

# The Subject as Migrant: Refiguring the Migrant Image in the Eastern Cape

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## Abstract

This paper engages with the concept of the migrant subject, as framed through contemporary literature on migrancy, and read through the Pauline Ingle photographic collection, located in the Eastern Cape. As against gendered historiographies of labour migrancy and the associated meanings attributed to the rural as a site of social reproduction, Ingle's photographs invite a series of atypical readings that unsettle these subjectivities. Rather, they suggest social and political acts that presage and constitute a migrant citizenship, one that undermines the dichotomy of the rural (traditional) and urban (modern) and projects the possibility of reading the history of the subject in the Eastern Cape differently.

## Keywords

migrant labour, migrant image, Eastern Cape, Transkei, mobilities, subjectivities, the figural, gender, homestead, Pauline Ingle, temporalities, social acts, citizenship.

## Introduction

This paper engages with the photographic collection of Dr Pauline Ingle, a missionary doctor, who worked around the All Saints Mission in Ngcobo, in the former Transkei, from 1948-1976. This diverse collection of amateur photographs is extraordinarily rare, given the sustained timespan that it covers, within a homeland locale. Then, to the images themselves, that detail in high fidelity everyday lives of people around the hospital, church and in the area at large. Arguably, the photographs are atypical of other images in circulation at the time, as they suggest a spontaneous and unstaged engagement with the subjects in the photographs and not an attempt to control the visual field.

Steele<sup>1</sup> has argued against reading these images as simply framed by the 'rural' in favour of complex enduring social and political 'acts' and, together with Parsons, against the traditional and ritualistic rural 'ethnographic',<sup>2</sup> proposing instead a much more nuanced interstitial revisioning of the subject across or between longstanding spatial and temporal dichotomies of interpretation (rural versus urban; traditional versus modern; capitalist versus precapitalist, etc.).

In this paper, then, we want to extend these arguments and turn to the question of migrancy and labour migration, its forms of representation and its meanings, re-read through Pauline Ingle's photographs.

In part, this prompt comes from a recent argument made by Thomas Nail in a book entitled *The Figure of the Migrant* and a related article called *Migrant Images*.<sup>3</sup> While primarily and not unproblematically concerned with the historic and contemporary transnational figure of the migrant, with mobilities, and that we now 'live in the age of the migrant',<sup>4</sup> Nail proposes that there is something about the material structure of migrant subjects and images alongside each other – providing a sense in which the migrant has become a dominant social image for us today, as well as the sense in which the image has become aesthetically migratory and mobile at the same time.<sup>5</sup> For us, it is this connection between migrant and image that is provocative.

Nail argues that the encounter between what he calls the 'kinetic theory of the image' and the figure of the migrant have problematically been treated as static, statist and ahistorical within both objective and subjective determinations, read as fixed, universal, essentialist and unchanging. He proposes, then that the fate of the image and the fate of the migrant are thus related to the problem of stasis.<sup>6</sup> Against this view, Nail argues that '[t]he mobility of the image, just like the mobility of the migrant, is thus both the condition of *possibility* for the object and subject, and the condition of their *impossible* convergence in ... media and political representation. Therefore, the study of migrant images is the study of aberrant affects, not of representations.'<sup>7</sup> Rather, starting from the historical mobility of the migrant image, '[t]here is thus a becoming migrant of the image and a becoming image of the migrant at the same time. ... Therefore, the two must be thought together as migrant images.'<sup>8</sup> For Nail, the citizen and the snapshot are thus crystallisations of the mobile migrant image, from which one can rethink the figure of the migrant as both the aberrant, but also as a constitutive mobile figure of social life itself.<sup>9</sup>

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1 C. Steele, 'Theorising the Image as Act: Reading the Social and Political in Images of the Rural Eastern Cape', *Kronos*, 46, 2020, 221-238.

2 J. Parsons, 'The Politics of Representation and Communication in the Exhibition Images of Transkei: ImiFaneKiso yaPesha kweNciba, 1949-1976' (MA thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2005).

