual and collective identities, differences as the constant challenge to the fixing of those identities, history as the repeated illustration of the play of differences, differences as the very meaning of equality itself.

Similarly, with regards to the "other" in society, inherent differences, such as skin colour, religion, culture, and language can predispose the "other" to be placed at a disadvantage within hierarchical binaries. The "other" in society is different to that of white European, Western society and thus if we say that the condition for equality is sameness, then this poses problems when we try and make room for the "other" within society. By recognizing and valuing differences within society, we can attempt to do away with hierarchical binaries, and yet still live and exist in a society where there are differences between cultures yet these are not placed on a hierarchical scale.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Despite the conflicted reaction of various members of the public to the Miscast exhibit, the postmodern exhibit was successful in its achievement of its central aim, which according to Skotnes (2001:313) was to encourage and allow for active participation in meaningful commemoration. In this way it is more about the process of learning and creating the past as opposed to simply displaying yet another closed version of the past.

The Miscast exhibit successfully opened up a space for debate and engagement with a public, where previously there had been almost none. This can be seen in a statement by a member of a Khoisan community: "it is through Miscast that we begin to know more about ourselves" (Skotnes 2001:319). In this way, the Miscast exhibit successfully embodies an aspect of post-structuralism as it allows for this process of negotiation and engagement to be open-ended, whilst not offering neat and easy solutions

that attempt a closure of the past within the exhibition.

By inviting and enabling the Khoisan to engage with the exhibit, Skotnes fulfils one of the aims of the exhibit, which was to reintegrate the Khoisan into the act and process of the recording of their own history. Skotnes does this by engaging the public in response to the exhibit. Skotnes wanted to transform the previous relationship between the museum and the public by enabling the public to "talk back", and in this way challenge the way in which previous museum rhetoric represented Khoisan past. The public, then, is able to actively participate in Khoisan representation and not be sidelined, and relegated to the peripheries.

In this way Skotnes loosens the hold of the colonial and apartheid past, where the Khoisan had previously no say in how they were portrayed, as can be seen in the dioramas of the SAM. This is very much a post-structural approach that challenges the notion of one unifying truth, but proposes instead a platform where different debates about the past and its representation can be argued and played out, and thus prevents a closure of the past within the memorial.

The reactions from the visitors to the exhibition raised further questions and brought various issues to the forefront, all of which successfully engaged the public into re-thinking their past in post-apartheid South Africa. As Skotnes (2001:313) states regarding her central aim of the Miscast exhibit, it was "the attempt to structure into the form of the exhibit a high degree of multivalence so it would be more about knowledge in the making than a presentation of the already known".

By successfully opening up a space for communication, the exhibit challenges the very basis upon which the modern museum operates: as a living and relevant site that encourages community debate and communication. As Skotnes originally claimed, she was not interested in accurately representing the Khoisan past by simply accessing the truth of the past, but rather she was interested in actively exploring the social relations between European colonizers and indigenous people within the present.

In fostering dialogue, the public boundaries of identity and difference in the new democratic nation are redefined and social hierarchies are effectively questioned. Once the public is actively and effectively involved in the process of commemoration, there is no longer a clearly delineated boundary of "us and them"; between the curator and the viewer. The inherent hierarchical binary opposition that is set up in the modern SAM is deconstructed, as the viewer actively engages and becomes a part of the process of commemoration. The curator does not simply disseminate a superior knowledge to an accepting and pliant public, but instead the space of commemoration becomes a question and a challenge to the public to respond and actively participate within the process of commemoration.

This is vital to my argument for a relevant commemoration within contemporary society. A museum or memorial that shuts out the public and attempts to disseminate an official truth will in turn be forgotten by its public. In contrast a memorial site that invites dialogue and participation allows for a process of commemoration that is able to remain alive and receptive to its public.

Chapter 4: Engaging with the Past

4.1 ON A POST-1994 MEMORIAL SITE THAT EMBODIES DERRIDA'S CONCEPT OF THE *BRICOLEUR*

District Six, Cape Town, is South Africa's foremost site of forced removals. In February 1966, the then Minister of Community Development, PW Botha, declared District Six a "white" group area. Over 60 000 people of colour were evacuated and much of the District was physically destroyed. Soon after the evacuation, the state set about re-inscribing District Six as a "white" group area. By the early 1980s, when the last residents were removed, almost two-thirds of the area had been appropriated and reused by the apartheid state. However, many years after the forced removals and reconstruction of the District Six, the area continues to have a strong hold on former residents (www.districtsix.co.za accessed on 06/06/2007).

When Mitchell, American scholar of public art, visited the District in 1997, he stated of the site: "it is unprecedented … that a community would have such a powerful cling to a site. It seems when buildings are torn down the erasure of memory is pretty much complete. I don't see that loss of memory that loss of community here" (quoted in Bedford and Murinik 1998:13). The memories to which the community clung were indeed powerful. Against the apartheid order, which sought to define people's identities in the narrow vocabulary of race, people found in District Six the social resources to live across the limiting boundaries of colour, class and religion.

The area was and still is a source of spiritual and moral sustenance for its people, signposted by its religious diversity, its colour and exuberance. So emblematic is District Six that District Sixers have difficulty in separating their identities from the sheer physical presence of the place. For instance, almost twenty-five years after having been evicted from her parental home in District

Six, Ngcelwane Nomvuyo (www.districtsix.co.za accessed on 06/06/2007) talks of the almost sensual pleasure she derived from just tripping off the names of the various streets of District Six.

The District Six Museum was not planned as a permanent space, but held a number of small exhibits and events around the city from 1992. On 10 December 1994, it opened the *Streets: retracing District Six* exhibition in its present venue in an old Methodist church. The District Six ex-resident community who attended the exhibit refused to let the doors close at the end of the exhibition's run and a volunteer force began operating the old church as a permanent exhibition space (Minty 2006:426). The fact that the District Six Museum began as an unofficial project by volunteers plays a vital role in the current Museum and is indicative of the role the people have within the memorial site of the Museum.

In this chapter I will look at how the District Six Museum attempts to commemorate this past in ways that are inclusive and open to individual narratives of the past. In exploring the District Six Museum's response to the past I will employ Derrida's post-structural ideas on *bricolage* and the *engineer*. First I will give some background on these post-structural ideas and explain how I integrate them in my analysis of the District Six Museum, after which I will apply these post-structural language terms to an exhibit with the District Six Museum.

4.2 DERRIDA'S *BRICOLEUR* AND *ENGINEER*

As explored in chapter two, according to Derrida in his work *Writing and difference* (1978) *bricolage* means to stop attributing a "truth value" to a structure or system, but rather to view the system as a construct, as something built around a central idea that holds the whole thing in place, even though that central idea may be flawed or even an illusion. Furthermore

these constructs are seen as man-made and cannot lay claim to any telos or origin. Derrida and Levi-Strauss (1978:360) call this latter method *bricolage*, where *bricolage* does not concern itself with the purity or stability of the system, but rather uses what is present so as to complete a task at hand.

Thus, what is significant to note in this context is that the District Six Museum does not concern itself with imposing a uniform, homogenous version of past events, or representing the past accurately, but rather utilizes the "means at hand", the stories and narratives of former residents, the relics and objects from the past, all of which contribute to a layering of memories in an active and inclusive process of commemoration (Derrida 1978:285).

This idea is evident in the reproduction of a giant map of the very streets and houses that were bulldozed by apartheid in 1964 which can be seen in Figure 5, Figure 6 and Figure 7. The floor map was created in 1994 as part of an exhibition entitled *Streets: Retracing District Six*. Bergman, the resource centre coordinator at the museum states of the map, that it is very much a centre piece in the space of the museum and many thousands of visitors and locals flock to the museum to view it (www.districtsix.co.za accessed on 08/09/2008). Previous inhabitants have brought memorabilia and placed them on this map. This is accompanied by rites of re-telling and remembering the stories of daily life, family and social life and experiences that together made up the complex and vital area of District Six. The map becomes a space where inscriptions take place, from writing down names of families to places frequented in the past.

The map that lies in the centre of the District Six Museum I believe successfully embodies Derrida's theories on the postmodern *bricoleur*, as opposed to the modern *engineer*. The idea of the map, I believe, is indicative of presenting a form of *bricolage*; where the multitude of narratives of former residents, written into the map, commemorates the past and allows for a

process of commemoration that is unscripted and spontaneous.

In this way it is not about imposing a single truth-claim to the past, but rather it is the *act* of commemoration that is of value within the District Six Museum and in this way vividly connects the former residents to the diverse past of the District.

The idea of *bricolage* as a tool for commemoration challenges the truth claims of the apartheid ideal. The apartheid ideal can be likened to Derrida's *engineer*, where the engineer is said to design buildings that have "to be stable", structures which have very little or no place for play, spontaneity or human interaction. Thus, the apartheid *engineer* attempted to create an essentialist history by suppressing the voices that did not conform to its own selective ideology. This can be seen in the idea of an engineered apartheid city, wherein a whites-only old-age home, a police barracks, and a segregated Technikon were built in place of the vibrant multifarious area of District Six.

In this way apartheid ideology can be compared to that of the *engineer* and the District Six Museum to that of the *bricoleur*. This process of *bricolage* allows for the layering down and uncovering of a web of differing versions of the past that is in opposition to Derrida's (1978:285) *engineer*, who attempts to rigidly arrange history according to a defined and fixed ideology. This active process of commemoration in the District Six Museum is not tied to any goal as such, the outcome is not decided from the outset and oftentimes the views and recollections of former residents are contradictory. As a former resident and Museum trustee states, "the Museum represents a living memorial and is more than just a static display…" (www.districtsix.co.za accessed on 23/03/2010). Thus what we see unfolding in the District Six Museum is an open negotiation with an historical and political legacy that worked to fix and seal ethnic difference to a defined territory.

The District Six Museum as a display case of official public culture can be seen to substantiate the changing ethnic and historical boundaries that define the state, but by the mere fact that it is a public space, it invites engagement in an emergent and unscripted manner. The public does not merely receive truths disseminated by the curators of the District Six Museum, they also engage with them and make them their own. In this way the District Six Museum seeks to rupture the hold of officialdom over the public consciousness, by encouraging a narrative that poses questions rather than depositing answers.

I will now further explore the creation of the giant floor map that forms part of the entrance of the District Six Museum. I will apply Derrida's theories on the *bricoleur* and *engineer* to the map exhibit and explore how the exhibit actively recollects the past in terms of *bricolage*.

4.3 MAPPING THE PAST

As an activist space, the District Six Museum has played a vital role through the engagement with the memories of ordinary people (www.districtsix.co.za accessed on 08/09/2008). In this way it focuses on oral histories as well as the creation of spaces of dialogue and engagement. Interactivity, community participation, co-authorship and the use of tactility in form are critical to the methods of the District Six Museum (www.districtsix.co.za accessed on 08/09/2008). Marking by hand on to museum exhibits reflects the engagement of bodies in an act of remembrance and is prominent in the two of the three signature pieces of the museum, the name cloth and the floor map.

The idea of visitors adding their own recollections and thoughts to the map

can be compared to a form of collage. The collage is essentially made from an assemblage of different forms, thus creating a new whole. This is ideally representative of what the District Six Museum attempts to create; a new whole out of the fragments of the past. Waldman of the Guggenheim Museum (www.guggenheimcollection.org accessed on 11/12/2008) states that collage "emphasizes concept and process over end product, collage has brought the incongruous into meaningful congress with the ordinary". In this way the fragments that the former District Sixers bring to the map may either be imaginary or lived memories, yet they all come together to form a new whole, that is never complete. It is this process of commemoration that is most relevant to the District Six Museum.

Figure 5. *The Map* **at the The District Six Museum in Cape Town, South Africa.**

Figure 6. *The Map* at the The District Six Museum in Cape Town, South Africa.
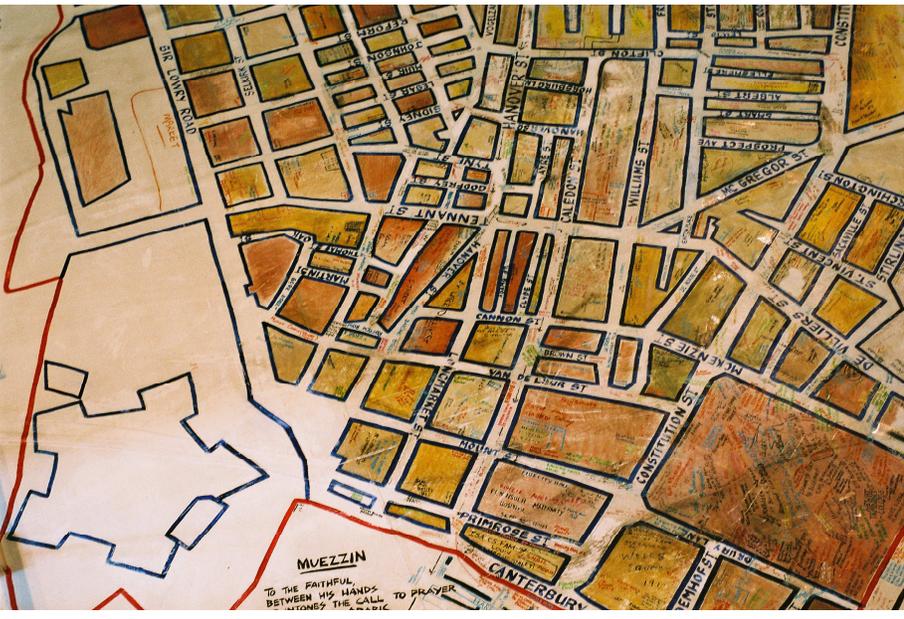
Figure 7. *The Map* at the The District Six Museum in Cape Town, South Africa.

The map stands for the whole, for the entire area of District Six, but just what that whole is, is made up by the residents of the district. As the former District Sixers walk over the map it is transformed from a two-dimensional graphic representation into the collection of experiences and relationships. But the life that this represents is in fragments, a mosaic of specific parts, so that the collective whole is constructed out of overlapping mosaics. This makes the memory of District Six more dense and acts as a form of *bricolage*. In this way the map becomes a *living* memorial.

The map of District Six, which is placed in the centre of the church, covering much of the floor space, is decorated with poems as well as linocuts by the artist, Davis, himself a District Sixer and a political activist. A certain ambivalence about the map reiterates the District Six Museum's aim that it does not wish to reify the past, by setting District Six in stone (or paper and plastic) and in this way enact a modern notion of a museum that solidifies its past in absolute truth claims. Yet, for many District Sixers the map is very powerful.

It is a site in the exhibition where people dynamically engage with the exhibit and turn it into something else, something living and thereby actively become part of the text (Soudien & Meltzer 1995:08). Not just content to sign their names and put their old addresses on the map, the ex-residents of District Six also wrote their names as well as their home addresses, their family names, shops, markets, and bus stops. In so doing they write themselves into the map; they render alive the map's physical representation.

The map is thus implicated in the declared intentions of the District Six Museum to resist apartheid's history by providing the opportunity for people to "re-possess the history of the area as a place where people lived, loved and struggled" and to "attempt to take back our right to signpost our lives with

those things we hold dear" (www.districtsix.co.za accessed on 16/07/2007). Through the map, District Sixers make visible the histories, which they have carried with them but which were rendered invisible in the destruction of the area.

By actively walking and writing their history on the map, District Sixers engage with and challenge the destructive and controlling discourse of apartheid, thus the *bricoleur* reclaims what the apartheid *engineer* attempted to destroy. The architects of apartheid attempted to destroy District Six and re-construct a segregated neighbourhood, in response to this, the former residents create a *bricolage* of their former past lives, so as to reclaim their past.

In addition, the idea of the map can be seen as the principal symbol of apartheid given the centrality of urban planning to apartheid's version of social engineering (Soudien & Meltzer 1995:08). As such, the map in the District Six Museum is a significantly effective way in which former residents can engage with apartheid's interventions into their lives. The map is a physical thing, an official text which in a straightforward manner depicts the basic topographical features of a region. It depicts streets names, landmarks, buildings but it is essentially lifeless; the map can be controlled in the interests of those in authority (Soudien & Meltzer 1995:08).

Official apartheid narrative stated that District Six was a slum, degenerate, crime and poverty ridden, "a blight on the social landscape requiring redemption" (Soudien & Meltzer 1995:08). In response to this the apartheid authorities utilized the map so as to systematically and methodically organize the destruction and consequent reconstruction of District Six. In a similar way the former District Sixers take back their past, their communities and homes destroyed by apartheid legislation by utilizing the notion of the map. By

actively writing in or drawing on the map, they are reclaiming the space that was taken from them.

The District Six Museum represents the "new South Africa", the "rainbow nation" as constituted out of a variety of identities, memories and engagements with the past. The writing into the map signifies this, as it enables former residents of the district to assert and remember the social structure of the area that apartheid managed to demarcate and classify in asocial terms. Former residents criticize and challenge, through recollection of the past, the official discourses of discrimination which apartheid policies and administrators propagated.

In this way the rigid and official language of apartheid that had the authority to repress and subjugate is subverted within the process of engaging the past. Within the map, dialogue emerges, where former residents speak about their former individual and community life. The District Six Museum challenges the *engineer*, the establishment of an enclosed set of narratives and a rigid civic language in South Africa by allowing the former residents and their descendants to actively respond.

The map and the people that engage with the map perform an act of *bricolage*, where *bricolage* is the necessity of borrowing one's concepts from the text of a heritage (Derrida 1978:285). Thus it can be said that the writing and re-writing of reminders of the past, addresses, places of significance, names, on to the map of the District, are interwoven to serve as an ongoing narrative of past events. This enactment of *bricolage* challenges the concept of the *engineer*, who attempts to suppress a community according to the *engineer's* rules and rigid set of truth-claims. The district would be erased and forgotten and thus the totalizing discourse of apartheid would create a homogenous society as Derrida (1978:285) states "out of nothing", where the

former lives and experiences of the District Sixers would be completely annihilated and forgotten.

In summary, I have explored the idea of the map in the District Six Museum as a means of encouraging the various narratives of memory. The map in the museum challenges the social emptiness of District Six as a destroyed area that was necessary to make Cape Town into a quintessentially *engineered* apartheid city. The people walking the map respond to this, criticizing apartheid's policies and actions in making Cape Town an apartheid city, by re-peopling and re-socializing the previous District Six with their stories. Their presence as former residents enables Derrida's process of *bricolage* and in so doing counters the destructive spatial engineering of apartheid.

4.4 DECONSTRUCTING THE CENTRE – THE LOST OBJECTS EXHIBIT

In further understanding the relevance of Derrida's *bricoleur* and the *engineer* within the District Six Museum, it is useful to look to other deconstructive strategies – that of Derrida's theory on deconstructing the centre as well as Lyotard's theory on "little" and "meta-narratives".

By deconstructing the notion of a centre, Derrida challenges in *Writing and difference* (1978) the traditional model that assigns an inviolable meaning to the centre of the structure, be it a mental or a physical structure. According to Derrida (1978:285), a centre is that part of a structure which focuses and organizes the entire system. By structure, Derrida (1978:285) proposes a philosophical system of ideas, a discourse in which all elements are defined by their relation to one another and given meaning by the position they occupy in the system's total arrangement.

Derrida (1978:278-294) states of the centre, "the function of this centre was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure…but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the *free play* of the structure". Thus, the notion of the centre mitigates and controls "play" within the structure, it provides the requisite coherence, organization, and stability for making the world appear ordered and logical according to its fixed ideology, whilst suppressing any spontaneity in or dissent to the "structure". Any discourse that was not aligned to the set rules of the structure was in turn repressed and condemned. Thus the heterogeneous region of District Six, an integrated area in which white, coloured and African working class people all lived, was seen to go against the central beliefs of apartheid ideology, which in turn necessitated its destruction (Bickford-Smith 1999:65).

Similarly one can state that the centre of the apartheid structure was controlled by the apartheid *engineer*. Apartheid structures required the security and certainty of a fixed truth and purpose, a centre whose firm principle controlled all variance. The centre of the apartheid structure attempted to create a single imposing viewpoint; what Lyotard (in Sim 1992:402) calls "grand narrative" which was to remain indisputable and uncontested.