3 T. Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2015). And T. Nail, 'Migrant Images' in *Moving Images*. transcript-Verlag, 2020, 147-164.

4 Nail, 'Migrant Images', 148.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., 158.

7 Ibid., 161.

8 Ibid., 163.

9 Ibid., 158. Nail suggests that 'the image is not a distinct or separate copy but the process by which matter curves, bends, folds, and bounces back and forth. The image is therefore the mobile process by which matter twists, folds, and reflects itself into various structures of sensation. The migrant too is defined by its flows, folds, and circulations – always in transit and caught between worlds.'

Nail argues that it is necessary to think of two kinds of movement that define the migrant. ‘The first kind, made up of units of space-time, is extensive and quantitative: movement as change of place, or translation. The second kind of movement is intensive and qualitative: a change in the whole, a transformation.’ Drawing on Bergson, ‘it is movement which is anterior to immobility. ... Reality is mobility itself. ... If movement is not everything, it is nothing.’

Nail reads the subjective figure as that which allows society to move and change, albeit that the dominant view reads migrant movement as a derivative or lack, arresting change (of place, status, recognition, rights) or harnessing this movement for profit and power.<sup>10</sup>

However, as Ahmed et al. have separately (to Nail) argued in relation to migrancy, we need to call into question the privileging of mobility over dwelling in different ways including ‘... how the mobilities of some subjects and the immobilities of others are coproduced; theorizing home as a site of movement; unsettling linear narratives of origin and migration; and rethinking the relation between embodied subjectivity, place and belonging’<sup>11</sup>

They argue, ‘We begin from the premise that the forms and conditions of movement are not only highly divergent but also necessarily exist in relation to similarly divergent configurations of placement or being “at home”. Who moves, who stays, under what conditions? What is the relationship between those who stay and those who arrive and leave? What forces entrench migration, or propel staying “at home”?’

To this we would add a further question: Are those who move and those who stay both migrant?

In highlighting the laborious effort that goes into uprooting and regrounding homes, and the energy that is expended in enabling or prohibiting migrations, Ahmed et al. argue that this allows them to ‘challenge the presumptions that movement involves freedom from grounds, or that grounded homes are not sites of change, relocation or uprooting. Being grounded is not necessarily about being fixed; being mobile is not necessarily about being detached. Thus, the overall project ... is to call into question the naturalization of homes as origins, and the romanticization of mobility as travel, transcendence and transformation.’

So, it is with these sentiments in mind, that as we turn to Ingle’s photographs, we offer a further observation. It emerges out of mobilities research where mobility is defined ‘by its route, velocity, rhythm and spatial scale, and mobility, as social construct defined by its meanings, experiences and competences ... socially shaped but also socially shaping’ in relation to bodies, subjectivities, materialities and assemblages of power and exclusion.<sup>12</sup> Importantly, though, as Merriman has relatedly argued, mobilities research can often produce what he calls ‘an overanimated mobile subject’, highlighting movement, action and dynamism above ‘other ways of

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10 Nail, *The Figure*, 13.

11 S. Ahmed, C. Castañeda, A. Fortier and M. Sheller, ‘Introduction: Uprootings/regroundings: Questions of home and migration’ in *Uprootings/Regroundings Questions of Home and Migration* (London: Routledge, 2020), 1-19.

12 See O. Söderström and L. Crot, ‘The Mobile Constitution of Society: Rethinking the Mobility-Society Nexus’, MAPS Working Paper 7 – 2010/E, 1-22, 15.

experiencing mobilities'. Stillness, waiting, slowness and boredom may be just as important to many situations, practices and movements as sensations and experiences of ... movement ...'<sup>13</sup>

To be sure, South African studies has not romanticised migrancy and mobility, at least in the understanding of it as a forced, oppressive and brutal system of black labour exploitation, and in its dual nature of equally destructive and impoverished homeland social reproduction. And yet, there does remain a pervasive sense of migrancy that locates transformation in the urban centres of production (where material, political and social agency, emergent modern citizenship and transcendent futures reside) as counterposed to the largely static, austere, rural, pastoral, patriarchal and traditional homestead and homeland – what Leslie Bank has recently called the 'heartland'.<sup>14</sup>

Bank, amongst others, has pointed to what he calls the 'persistence of labour migrancy'; of significant formations of ongoing circular migration as a defining feature of contemporary South African society, despite contradictory articulations of post-apartheid and developmental policy asserting processes of rapid urbanisation, the necessary emergence of segmented redefined urban and rural spaces beyond migrancy and the homelands.<sup>15</sup>

A range of authors, including Deborah James (circular migration and double-rootedness), point to migrancy as being 'home and away', 'here and there' and so on.<sup>16</sup> Embedded in these accounts reside a number of fairly conventional accounts of labour migration in South Africa, often underpinned by the central understanding of migrant labour as a cheap exploitative black labour regime with a long brutal history. Delius's recent account and overview, while sustaining this interpretation of the migrant labour system overall, qualifies central aspects and struggles within this system, particularly around origins, over its form as cheap labour and in relation to cultural histories of its rural bases and of 'building the homestead', to on-going rural 'investments' and rural social reproduction, patterns of migration as well as in forms of migration and association and life in the cities. This sense of 'double-rootedness', then, and the system of 'circular migration', following what Bank calls the 'migrant imperative', continues to define and mark social and material life in significant ways.<sup>17</sup> This is not in dispute.

The recent edited volume, *A Long Way Home*, with its curtailed reproduction of an associated exhibition, provides a useful lens.<sup>18</sup> Structured around 'Ngezinyawo – Migrant Journeys', with the idea of it being a 'comprehensive idea about migrant

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13 P. Merriman, 'Rethinking Mobile Methods', *Mobilities*, 9, 2, 2014, 167-187, 177. Admittedly, Merriman is here engaging a wider sense of mobilities research as overconcentrated on issues of speed, movement, excitement and exhilaration over what he calls the 'more passive practices, engagements and affective relations which gather around movements and mobilities'.

14 L. Bank, 'Entangled in patriarchy: migrants, men and matrifocality after apartheid' in L. J. Bank, D. Posel and F. Wilson (eds.), *Migrant Labour after Apartheid: The inside story* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2020).

15 L. Bank, 'Migrancy, war and belonging: the cultural politics of African nationalism at Marikana', *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 100, 1, 2019, 1-26.

16 D. James, *Songs of the women migrants: Performance and identity in South Africa* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).

17 Bank, 'Migrancy', 18.

18 P. Delius, L. Phillips and F. Rankin-Smith (eds.), *A Long Way Home: Migrant Worker Worlds, 1800-2014*. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2014).

labour', and as stated, 'the theme of journeying is threaded metaphorically throughout the exhibition, constantly referring to traveling between spaces ...'. As Fiona Rankin-Smith states:

The journeys made by men from rural to urban spaces in search of labour were often very long and full of danger and hardships. ... The experience of travelling between the rural homestead and the mines and urban centres in search of work was a defining experience for migrant workers, separating and connecting various emotional universes. This exhibition is centred on the concept of journeys across and between different worlds, journeys that both unite and overlap the differences, creating linkages between objects. The objects' significance resonates within multiple categories of the exhibition, symbolic of the journeys travelled between the rural and the urban, from home to places of work that were often dehumanising and foreign.

Indeed, the associated volume seeks to place 'migrant experience, expression and perception at [it's] centre ...'<sup>19</sup> and where Peter Delius' introductory remarks ask that we read it as 'fuel[ing] debate about the ways in which migrant workers' searches for meaning, self-expression and solace can inform the ways we remember the past and imagine the future.'<sup>20</sup> Indeed, as Delius further notes:

We have lost sight of the lives, struggles and ideas of the millions of migrant workers from within and far beyond South Africa's borders. Their efforts, in often deeply dangerous and dehumanising conditions, provided the foundations of an industrial economy that may, if properly managed, be able to improve the lot of the majority of South Africans. Their attempts to comprehend, explain, represent and simply to endure the maelstrom of change that swept through their lives and communities have also bequeathed to contemporary society a living, dynamic cultural and artistic heritage. This legacy could provide rich resources for further innovation and adaptation. However, instead of drawing on these artistic wellsprings, all too often our society is offered a static, ossified and reactionary version of 'tribal' culture – a legacy initially elaborated by apartheid's intellectual fellow travellers, but now endorsed by the new cultural commissars as our authentic repository of heritage.<sup>21</sup>