According to Davies in his work *A companion to aesthetic* (2009), when Lyotard speaks of grand or meta-narratives he refers to large-scale theories and philosophies, for example the modern notion on the progress of history, and the rationalisation of science. They encompass large-scale theories such as Marxism or Hegeliansim (Davies 2009:543). Lyotard (in Sim 1992:402) states that "grand narrative is held to dominate and suppress 'little narratives', and is therefore to be resisted". Lyotard argues that all theoretical discourses have no ultimate claim to truth or knowledge.

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In his work, the *Postmodern condition: a report on knowledge* (1984), Lyotard opposes the dogmatism of meta-narratives to the heterogeneity of "little" narratives. Lyotard (1984:preface xxiv) states "…I define postmodernism as an incredulity toward meta-narratives". For Lyotard this disbelief in meta narrative allows for non-totalizing "little" narratives. Narrative as long as it remains little and heterogeneous, is considered by Lyotard (1984:xxiv) to be a kind of open and highly mobile form that resists all form of rigidity and suppression.

This heterogeneity is inherent in what Lyotard terms "language games". Since language is labile, variable and can not be pinned down, language therefore implies the multiplicity of the creation of meaning. Language, then, the very medium through which we interpret the world, is itself in a constant flux. If this is the case, all meaning is variable and we are never able to reach a final conclusion in our interpretations of the world. Lyotard stresses the variability of different language games in an attempt to challenge grand narrative. By accepting, as Lyotard believes, the variability of different language games as a given, we are better able to challenge the oppressive nature of grand narrative (Davies 2009:542). Society is then able to be alert to diversity and difference.

Carroll in his work *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida* (1987) examines Lyotard's resistance to meta-narratives (1987:159). For Carroll (1987:159), Lyotard considers the right to narration to be the basic right of alterity – this means not only the right of the individual subject to be and express her/himself, but rather the right of the "other" to be other, without conforming to pre-determined or pre-existing values and ideals. This right should be utilized by the "other" to question all systems and structures that would try to contain, or repress the "other". As West (1996:211) states of postmodernism

"[f]ar from producing some new and grandly unifying theory or inciting organised struggle against the 'system'. Postmodernists seek to entrench the multiplicity of discourses, knowledge, cultures, struggles and voices". Thus, meta-narrative would "challenge the terroristic suppression of diversity or difference" (West 1996:211). Postmodernism would disrupt this by promoting many different narratives and allowing for various voices to be heard, in other words it would allow for the right to narration.

Lyotard (1984:23) has argued that the most significant of the Marxist meta-narrative injustice was the way it refutes even the "heroes" of Marxism the right to narration. Everyone within the Marxist system is assigned a place within the system, where there is no allowance for narration. Being denied narration is not just a metaphor for injustice for Lyotard (1984:23), it is already a form of injustice itself. Similarly so, within apartheid discourse, where the right to express oneself was suppressed and destroyed along with the destruction of District Six.

The totalitarian state is, for Lyotard (1984:31-32), one in which all narrative functions are determined and assigned in advance and where all deviations from the meta-narrative are immediately repressed. He states:

> As a citizen of one of these regimes, you are taken at the same time for the co-author of its narrative, for the privileged listener, and for the perfect executor of the episodes assigned you. Your place is thus fixed in the three instances of the master-narrative and in all the details of your life. Your imagination as a narrator, listener or actor is completely blocked…A mistake in execution, an error of listening, a lapse of narration and you are locked up… .You are forbidden narration. Such is devastation.

The meta-narrative thus, enables injustice or "devastation" because it constitutes a denial of the imagination, a denial of the right to respond, challenge, to create, and to be different from the norm. In a certain sense, the

totalitarian state is an extreme extension of all meta-narratives; wherein the "narrators", "listeners" and "actors" are assigned to a fixed place and function; wherein narration and interpretation is suppressed (Carroll 1987:159).

Similarly, the totalizing apartheid narrative attempted to destroy District Six, and to assign its residents to a fixed place and function; to the peripheries of Cape Town as second-class citizens. Similar to Lyotard's notion of grand narrative the oppressive narrative of apartheid buried other perspectives under a single totalizing discourse; the dominant ideology literally razed and destroyed the multitude of micro-narratives. This can be seen in the demolishing of District Six, an area that did not fit according to the official grand narrative of apartheid. At the centre of this narrative there existed an order and a system whose motivation and belief was the inherent racial differences contained within cultures. In response to this totalizing meta-narrative, the people of District Six build the memorial to their area with many diverse individuals taking part and contributing to the process of commemoration. Each individual brings to the memorial site a narrative of their own.

One such exhibit within the District Six museum that I believe embodies Lyotard's "little" narratives and resists a totalising meta-narrative is that of "lost" or "found" objects. In this exhibit former residents of the area bring lost or found objects. According to the official website of the museum (www.districtsix.co.za accessed on 11/08/2008), the form of the exhibition is both multi-media and interdisciplinary containing a combination of former objects of District Six, paintings, documentary, digital and sound elements. The voices of narrators and transcribed life histories of numerous ex-residents are the major resource and departure point for the choice of exhibition themes.

Figure 8. *Lost objects exhibit* at the The District Six Museum in Cape Town, South Africa.

In the exhibit of "lost" and "found" objects (Figure 8), residents of District Six are encouraged to bring articles and display objects belonging to their former homes in the area. These objects provide reminders and markers of the former District Six. The objects' former practical uses in daily life are given new meanings in the context of the District Six Museum. The objects that are exhibited acquire new meaning over time and changing contexts, while simultaneously retaining traces of their former use. This becomes a play of sign substitution in which one sign in any discourse always remains other than itself and points to another which is other than itself. In this way meaning and interpretation within the District Six Museum always get passed along and are deferred but never fixed or attained.

The exhibit of former objects becomes in Derrida's (1970:225) words a "function, a sort of non-locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions [come] into play". The objects acquire new meaning over time and changing contexts, while simultaneously retaining traces of their former use. This reveals the innate conditionality of signs and gestures where value and meaning are always subject to and reliant upon its immediate circumstances.

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In terms of the exhibit, there is no access to an absolute certainty and no centre that controls the outcome of the exhibit. People bring to the exhibit in a haphazard manner, and the outcome is not determined. The lost and found objects can be seen as signs in the language network that point to other signs in a continual process of sign signification.

The exhibition is relevant as a form of commemoration of District Six, as it enables and allows for that which apartheid meta-narrative suppressed. Each individual contributes to the exhibit in a way that is unscripted and undefined. The exhibition is not assigned a specific role or outcome, but is rather an organic process where each participant is allowed to tell her/his own unique story.

In summary, by playing on absence and presence, by displaying items of the past in new and changed contexts, the Museum reinforces the conditions of indeterminacy and uncertainty that define the postmodern experience of representation and commemoration. According to post-structuralism, words do not inherently contain meaning in the same way as facts and objects do not inherently contain meaning, but are in fact meaningless in themselves (Jenkins 1999:53).

They acquire different meaning over time according to what they refer back to or point towards. This condition produces the possibility of a conceptual process where "the centre is not the centre" and the free play of meaning is continuously made possible (Derrida 1982:224). It is in this way that the District Six Museum allows for the differing truths and "little" narratives of the past in a valid and relevant manner by being open to uncertainty and personal interpretation.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In summary, what this chapter examined is a notion of commemoration that does not solidify into one narrative or view of the past. This idea is not only integral to a postmodern commemoration that is able to remain a vital and rejuvenating force within society but also integrally significant to the process of commemoration within the District Six Museum itself. What is meant by this is that the participatory and multifarious style of commemoration within the Museum provides a powerful challenge to the inherent totalising and oppressive nature of the apartheid regime. The Museum provides us with a very different experience than that of official apartheid discourse where truth was disseminated as rigid and absolute. By opening the text of the District Six Museum to all narratives and interpretations of the past, it challenges the traditional unitary and authorial viewpoint of apartheid and in this way it is able to remain vigilant towards all forms of totalitarianism and dogma.

Consider Degenaar's (www.unisa.ac.za/default.asp accessed on 07/04/2009) views on postmodernism and dogma:

> Postmodernity is characterized by an ironic approach to all forms of closure. By not being committed to a final system of knowledge and by acknowledging the limitations of all kinds of understanding when confronted by the complexity of the inter textual nature of things... The fact that finality cannot be achieved does not entail that projects of understanding cannot be assessed in terms of their appropriateness. The appropriate strategy of postmodernity is eternal vigilance, holding off all gods and tyrants who impose a final view on society.

In place of the "gods" and "tyrants" of the apartheid narrative, the historical narrative of the District Six Museum is purposefully heterogeneous, varied and in constant motion. The engagement by the visitor with the exhibits allows the District Six Museum to break free of a totalizing discourse, as

differing personal accounts create tensions and conflicting viewpoints. Rorty (in Jenkins 1995:111) speaks of the necessity for this "tension" within discourse:

> Without such splits – without tensions which make people listen to unfamiliar ideas in the hope of…overcoming those tensions – there is no such hope. So our best chance for transcending our acculturation is to be brought up in a culture which prides itself on not being monolithic – on its tolerance for a plurality of sub-cultures and its willingness to listen to neighbouring cultures.

This "tolerance" and "willingness" to listen to neighbouring cultures can be seen in the multifarious exhibits of the "map" and the "lost" and "found" objects exhibit. Both exhibits allow for a readiness to listen to various narratives. This idea as understood here does not allow the work of the postmodern museum to be finished or complete. The postmodern District Six Museum acknowledges its communal nature and the need for open dialogue, as an antidote to the powerfully oppressive nature of apartheid ideology.

It is significant to note that according to transcripts from the District Six website (www.districtsix.co.za accessed on 06/07/2009) the success of the exhibition depends upon this ongoing process of revival. The exhibition honours the oral, physical and visual material contributed by ex-residents. Each individual who reclaims her/his personal history within the museum also participates in an ongoing construction of the past. In this way the exhibition permits catharsis by allowing a community to actively create and be created by the exhibition.

By interrogating and exposing the official language/text of apartheid, the exhibition attempts to deconstruct the "engineered" notion of the "centre" by allowing for the text of the museum to be inherently participatory in nature. This in effect allows the museum to remain an ongoing and vital space for

commemoration and as I have investigated the District Six Museum is an example of a museum that embodies the capacity of the memorial space to absorb new meanings in new times.

What is significant to note is how the language of the District Six Museum challenges the rigidity and fixity traditionally embodied within the modern museum. By allowing for exhibitions that change and transform with time, as in the map exhibit, the Museum not only refers to its own physical temporality, but also the contingency of all meaning and memory. As such, the District Six Museum proposes in its exhibits, an antidote to the apparent permanence of the apartheid ideology. However by negating the permanence of meaning and embodying the transitory nature of memory, the Museum does not negate memory. Rather it challenges the illusion of permanence that is traditionally upheld in the modern museum and monument. In this way, by resisting the illusion of permanence, the District Six Museum rejuvenates the very notion of commemoration itself.

Chapter 5: Reconstruction and Reconciliation

5.1 RE-THINKING THE VOORTREKKER MONUMENT

In this chapter, the Voortrekker Monument is traced as an example of a monument constructed with a modern ideology. I will first discuss the ontological and teleological assumptions of the founding beliefs of the Voortrekker Monument. I then argue for a post-structural metaphorical approach to the Monument. The reason for this chapter is to demonstrate that even though a monument is constructed with certain ideals that are no longer applicable, when applying a post-structural approach to the monument, it allows for a liberation of the modern text of the monument.

The postmodern challenge to the modern notion of a teleology and an ontology of memory is evident in the Voortrekker Monument, a monument that over time has acquired new meaning and place within a radically changed political and social South African landscape. I will explore how far we are able to integrate a monument such as the Voortrekker Monument, with a history as foundational to apartheid ideology, within a radically transformed post-apartheid democratic society. I argue that through the process of deconstruction the Voortrekker Monument did not simply become a shadow of its former self, but instead has managed to remain a relevant and engaging site within post-apartheid South Africa.

The methodology of deconstruction, although deeply critical of modern texts, can also be utilized in revitalising these very texts. The ensuing effort of re-instating these texts into contemporary dialogue, re-imparts value to a text that would otherwise be deemed superfluous. In this way I will focus on how the process of deconstruction shifts to a process of reconstruction within the Voortrekker Monument.

In this chapter, I will focus on this process of deconstruction as reconstruction through the post-structural notion of metaphoric language. The post-structural metaphorical approach to language enables us to grasp the notion that "metaphor" is a continual and unending process. Within this process meaning is not a stable, determined fact, but is rather continuously disrupted by new metaphoric patterns, which will in turn be disrupted by new metaphors.

What is significant to note in the metaphoric creation of new meaning, is the notion that a post-structural view of metaphor is that it should not relate to an original thought (Potgieter 2003:59-60). Derrida (1984:123) states: "the term metaphor generally implies a relation to an original 'property' of meaning, a 'proper' sense to which it directly or indirectly or equivocally refers…". However, according to a post-structural approach there is no such concept of a copy or a unique and original idea or thought as we do not have an access to a deeper reality, from which the "original" thought is accessed (Potgieter 2003:60).

This is in contrast to modern thought, which can be seen as instances of correspondence thinking. Correspondence thinking suggests that we are presented with surface structures or patterns that conceal hidden codes that when successfully implemented, disclose a "deeper" truth than the one that was at first presented to us (Potgieter 2003:48). Applied to the Voortrekker Monument, a modern reading would mean that the Monument inherently contains a "deep" pre-given quality or ideology that is always able to be uncovered or revealed to the viewer. The Monument site, therefore, inherently contained a deep and profound meaning, such as a Voortrekker "heritage" and a "heroic" past.

According to post-structuralism, instead of a "deeper truth", that waits to be exposed or defined, meaning exists within the chain of signifiers. Burgin

(1986:50-51) states of metaphor:

> Text, as conceived of by Barthes… is seen not as an 'object' but rather as a 'space' between the object and the reader/viewer – a space made up of endlessly proliferating meanings which have no stable point of origin, nor of closure. In the concept of 'text' the boundaries which enclosed the 'work' are dissolved; the text opens continually into other texts, the space of inter-textuality.

Interpretations of texts then cannot claim to be authoritative and definitive, as meaning can always be deferred. In this way deconstruction challenges the notion of a unified voice as a single authority of the text. As Barthes (1977:146) states: "the text does not release a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash".

This challenges the ontological notion that a memorial is able to retain the original intention of the author/artist which can be communicated to all who view it whilst still remaining a relevant site. Additionally according to a modern ontology of memory, an author communicates her/his intentions to a determinate viewer. The "telos" of this progression is the revitalisation of the original presence of the author from within the text (Dooley & Kavanagh 2007:100). Thus when we read a text or visit a memorial or monument, our task as the reader/visitor is to discover the original intention of the author.

In contrast to modern theory, it is the possibility and potential for second (or multiple) interpretation that makes all forms of commemoration meaningful and relevant in society. If one reads the Voortrekker Monument only in terms of the artist's original intention, the monument would clearly have no relevance in contemporary South African society. The Monument would have become an outmoded and superfluous monument that represents an outdated ideology. Only in light of the postmodern experience does the

Voortrekker Monument maintain its relevance within South African society. The postmodern idea of the metaphoric nature of the text of memorial site is central to my argument that the Voortrekker Monument has maintained its relevance within post-apartheid society.

Through the post-structural lens the Voortrekker Monument is a site that represents a shift from the modern view that art signifies a pre-existing meaning to the view that art is a catalyst for the invention of new meanings. As I investigate the transition from a modern ontological and teleological understanding of art to a postmodern metaphorical understanding is an affirmative form of commemoration for post-apartheid South Africa.

Degenaar (1986:109) remarks on the positive outcome of deconstruction:

> The meaning of life consists in the continual creation of meaning. Meaning is created by way of playing with signs. The role of deconstruction is to protect man from death of dogmatism and premature totalisation in which signs are assumed to escape the interminable play of differences. Meaning of life is found in the process of involving ourselves in the interminable play of difference without a privileged position which transcends human limitations.

Sarup (1993:50) argues that:

> Metaphors can be productive of new insights and fresh illuminations. They can promote unexpected or subtle parallels or analogies. Metaphors can encapsulate and put forward proposals for another way of looking at things. Through metaphor we can have an increased awareness of alternative possible worlds.

This approach initiates an insight into commemoration as a space for the creation of new meanings. Potgieter states (2003:58): "here there is the option of not only providing spaces for previously silenced voices, but providing space for voices that do not yet exist". In this way, by approaching

the Voortrekker Monument as metaphor, the process of deconstruction enables the process of reconstruction.

The first section of this chapter looks at the reasoning behind the construction of the Voortrekker Monument. Thereafter it looks at the founding teleological and ontological principles of the Monument. I do so, so as to reach a further understanding regarding the ideals with which the monument was created and highlight how these ideals have changed over time. This will ultimately serve to show that the architect is not fully in control of the possible meanings that the Monument can produce. Each viewer will interpret the interplay of signs of the memorial site differently, since all meaning is provisional and we will never reach finality in our interpretations.

5.2 THE VOORTREKKER MONUMENT

The Voortrekker Monument was realized, I believe, as an example of a modern museum that embodies Derrida's term "archive fever". In his work *Archive Fever: a Feudian impression* (1995:02), Derrida defines the origin of the term archive:

> The meaning of 'archive'…comes to it from the Greek Arkheion: initially a house, a domicile, and address, the residence of the superior magistrate…those who commanded… .On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is their home, in that *place*…that official documents are filed. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret archives.

Thus according to Derrida, in safe-guarding "official documents", "public officials" are simultaneously accorded the right to "interpret archives" (1995:02). Therefore, by selecting certain documents for the archive, various documents are privileged over others through the process of inclusion and

exclusion into the archive. In this way the archiving of documents becomes interpretive rather than simply factual, where certain documents selected for the archive in order to serve as reminders of an "original" event.

Dooley & Kavanagh in their work *The philosophy of Derrida* (2007), discuss Derrida's notion of the "archive" and state that an "original" event is externalised and represented in some form of an archive, be it in a written testimony or monument. According to Dooley & Kavanagh (2007:97), the sole aim of this "archive" is to recollect the "original" event.

This then becomes an ontological desire to recollect the "purity" of this "original" event. It also becomes a teleological desire for identity, completion and conservation that holds on to the idea of an inevitable historical progress. This ontological and teleological desire can be seen in the architect, Moerdijk's statement regarding the Voortrekker Monument that it "had to remind people for a thousand years or more [of] the great deeds that had been done" (in Coombes 2003:56).

To understand the significance of this statement and the role that the Voortrekker Monument played in establishing the cultural identity of the Afrikaner, in South Africa, it is necessary to look briefly at why it was built, and at the socio-economic and political climate in which it was erected.

The Voortrekker Monument, situated south of Pretoria, is a perfect example of a monument that was constructed to mark an historic event, namely the Great Trek of 1835 to 1852. At the same time, the Monument commemorates the approximately twenty thousand people who participated in this migration from the Cape Colony into the interior of Southern Africa. Although the Voortrekkers perhaps did not realize the importance of their migration, it has been a great basis of inspiration for historiography and literature, and has led

to the construction of approximately thirty monuments countrywide – the most significant of these being the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria.

The conscious purpose of the Voortrekker Monument is clearly set out by Van Niekerk in the foreword to the official guide of 1954:

> The Monument will arouse the pride of belonging to a nation of heroes who saw the Great Trek through; it will arouse and strengthen a love for the country for whose sake so much was sacrificed; and it will strengthen a faith in God whom the people trust. It will induce them to devote their lives to the duty and the privilege of building a nation.

From the above quote one can deduce ontological and teleological aspects embodied within the Monument. Ontological, as the Monument will serve to enable access to a golden past, replete with heroes and sacrifice, and teleological as it is forward looking in its claim that the Monument will aid in building a nation.