In the spirit offered by Delius, amongst many others, then, we want to draw attention to this 'static' view, resonating with Nail's earlier observations, but also to prompt a further reading, perhaps suggested in and through the Ingle photographs. However, it can also be noted that these interpretive frames, themselves, retain and reproduce

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19 Ibid., 28.

20 Ibid., 54.

21 Ibid., 53.

longstanding dichotomies and trajectories that define migrancy. Most notable is that of rural origins and urban destinations, coupling an enduring differentiation and understanding that divides rural and urban between the traditional (however dynamic) and the modern; between reproduction and production; between the pastoral traditional patriarchal authority and the individuated racial bio-political; in short between rural subject and urban citizen. The imaging of migrant labour reflects and reinforces these readings.



Figure 1: The bus stop for All Saints Hospital at the entrance to the Mission road, c.1969.

Two buses, labour migrancy and a waiting queue. Historically, labour migrancy has played the stereotypical narrative centrepiece of this rural experience in homelands in South Africa, holding within it a discursive conjuncture of sub-narratives of de-agrarianisation, oscillation, immiseration and household dissolution, with passing references to the gender implications of these. Within this discursive formation of the rural, the bus has been a recurrent and potent visual signifier of labour migration and racial capitalism and often interpreted as a vehicle of modernity, as conduit between the 'rural' and the 'urban'. The bus creates a metaphor of betweenness, in which the migrant is read as being held between two different subject positions on a trajectory from here (tradition) to there (modernity).

And it needs saying that in the Transkei, from the 1970s, labour migration is the predominant economic activity, accounting for 70 per cent of the Transkei's GNP;<sup>22</sup> while in the 1980s, Francis Wilson and Mamphela Ramphele calculated that wages from the mines were by far the most important source of income for households in

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22 D. Budlender et al., *Transkei Independence: Report of the Transkei Study Project* (Johannesburg: Wages and Economic Commission, 1976), 66.



the Transkei.<sup>23</sup> As Glover and Money state, ‘by the late 1980s, TEBA calculated that the mines could satisfy their labour demands from the bantustans alone. Among these, the Transkei was by far the most important labour-sending region in South Africa, and no other region came close to assuming the same importance.’<sup>24</sup>

In this photograph of the bus stop for All Saints Hospital, there is a sense of both embarkation and destination, as signified by the two stationary buses – Bam Bros. Buses and Taxi Services.<sup>25</sup> On the left-hand side of the photograph, predominantly women queue to board the first bus, while a man alights from the same bus, and two women and a child in the centre of the photograph also appear to have alighted and are walking away to some onward destination. The man on the right of the photograph, with a large suitcase in hand, provides a sense of purpose and intention as he strides towards the second bus, where we can just catch a glimpse of the back of an already-formed queue, partially obscured by the first bus. Can he be likened to the younger Mpondo men escaping parental control and family labour, ‘running away from herding’ that William Beinart has discussed?<sup>26</sup>

This photograph depicting embarkation and disembarkation, as passengers alight from and queue to board the bus, is redolent of Ingle’s ability to capture movement in everyday life. Interestingly though, and perhaps ironically, unlike the techniques of proximity ascribed by Steele to Ingle’s portraiture and ‘community’ photography, this photograph suggests a distance between herself and those being photographed, which proposes a deliberate detachment on her part.

The long-distance journey suggested by the suitcase and boxes on the roof of the bus, is undercut by the knowledge that in 1969, the movement of people into urban areas was restricted by influx control and the pass law system, which heavily regulated arrivals and departures from the rural ‘homelands’. This, together with a strong sense of movement suggested by the varying agendas of agency and itineraries of unknown destination, portray a scene of complexity, indeterminate mobility and unstable significations.