Further teleological and ontological modes of thinking are strongly reflected in all aspects relating to the Voortrekker Monument. In the literature surrounding the monument, all of which was utilized to perpetuate various founding myths of Afrikaner history, a teleology of thought can clearly be deduced through a quote by Van Niekerk (1954:01) in the foreword to the official guide that states: "the Monument will arouse the pride of belonging to a nation of heroes, who saw the Great Trek through…it will induce them to devote their lives to the duty and the privilege of building a nation". In this way one can see how a profound teleology of thought dominated the conception of the Voortrekker monument, wherein the monument sought to commemorate the heroes of the Great Trek, whilst at the same time looking to the future in terms of nation-building. The teleological notion of nation-building can be seen inscribed in cenotaph within the Monument (Figure 8), where the heroes of the Voortrekker war are seen to have died for the goal of building the South

African nation.
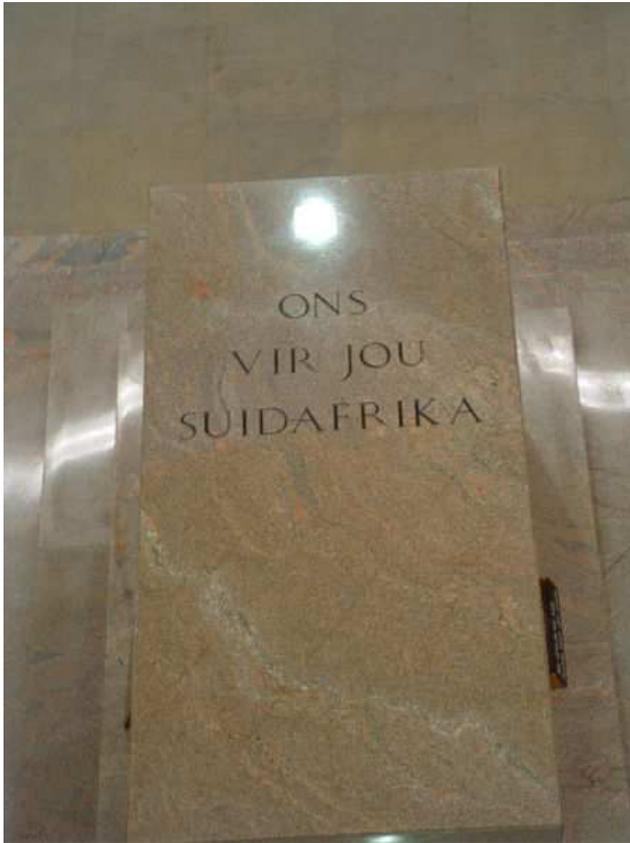
Figure 9. Cenotaph inside the Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria.

This teleology can also be seen in the inaugural speech to the Monument, of the then prime minister of the Union of South Africa, wherein Malan describes the trekker as "exclusively and bound up in their own blood ties, they had to be children of South Africa" (in Coombes 2003:26). Furthermore, there was the realization that as bearers and propagators of Christian civilization, they had a national calling which had set them and their descendants the inexorable task on the one hand to act as "guardians over the 'non-European' races, but on the other hand to see the maintenance of their own white paramountcy and of their white race purity" (in Coombes 2003:26). From this, one can deduce that the inception of the Voortrekker Monument was not

simply seen as a historical commemoration, but also as an act of nation building that would carry through into the future.

The past was interpreted in a specific manner so as to be in service of an ideology that would supposedly secure a specific future. Thus, the visitor to the Voortrekker Monument would become an integral part of the history of the Monument; profoundly bound up in a teleology of thought that on the one hand commemorated the heroes of the past and on the other was part of an ongoing linear narrative whose mission it was to pass on the Voortrekker values and culture to future generations.

This notion of progress and continuity is projected in symbols within the Monument. In the lower hall of the Monument, a shrine-like room houses an eternal flame. The flame was supposedly lit by the sun's rays at the foot of Van Riebeeck's statue in Cape Town and was thereafter carried from Cape Town to Pretoria by torch-bearers, who would arrive on the eve of the laying of the foundation stone (Delmont 1992:13). This idea clearly emphasizes the notion of progress and development – the torch was respectfully carried on a journey where its ultimate aim was to be placed within the monument. This torch would symbolize how the memorial site would ensure that the Voortrekker's values and ideology would be safely handed from one generation to the next, eternally bound up in the flame that was originally lit by the founding fathers.

This notion of a linear history that is successfully carried through into the future can be seen in how architect of the Voortrekker Monument, Moerdijk, likens the Monument to a number of ancient and well-known monuments such as the pyramids, the Zimbabwe Ruins, the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus (Delmont 1992:05). By referring back to these ancient monuments, there is the implication that the Voortrekker monument will take its place amongst

these great architectural structures and the teleological assumption that like these great architectural monuments, the Voortrekker Monument will endure for centuries; its ideas and values embodied within shall be passed from generation to generation in the grand narrative of Voortrekker history.

Moerdijk (1954:35) states in the official guide that the granite used for the Monument, which according to him is of "the same quarry as that found in Egyptian quarries at Aswan". He continues that as the monuments of Egypt have stood for 4000 years similarly the Voortrekker Monument and its values will stand for eternity.

Additionally, by making reference to these universal monuments, Moerdijk demonstrates an ontological mode of thinking wherein there was the belief that the Voortrekker and surrounding culture and values had a reducible universal core essence, and would thus be inherently connected to these "great" universal monuments.

This ontological mode of thought is carried through in various other ways within the Monument, as can be seen in the usage of a dome and lighting (Figure 9). The construction of a dome foregrounds an ontological belief that emphasized the religious shrine-like nature of the Monument and was felt to contain within a religious universal quality (Delmont 1992:7). The dome structure dates back to Roman times, whose best example is the Pantheon in Rome.

Figure 10. Within the domed Hall of Heroes of the Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria.

The circular wall of the Pantheon had hollowed-out niches in the walls, in which various statues were placed. At certain times of the year, a light would shine in through the circular opening at the centre of the dome, and would shine on the various statues. The dome was then adopted by the Christians and was imbued with notions of the dome of heaven with the highest point referring to God (Delmont 1992:7).

Similarly in the Voortrekker Monument lighting is utilized so that on every December 16, a shaft of light shines through the aperture in the dome on to a marble memorial block inscribed with the words "we are for thee South Africa". December 16 is a significant date as on this day the battle of Bloodriver was won and it was thought that God had delivered the Vootrekkers from a Zulu attack. The domed Monument would thus carry within it a particular ontology, one that projects order and perfection. Order, in

that every year on a set and significant date the light shines through on to the words of victory, and perfection in that it was God that had ultimately willed this.

The Voortrekker Monument additionally contains various other religious elements. It is constructed around a symbolic altar that highlights the centrality of religion to the Trekker culture and entrenches its importance for contemporary Afrikaner nationalists (Delmont 1992:6). Religious elements are carried through in the frieze that runs around the wall of the Hall of Heroes and consists of twenty-seven panels illustrating different episodes (Figure 10 and Figure 11). Moerdijk's concept of portraying the Voortrekker history as objective truth is apparent in the continual emphasis on the accurate recording of detail as can be seen in the frieze (Delmont 1992:9). This can be seen in the accurate representation of everyday objects and details of a past way of life. Thorough research was conducted by the Voortrekker Monument committee and ensured that each item was depicted accurately and in fine detail (Delmont 1992:9). The emphasis on research and detail was believed to add extra validation to the truth of the past and the historical facts as recorded in the frieze. Additionally it provides the visitor at the time with an "immediate" access to the Voortrekker past, where the visitor is made to identify with what is being portrayed, in all its minute detail.

Figure 11. Detail of the historical frieze in the Hall of Heroes of the Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria.
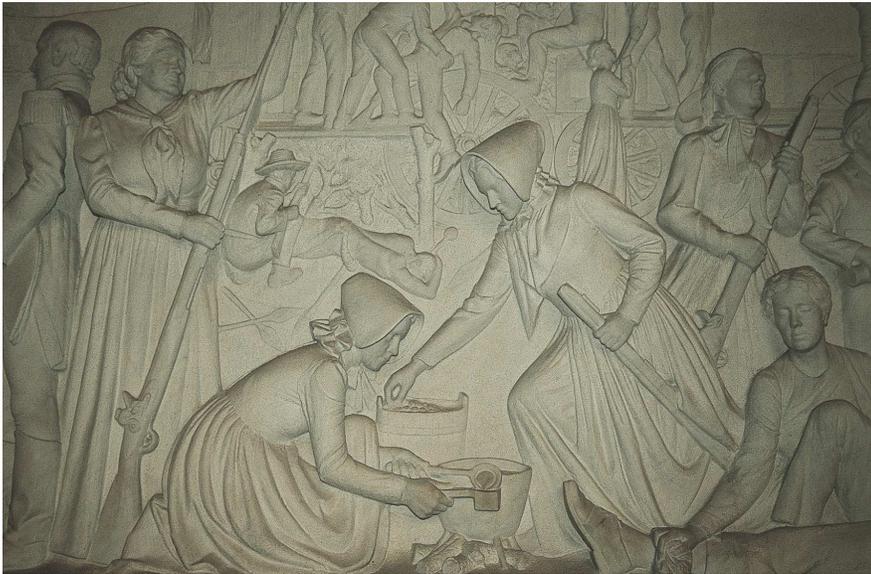

Figure 12. Detail of the historical frieze in the Hall of Heroes of the Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria.

Moerdijk, as architect of the Voortrekker Monument, I believe embodies the

ontological notion that the creator of the work controls the meaning in the text. This idea can be seen in the idea that Moerdijk as well as his family served as models for various scenes in the frieze, and are thus immortalized by their integral connection with the Voortrekker past. Thus Moerdijk's active role in the creation of meaning within the Monument is further emphasized. In a panel on the frieze 'Making the Vow', the architect uses himself as a model for the architect for the Pietermaritzburg church, thus Moerdijk's role as an architect of the monument is directly linked with the historical precedent of the Pietermaritzburg church. In this way the connection between the memorial site and the artist is further solidified.

5.3 A POST-STRUCTURAL READING OF THE VOORTREKKER MONUMENT

With the founding of a democratic South Africa in 1994, the future of the so-called "Afrikaner" monument, the Voortrekker Monument, also seemed to hang in the balance. Based on experience gained from countries that had gone through the democratization process, monuments from a previous era could be expected to lose their significance, be destroyed and replaced, or simply be appropriated (Delmont 1992:5). What I will demonstrate in this section, is that as opposed to being "destroyed", "replaced" or "appropriated" the Voortrekker Monument has the possibility to remain a relevant site within post-apartheid South Africa.

I will now examine two events that openly challenged the founding modern ideals of the Monument. I do so, so as to focus on how the Monument is able to achieve and generate different meaning, when placed in differing contexts. By utilizing a post-structural approach and focusing on the metaphorical aspects of commemoration, the ontological and teleological assumptions of the Voortrekker Monument are deconstructed. The metaphorical aspects of

commemoration enable this process of second interpretation, where the contemporary public actively engages the Monument in a variety of ways. As I will show, this process of allowing for various interpretations liberates and revitalizes the memorial spaces of the monument.

The first event I examine is when Mandela was asked to visit and give a speech at the Monument. The invitation extended by Management to former State President Nelson Mandela to deliver a speech at the unveiling of an Anglo-Boer War statue of the Boer scout Danie Theron on the Voortrekker Monument Heritage Site on 6 March 2002, was the topic of debate. Conservative groups perceived the action as a gross injustice to the Afrikaner people, while the majority on the other hand regarded it as an honour that a person of Mandela's stature acknowledged an Afrikaner hero, thus acknowledging their history and contribution to the country's development. Former State President Mandela's acceptance of the invitation would seem to be a major step forward in the reconciliatory process in which the Voortrekker Monument Heritage Site hoped to participate.

The second instance was when an international fashion show was hosted in the Cenotaph Hall in May 2004. Designers and models, mostly from African states, participated in this event, which once again gave rise to all kinds of reaction ranging from vehement outcries of protest from conservatives to appreciative comments in daily newspapers. Letters and e-mails of discontent and protest, as well as congratulatory messages at this "bold step", poured in.

Both examples cited above disrupt the apparent stability of meaning embedded in the original ideology of the Voortrekker Monument. Both events destabilize the familiar, and propose new, fresh ways of seeing and interpreting the text of the Monument. In the first instance, by inviting Mandela

to deliver a speech at the unveiling of an Anglo-Boer War statue, it contests the founding teleological assumptions of the Monument and can be directly compared to the speech delivered at the inauguration of the cornerstone of the Monument. As Kruger & Van Heerden (2005:249) state of the inauguration of the cornerstone of the Monument:

> Several VIP speakers voiced the raison d'être for this monument at the inauguration. Prime Minister DF Malan said in his speech: With deep respect and thanksgiving we now pay tribute to the Voortrekkers for the tough perseverance and heroism, which enabled them, in spite of the greatest privations, to lay the foundation for a White Christian civilisation in a greater South Africa.

The teleological assumption of the Monument was the realization that as bearers and propagators of Christian civilization, they had a national calling which had set them and generations after, the task to act as custodians over the "non-Europeans" races, as well as the underlying assumption to uphold their own white supremacy. The inception of the Voortrekker Monument was not simply seen as a historical commemoration for a past event, but a process of nation-building that would be upheld for future generations. This teleology of thought is interrupted and deconstructed by Mandela's speech at the inauguration of the statue.

Mandela, himself a symbol of the end of apartheid and division based along racial lines, steps into the text of the Voortrekker Monument and thereby allows for this teleology of thought to be challenged. Another voice can now be heard within the text of the Voortrekker Monument. The over-arching meta-narrative of the Monument is opened to allow for a variety of other narratives. By enabling Mandela to deliver his speech at the inauguration of the Anglo-Boer War statue, it opens up and revitalizes the text of the Voortrekker Monument. The result allows for the potential for viewers to shift their attitude from a familiar habitual approach to the Monument to one that

allows for differing interpretations.

The second example cited above allows for a deconstruction of the ontological assumptions of the Monument. The shrine-like quality of the Monument, as well as religious symbolism, is disrupted by the international fashion show that was held at the Monument. The convergence of the sublime – epitomized by various elements such as the dome – with the mundane, allows for the ontological assumption of the memorial to be challenged. The ontological assumption of the Monument was to be able to connect with essence or origin that the Monument is based on, ideologies such as Afrikaner nationalism. By holding an international fashion show at the site, it deconstructs the shrine-like deep ontological assumptions of the site, and arrives at an alternative surface aesthetic.

In the two events, what is significant is that they rupture the modern notion of eternal meaning that is supposedly contained within the Voortrekker Monument. This is very much a post-structural notion and can be explained by Derrida's theories on the instability of language within a post-structural paradigm. Sarup (1993:33) states regarding Derrida's theory that there exists a rupture of the direct relationship between signifier and signified. He maintains that when reading a sign its meaning is not immediately clear and therefore the sign is a "structure of difference" (Sarup 1993:33).

Signs refer to something absent while not being the object signified. As such, they still need to be "studied under erasure", always already inhibited by the "trace of another sign which never appears as such" (Sarup 1993:36). As Sarup (1993:36) continues to note the sign contains the trace of signs it excluded in order to be there, and therefore cannot fully contain any presence. The post-structural formulation of signification positions signifiers and signifieds in an inter-connecting web of relationships which cannot be predicated, determined or defined.

The inevitable result of Derrida's theory of signification is that there is an infinite play of changing configurations and reconfigurations of the attachments between signifiers and signifieds. This continually reconstructed signification process is linked to the deconstructionists' negation of the modern idea that there exists an unchanging and eternal ground of meaning. Derrida (1970:249) contends that, "[t]he absence of the transcendental signifieds extends the domain and the interplay of signification *ad infinitum*". It is impossible to arrive at a signified which is not yet another signifier, this does away with the distinction between the two elements of the sign.

Similarly so within the Voortrekker Monument, which does not exist solely in a vacuum but is very much part of a language network. The Voortrekker Monument contains traces and threads of the past, and when placed within different sign configurations (as with Mandela and the fashion show), new meanings are created. These meanings themselves are not eternal and defined but are continually open to new interpretation.

Sarup (1993:52) notes that "texts can refer only to other texts, generating an intersecting and indefinably expandable web called intertextuality". Just as meaning cannot be fixed within the chain of signifiers, interpretations of texts cannot claim to be authoritative within the accompanying proliferation of texts. Burgin (1986:50-51) defines this:

> Text, as conceived of by Barthes… is seen not as an 'object' but rather as a 'space' between the object and the reader/viewer – a space made up of endlessly proliferating meanings which have no stable point of origin, nor of closure. In the concept of 'text' the boundaries which enclosed the 'work' are dissolved; the text opens continually into other texts, the space of intertextuality.

Post-structuralism, denies the possibility of a unified, authoritative interpretation of any signifier or text. As Barthes (1977:146) argues, the text does not release a single "theological meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of

them original, blend and clash".

Griffiths (1989:96) remarks on a positive outcome of this new understanding of signification, stating that "a text may be liberated from slavery to an inevitable significance. Now it is free to offer a new reality, to be creative. Text or artwork can create the new". Degenaar (1986:109-110) similarly emphasizes the positive contributions of deconstruction:

> The meaning of life consists in the continual creation of meaning. Meanings are created by way of playing with signs. The role of deconstruction is to protect man from death of dogmatism and premature totalization in which signs are assumed to escape the interminable play of differences. Meaning of life is found in the process of involving ourselves in the interminable play of differences without a privileged position which transcends human limitations.

Metaphors can encapsulate and put forward proposals for another way of looking at things. Through metaphor we can have an increased awareness and the potential of new creative possibilities.

In summary, the concept of metaphor — the situating of signs differently to create new meaning, can be seen in the above-cited examples. By deconstructing the original text of the Monument, by allowing for different sign significations allows for a revitalisation and a liberation of the text of the Voortrekker Monument. Degenaar (1986:81) argues for the liberating aspects of deconstruction: "Deconstruction is not destructive… It takes the elements of a text apart, points out the behaviour of figural language and puts the elements together again in a different way". This aspect of deconstruction of re-inscribing or situating signs differently involves a process of reconstruction that proposes new methods and combinations of signifiers which are then able to contribute new meaning and interpretations.

By allowing for the text of the Monument to be opened up to new ongoing meaning and interpretation, it allows for the viewers and the public to remain an integral and vital part of commemoration. Thus, one can say that a point of departure is reached, from the modern notion where meaning is solely contained within the author of the text, to one that allows for meaning of the text to be opened up to the public. When one applies a post-structural approach to the Monument, and allows for different meaning to be created through the play of signs, the centrality of the author to the text is weakened.

Applied to the Voortrekker Monument, this would mean that the importance of the architect and the founders of the Monument to the meaning of the Monument is weakened and loosened. In the following section I will further explore the theory on the significance of the author to the text. I will look to Barthes' theory on the centrality of the author to the text and how this is deconstructed. Following on from this, I will then discuss Derrida's post-structural theories on interpretation and how this is relevant to the transformation and creation of meaning within the text as well as the post-structural notion on the inter-textuality of history. I will do so, so as to demonstrate how through these the post-structural theories, it further allows the text of the Voortrekker Monument to be revitalized and re-integrated within contemporary society.

5.4 RE-INTERPRETING THE VOORTREKKER MONUMENT

Post-structuralism contests the modern concept of "man" as created by enlightenment thought. Rather than holding as in the enlightenment view that individuals, are sacred, separate and intact, their minds the only true realm of meaning and value, the post-structural view holds that individuals are culturally and discursively structured, created in interaction as situated, symbolic beings.

For Barthes (1977:12) the author is a modern figure, "a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual of as it is more nobly put, the human person." The idea of an author emerged from the modern idea that focused on the prestige and creative genius of the individual (Barthes 1977:146).

For Barthes (1977:146) there is a necessity to substitute the central role of the author for that of the subject embedded within the language network. The rhetoric of language is shown to involve the user of language in an exploration of which s/he is not in complete control. According to post-structuralism, language is loose and variable, therefore the user of language is not in control of the infinite possibilities of meaning in language. Meaning cannot be finalized by linking the text with the author's intention or by linking it to the world which the text is said to represent (Degenaar 1986:99).