Further, in apprehending the metaphor of movement from this photograph and as against conventional gendered constructions of the rural – which have situated women as extant to labour migrancy – as inhabiting degraded environments, lacking in technology and opportunity and as having to wage constant struggles against spiralling poverty; the representation of women in this photograph evokes a sensorial self-determination, that displaces their marginality and suggests various metaphoric journeys of their choice and making.

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23 Budlender et al., *Transkei Independence*, 66; F. Wilson and M. Ramphele, *Uprooting Poverty: The South African Challenge* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), 62-3. They state that ‘in households with incomes less than R1,500, 66-71 per cent of income came from wage remittances from mining, compared to 11-15 per cent from wages from jobs in the Transkei’, cited in M. Glover and D. Money, “‘Not Wholly Justified’: The Deferred Pay Interest Fund and Migrant Labour in South Africa’s Gold Mining Industry, c. 1970-1990”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 47, 4, 2021.

24 Glover and Money, ‘Not Wholly Justified’, 636.

25 Bam Bros. are listed under Idutywa in the January 1960 ‘Telephone Directory for East London, Port Elizabeth and Neighbouring Districts’ (number 27). This suggests a more local/ regional scale movement, within the Eastern Cape, rather than to the mines, for example. See page B55. There is no local listing for ‘Engcobo’ for Bam Bros. Buses, further suggesting a scale of movement. Printed by The Natal Witness, Braby, Pty Ltd, Pietermaritzburg, Jan 1960.

26 W. Beinart, ‘A Century of Migrancy from Pondoland’ in P. Delius, L. Phillips and F. Rankin-Smith (eds.), *A Long Way Home: Migrant Worker Worlds, 1800-2014* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2014), 183.

The buses already hold passengers. The scale and extent of the journeys are hard to tell. Many though, carry the baggage of distance. Significantly, apart from the younger girl in the centre of the image, seemingly associated with the two women, all the passengers appear adult. Perhaps, though, she is alone, a 'runaway girl', leaving rather than arriving.<sup>27</sup> To the left of the bus in the foreground, people gather in the manner that suggests the purchasing of travel tickets, or perhaps, less likely, some form of official travel documents. Most notably, though, given the gendered formations of migrancy as male,<sup>28</sup> is the predominant presence of women in these images. Are they commuters to the mission station hospital or involved in more localised movements? Many probably are. But there is also the sense of something more, a larger sense of movement and of migration, at least for some.

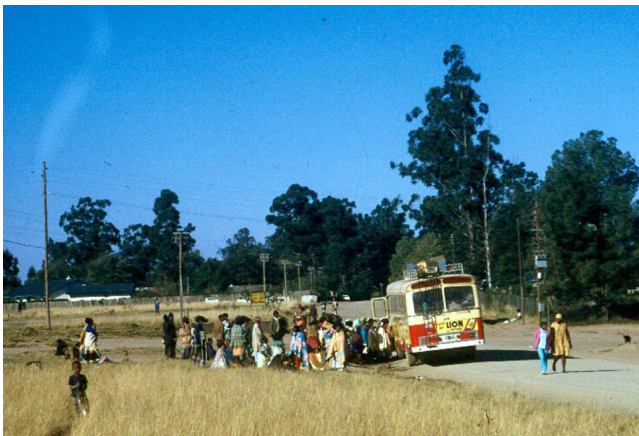


Figure 2: The bus stop for All Saints Hospital at the entrance to the Mission road. c.1969.

If movement is one aspect anticipated in these photographs, there is also the sense that this movement is punctuated by home as a 'site of movement', as they simultaneously unsettle linear patterns of migration counterposed to the homestead and origin locality. Here, movement may also be associated with waiting, with queues, with interruptions, but also with a sociality of movement. The few men visible all seem to have their hands in pockets of coats or trousers, and are somewhat detached from the gathered intimacy of the majority of women, wrapped in blankets. Are they waiting for passengers arriving? Simply going to town? None of the blankets the women wear are 'red'.<sup>29</sup> But they are wearing blankets, all the same. Traditional 'red' women on the move? Is this even useful as a categorisation?