The demotion of the author from the central role of the text, transforms the modern text, where the text is henceforth read in such a way that at all levels the author is not seen as central or fundamental to the text (Barthes 1977:121). Tying this to museums and memorials, commemoration can no longer be seen to designate an operation by the author/curator of recording, representing, or depicting a fixed and in-transmutable message. This is particularly relevant to the text of the Voortrekker Monument.

The text of the museum and memorial then is no longer a line of words where the author/curator releases a single message that contains a unique meaning, but is a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of texts, none of them original, merge and collide. As Barthes (1977:146) states, "the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture".

As can be seen in the Voortrekker Monument, when the museum or memorial

remains fixed to what the authors/curators of the text intended, the memorial space petrifies and remains trapped in the past. The single authoritarian voice of the author/curator that clearly articulates its message is to impose a limit to the text, to provide it with a final signified. In this way, to remove from the text of the museum and memorial an author/curator, is to refuse to assign a final meaning to the text, the text is thus liberated from closure and fixture and becomes an ongoing event, open to interpretation. This openness to interpretation is vital to the ongoing vitality of the text.

Derrida explores this post-structural concept of interpretation within his work *Signature event context* (1966). In this work, Derrida (1966:75) engages the work of British philosopher Austin. Austin's most influential text is a series of lecture series entitled *How to do things with words* (1962). According to Austin (1962:6), philosophers of language have traditionally focused their work on "constative utterances". These are a statement of fact that possesses a truth-value; whether or not the statement is true or false. Austin (1962:6) however focuses on "performative utterances". A "performative utterance" is not a simple description of facts, but it is itself the performance of some action.

Derrida is interested in two aspects of Austin's theory on "performative utterances". Firstly, that according to Austin (1962:6), all "performative utterances" contain within themselves a transformative force. This transformative force is the idea that "performative utterances" can transform a situation (Derrida 1966:78). The second point that interests Derrida (1966:78) is Austin's claim that the "performative utterances" may fail to communicate or be misinterpreted. Thus all "performative utterances" contain within themselves the possibility to transform, as well as the potential for success or failure. Whether or not a "performative utterance" is successful or not is determined by the context. This challenges the presupposition of the abiding

presence of the author's original intention which guarantees the certainty and success of the text's meaning in any event or context.

The text, from a postmodern approach in contrast allows for second reflection and interpretation. It is this potential for repetition with the possibility to arrive at new meaning and transformation that allows the text of a memorial to be alive and vital. Loosening the hold of the author over the text, is to view the author as embedded within the text of language. The author does not stand outside of the text and discover a hidden meaning. It is in this context that Derrida (1988:148) states "there is nothing outside the text" and consequently that all history is "text" (Jenkins 1999:52).

In Derrida's (1988:148) words:

> What I call 'text' implies all the structures called 'real', 'economic', 'historical', 'socio-institutional', in short, all possible referents. Another way of recalling once again that 'there is nothing outside the text'. That does not mean that all referents are suspended or denied or enclosed in a book… But it does mean that every referent and all reality has the structure of a 'differantial' trace and that one cannot refer to this 'real' except in an interpretive experience. The latter neither yields meaning nor assumes it except in a movement of 'differantial' referring.

To say that history is determined by "differential" referring, is to say that it is constituted by a general or unbounded logic of traces and remainders – general and unbounded because these traces and remains, this work of remainders and remnants are themselves neither presences nor origins: rather they too are constituted by traces and remain in turn.

This is in contrast to a modern approach where the memorial or museum is viewed as a monument with its own autonomy – a timeless, self-possessed, self-enclosed structure of meaning. It attempts a closure and fixture of meaning and interpretation of the past. The museum is thought to clearly

represent the past *as it happened*. In contrast, post-structural language theory views the text of the museum as an ongoing happening in which signs and the traces of signs make themselves available to the reader for the adventure and process of understanding and interpreting the text (Degenaar 1986:98).

It is the limitless and fluid condition that constitutes writing for Derrida – a condition wherein we never really know where to start or end our accounts of past events; where the way those reminders and remnants are selected and contextualized is ultimately one of choice; and where how to choose and bestow with certain meanings is not *given*. These arbitrary ways of cutting and pasting pieces of the past is compounded by the fact that we readers and writers are ourselves part of this process of the general and unbounded logic of traces and remains, we are ourselves textual.

So, since other texts are also involved in the text, it can also be described as an inter-textual event, and therefore the text has no stable or limited identity. To bring this idea of the post-structural notion of the "text" back to the discourse of commemoration, postmodern museums can be seen to draw on the "inter-textuality" of past events, and thus they do not contain an overarching vocabulary that assumes a fixed and limited set of meanings. For post-structuralism there is no blank space outside the text, but rather another "text" that intertwines to create a weave of differences with no present reference of centre (Smith 2005:49).

Thus one can look at history as a tapestry where every thread inter-links with another. The "signs of the text"; the codes of the museum and memorial according to post-structuralism, are kept open towards a historical chain of relationships which are not reducible to a fixed frame of reference. The text of the museum and memorial can be viewed as a system of signs that is in

constant flux, where interpretation is variable and infinite and has the potential to produce alternative meanings (Degenaar 1986:83). There is no end point in history, no point of origin, but a constantly shifting space where new elements come in and out of focus.

History as a "text" as understood here, can therefore have no beginning or end point; it is vital to view the Voortrekker Monument as not a site that contains within itself a stable or definitive meaning. The implication for the Monument is that there is no final truth that is fixed and solidified, the "text" of the museum acquires new meanings and interpretation over time, depending on what the audience brings to the museum and various other social, political and economic contexts.

This realization will keep one from ascribing the "text" of the museum and memorial autonomy and will allow for an ongoing plurality of interpretations. Derrida (in Royle 2003:64) states that a text "is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing…but a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces". In attempting to elucidate the underlying codes of museums and memorials, within post-structural language theory, it is therefore significant to acknowledge that the post-structural concepts and tools are always an open-ended process, rather than a closed method convinced of and restricted to its "own right reason" (Norris 1982:30).

5.5 CONCLUSION

In summary I have explored how by approaching the Voortrekker Monument as an unfinished point within the network of history, it reintegrates the Monument within contemporary dialogue. The Voortrekker Monument was constructed according to modern ideals, as a means to commemorate an ideological past and carry forth these ideals onwards for future generations.

However, over time these beliefs no longer hold true for many South Africans. They have become meaningless ideas from a past that is contentious to many. Through the process of interpretation the text of the Monument is able to be transformed. The post-structural approach loosens the hold of the author to the text, and in turn liberates the spaces of the Monument. By shifting the notion that commemoration is able to signify a pre-existing meaning, and in this way discover the *truth* of the past, to a view that commemoration is the potential for the invention of new meanings of the past, the Voortrekker Monument is able to open itself to the public.

No longer, is the Monument viewed as an outdated and superfluous monument standing outside of the current reality, but is instead re-incorporated within society as a site for discussion and debate. This is necessary within South African society as it both acts as a reminder of a past that we should not repeat, as well as cautions us that it is not simply enough to overthrow totalitarian regimes but to be constantly and continuously aware of replacing these regimes with authoritarian discourses in turn.

The irony of modern thinking is that in attempting to eternalize the past, it eliminates the potential for the monument to remain relevant within the present. This is the apparent contradiction that is contained within the text of the Voortrekker Monument. The founders of the Voortrekker Monument attempted to set the past within stone. Yet in doing so, they ironically eradicate the possibility of remembering this past. As Mumford (1938:435) states of the traditional monument: "stones gives a false sense of continuity and a deceptive assurance of life". As I have demonstrated, it is through a flexible and open commemoration that enables the Monument to remain a vital and valid force within society. This process of commemoration invites the continual perpetuation of meaning itself, encourages renewal and change, and challenges the illusion of permanence.

The force of the text of the Voortrekker Monument, is that in utilizing the very text of the Monument itself, but simultaneously allowing for change and transformation within the text, it encourages a vibrant and relevant commemoration within the post-apartheid South Africa. Neither destroying nor negating the Voortrekker Monument but re-integrating it into the post-apartheid dialogue, makes for a very powerful and positive commemoration. In allowing for Mandela to give the inaugural speech and the fashion show to take place at the Monument, it enables an affirmative understanding of commemoration as a means for the continual creation of new meaning of the past.

Furthermore by opening up the text of the Monument, it allows for a transformative process. There is the option for previously suppressed voices to be allowed to speak out. This is the transformative and creative power embodied within a metaphoric approach to commemoration. Heidegger (1978:185) states that metaphors not only allow the creation of new meaning but allow for new and as yet un-thought of realities. In other words, situations and contexts that as yet have not been imagined, thought of or actualised. Heidegger states of metaphor (poetry in his words):

> Poetry is the saying of the unconcealedness of what is. Actual language at any given moment is the happening of this saying, in which a people's world historically arises for it and the earth is preserved as that which remains closed. Projective saying is saying which, in preparing the sayable, simultaneously brings the unsayable as such into a world.

In this way, according to Heidegger (1978:185), metaphor allows for the previously hidden, suppressed or "unsayable" to be enabled. When applied to commemoration in general and to the Voortrekker Monument in particular, this means that integrating the previously racial and ideological

text of the Voortrekker Monument within the post-apartheid South Africa allows for a transformation of the text. Through a metaphorical approach, the text of the Monument allows for the potential and possibilities for interpretation, re-interpretation and creation.

This is the transformative force of the post-structural approach, which allows for a new understanding of the world. By defining itself in opposition to the traditional text of the Monument, the Monument today illustrates the potential and limitations of memorials. In this way it acts as a valuable site where time, memory and current history intersect within the memorial site.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6. CONCLUSION

My stated overall goal for this dissertation was to investigate ways in which commemoration is able to remain a vital and relevant force within society. In doing so I investigated the ways in which both modern and postmodern museums and memorials commemorate the past. I investigate examples of museums and memorials from both pre- and post- apartheid. The South African Museum (SAM) and the Voortrekker Monument serve as examples from an apartheid discourse, whilst the *Miscast: negotiating the presence of the bushmen* (Miscast) exhibit and the District Six Museum provide examples from after apartheid.

The postmodern museums I investigated employ post-structural insights in the manner they have been built and conceptualized. The postmodern museums and memorials investigated, utilize various post-structural practices, which emphasise that representations and interpretations are mediated and thus our experience of the past is continually subject to interpretation. The modern museums I explored, despite a contentiously complex and loaded past are nevertheless able to be revitalized through post-structural insights.

The post-structural theories I utilized, dismantle modernism's belief in the notion of a definite, external truth to which the past can correspond. This directly relates to the subject of commemoration, where modern notions propagate the notion of a defined and set past. In response the post-structural approach to commemoration challenges this notion of a fixed past and instead embraces the idea that we can only reach the past, though our interpretations of it.

What I emphasise in my study is that there is no *one* truth of history. As Herodotus in *The history of Herodotus* (440 BCE), announced, appealing to the etymological meaning of the word, history means enquiry. This can be seen in opposition to a modern version of history which is presented as guardian of an official and collective history. The postmodern approach to commemoration in contrast affirms that commemoration is an enquiry into the past, an enquiry that is continually subject to various interpretations and narratives to the past.

A critical view of postmodern commemoration would suggest that the actual events of the past might get lost in the post-structural practice of a never-ending process of interpretation. As Young states in his introduction to *Writing and rewriting the Holocaust: narrative and the consequences of interpretation* (1990:3) "if holocaust narrative is nothing but a system of signs pointing to other signs, then where are the events themselves?" Too much attention to the *form* of commemoration might be in danger of supplanting the *event* at the heart of the inquiry. If knowledge and experiences are language-bound, with language a variable and therefore erratic network of signs, does this entail that all experience has no meaning or value?

In response to this, what this research has attempted to emphasise, is that value and meaning in an event does not simply lie in the representation or recounting of authoritative facts but more importantly in the re-telling and the continual engagement of the past by contemporary society. The manner in which it is represented, told and remembered becomes as relevant to commemoration, as what has actually happened. What this study focused on is that although a postmodern commemoration refutes the notion of an inviolable origin,

and teleology to events of the past, there can be a more valuable reference to past events that enable the events of the past to remain vital and alive *in the present*. It is through the post-structural process of re-telling and interpretation, that the significance and vitality of such an event remains integral and relevant to contemporary society.

This study argues that despite Young's argument against a postmodern commemoration, a postmodern commemoration is a more valuable contribution to contemporary South African society then the modern approach. I have argued this for various reasons:

1. The first argument being the deconstruction of hierarchical binaries that privilege certain races or classes. This is demonstrated through the deconstruction of the SAM by the Miscast exhibit, which allows for previously silenced voices to be heard.
2. My second argument for a postmodern commemoration over a modern approach is the emancipation of "little" narratives over grand narrative. In this way the deconstruction of existing knowledge and practices assist in the silenced voices again being heard as demonstrated within the District Six Museum.
3. My third argument is the idea of a space for the creation of new meaning within commemoration, one in which the old metaphors are deconstructed to bring forth new meaning. This I have demonstrated within the Voortrekker Monument.

For all the above reasons, this study demonstrates that a postmodern approach to commemoration entails a more meaningful role within society, than a modern approach to commemoration.

6.1 The SAM and Miscast exhibit

The Miscast exhibit deconstructed the SAM Khoisan text and in doing so attempted to contest the notion that the Khoisan are a primitive and primordial people. The Khoisan were not presented as "different" and "other" to society, but were explicitly shown as similar and integral to contemporary society. This study analyzed how Miscast's deconstruction of hierarchical binaries brought forth some interesting reactions from members of the Khoisan community.

My conclusion to this chapter is that despite the fact that the Miscast exhibit drew mixed and angry reactions, it was successful in that it allowed for the interaction and engagement from the viewer, something that was profoundly suppressed in the SAM. By actively allowing for responses from the viewer, the Miscast exhibit opened up the space of the memorial for a re-interpretation and appreciation of the texts, previously suppressed within the SAM dioramas. What is of significance in this chapter with regards to my overall stated objective is that for an exhibit to remain relevant within society, it is significant that there is engagement and discussion between who is being commemorated, members of the public and the curators of the exhibit. This would allow for a continual revitalization, whereby the walls of the exhibit remain open and flexible to the continual creation of meaning.

In this way, a postmodern approach to commemoration is integrally involved in the deconstruction of old canons that privilege certain classes and races. As has been demonstrated through the Miscast exhibit, the deconstruction of hierarchical binaries allowed for a liberation and re-appreciation of voices and narratives that were previously silenced by those very canons. Through the Miscast exhibit one can find a re-appraisal of silenced voices that previously operated on the periphery.

6.2 The District Six Museum

In my third chapter, I demonstrated how a postmodern approach to commemoration is relevant and significant to contemporary society as it worked to promote an ethics of "little" narratives over grand narrative. This opened up the space for previously hidden and suppressed voices to be heard. As Sim (1992:402) states of narrative:

> A multiplicity of little narratives, all of which have their own particular integrity and sense of importance, but none of which can be considered to take precedence over any of the others. Grand narrative is held to dominate and suppress little narratives, and is therefore to be resisted.

As this study demonstrated, the postmodern District Six Museum allowed for a multiplicity of various narratives to play out within the space of the museum. This challenged the modern museum which sealed memory off from awareness altogether, where memory becomes a rigid and inflexible approach to events of the past. I argued that the unprecedented interpretations that the viewer brought to the District Six Museum allowed for the redemptive and rejuvenating possibility of a positive commemoration within society. In this way the events of District Six are kept as vital and significant reminders against a totalistic canon that favoured certain classes, genders and races.

6.3 The Voortrekker Monument

In the fifth and final chapter, a postmodern approach to commemoration allowed the memorial site of the modern Voortrekker Monument to remain a relevant site within the post-apartheid landscape, despite a contentiously loaded past. The post-structural approach that challenged the notion of a final closure of truth and meaning, consequently allowed for new meanings to be created within the space of the Voortrekker

Monument. The post-structural metaphoric approach to meaning, not only deconstructed the founding concept of the Monument, but also enabled one to see commemoration as a manner in which new meaning is able to be created.

In the chapter on the Voortrekker Monument, I explored the seemingly unbridgeable contraries whereby time, appears in two registers: the present moment, where the contemporary public remember the past and, in contrast to this, the notion of the "eternal" moment where the material of the Monument, according to its founders, would become part of an infinite and supra-temporal whole.

On first view both these contraries appear to cancel the other out. The static and rigid material of the Voortrekker Monument bears down upon the viewer with its monumentality and rigidity and in contrast to this there is the present moment where the contemporary public approach the Monument with very different ideas to the those that were encompassed within the founding ideals of the Monument. This is very much the contradiction within museums and monuments that I have explored in my study; the contradiction where by commemorating the past, the past is sealed off in a manner where the contemporary public is unable to relate or empathise with what is being commemorated. Thus, by its very notion, commemoration would entail forgetting. In response to this anomaly, what this chapter demonstrated is the use of post-structural ways of understanding, as a means for which the Monument is able to remain not only relevant but vital to contemporary society.

In this way, I focused on the post-structural notion of situating signs differently. I investigated how the combination of signifiers contributes to

new meaning. By allowing for the boundaries of the Monument to be "opened" up so as to allow for new expression and meaning, the Monument in turn reaches out to the contemporary visitor. Previous ways of thinking are dismantled allowing for new ways of perceiving and conceiving of the past. By stripping away and reconfiguring the "old" associations of the Monument, I explored the ways in which the site can express new and relevant associations. This facilitated the re-interpretation of dead metaphors and re-instates them with fresh meaning.

It is this idea of possible alternative ways of communicating that is so vital within a postmodern commemoration. The idea being that not only are suppressed and silenced voices allowed to be heard, but that new voices and new ways of understanding which *as yet do not exist*, are also given the space in which they could potentially be heard.

This metaphorical approach is present in Lyotard's analysis of the postmodern condition in which he speaks about his term "paralogy". By this he means a space in which to create meaning outside of the rules, in other words to create news ways of understanding and engaging without simply operating along traditional lines. He writes (1984:43): "there are two different kinds of 'progress' in knowledge: one corresponds to a new move (a new argument) within the established rules; the other, to the invention of new rules, in other words, a change to a new game". In this way this study demonstrated that the Voortrekker Monument, a site that operated according to modernism's "rules" is able, through a post-structural lens, to acquire new meaning within post-apartheid South Africa.

To conclude, it is for these reasons that I would assert the value of a

postmodern commemoration, as it is able to utilize the tools of the past and render them useful and vital to the present. By this I mean, that by challenging the illusion of permanence traditionally fostered on the modern Monument, the postmodern approach reinvigorates the notion of commemoration within society, by grappling with the very real and relevant issues of current society. By examining the processes of memorial-making, as is demonstrated in the District Six Museum, by engaging the public in active dialogue, as demonstrated in the Miscast exhibit, and by opening up a memorial space for new meaning, as in the Voortrekker Monument, the postmodern approach both embraces and enables the active role of the memorial within the continual evolving lives of the communities.

Thus, this study would highlight that one ask not only how the memorial would reflect past history, but rather what role it now plays in contemporary history. This emphasizes the notion that public commemoration should not be rendered benign or irrelevant but should become a force for action within society.

As Doezema (1977:9) states of the public monument; "the public monument has a responsibility apart from qualities as a work of art. It is not only the private expression of an individual artist; it is also a work of art created for the public, and therefore can and should be evaluated in terms of its capacity to generate human reactions". As Young similarly states: " [t]o what social ends have they been moved, to what historical conclusions, to what understanding and actions in their own lives? This is to suggest that we cannot separate the monument from its public life…".

For the above reasons, this would defy a critical approach to

postmodernism that would state the "valueless-ness" of postmodernism. On the contrary by building on the past by creating new meanings in the present, we are able to build a more open and *just* society. As Lyotard (1984:67) claims that a postmodern ethics should strive for "the desire for justice". By utilising the tools of the past, a postmodern commemoration is able to act as a reminder or a warning of what we should avoid as well what we should strive for in the present and for the future.

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