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27 A. Mager, 'Sexuality, fertility and male power', *Agenda*, 12, 28, 1996, 12-24.

28 See James, *Songs of the Women*, 2019.

29 See J. Broster, *Red Blanket Valley* (Johannesburg, Hugh Kearland Publishers, 1967). Broster's book, located in the proximate region to All Saints Mission and Ngcobo, where the title says it all, constituting a rural subject as 'primitive', bound by tradition and stasis. For a more extensive engagement with Broster, see C. Steele, 'Re-interpreting the history of "the rural" through the visual in the Eastern Cape, 1948-1976' (Unpublished PhD thesis, 2018).



Some of the passengers sit. Perhaps they have just returned, pausing before moving home. In the left foreground, two young women move away from the bus, perhaps simply passing by. Given how they are dressed, an index, in the tired narrow language of Philip Mayer, that they are ‘schooled’? Others move away in the background.

In terms of the Southern African migrant image, it is important to note that the male migrant figure walks.<sup>30</sup> This can be seen in the dominant photographic reproduction of journeys to the mines, as well as in returns. In particular, the photographic image of the male migrant, carrying larger trunks on their backs down deserted ‘rural’ country roads is pervasive.<sup>31</sup> This image, then reproduces both the rural as distant and as traditional, even if it can also be read in relation to cheap labour power, unable to afford other modes of transportation. Equally, though, the potential of reading these returning migrant images as representations of exploitation and oppression are countered by the carrying of large trunks of labour ‘reward’ back to sustain, to build the rural homestead.

What might then be said of women’s migration? As Anne Mager has argued for the Ciskei, in a slightly earlier period, that focusing on individuals within households rather than on household units (and their breakdown), ‘... allows for a consideration of sexuality and domestic power relations as critical factors in female migrancy and it recognises that the effects of migrancy are so pervasive as to result in a “profoundly altered world view”’.<sup>32</sup> She adds, in contrast to the patriarchal discourse of ‘family breakdown’ and female migrancy as ‘subversive’, an ‘analysis of women’s practices in urban and rural environments reveals that female migrancy stemmed from the increased viability of independent livelihoods for women and women’s ability to develop strategic responses to social change’.<sup>33</sup>

Women walking. Smiling. There is a carefree sense of movement, through the grass, the veld, the land. A grounding. The woman on the left seems to be carrying books in her right hand. An educated woman, as she appears too old to be going to school. Perhaps they are going to or from church and the mission station. Yet is that not again a narrowing – of literacies and reading – into colonial constructs of the traditional rural. Perhaps, they are signs of independence, translated between books, bodies, education and movement. A care of the self?

The ‘care of the self’ advances the conception of an ethical subject, following Smith,<sup>34</sup> in which the subject is not a model of substance, but is a process wherein the subject reflexively relates to itself. Reading this subject as emergent over time and bearing critical faculties that continuously question the self and its surroundings, as

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30 Again, this is not to claim the absence of various forms, routes and technologies of migrant movement, but rather that in actual image economies, the migrant is aligned with walking. Most recently C. van Onselen’s, *The Night Trains: Moving Mozambican Miners to and From South Africa, c 1902-1955* (Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2019) refers, albeit without photographic images. Relatedly, we also acknowledge that photographic migrant images of movement are sparse, especially given the overwhelming preponderance of rural ethnographic images produced alongside these.

31 Most recently, the book *A Long Way Home: Migrant Worker Worlds 1800-2014* that contains photographic images from an exhibition organised by F. Rankin-Smith and entitled ‘Ngezinyawo – Migrant Journeys’, and where the walking migrant predominates.

32 A. Mager, ‘Migrancy, Marriage and Family in the Ciskei Reserve of South Africa, 1945-1959’ in P. Sharpe (ed.), *Women, Gender and Labour Migration: Historical and Cultural Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 259-274; 259.

33 Ibid., 271.

34 D. Smith, ‘Foucault on Ethics and Subjectivity: “Care of the Self” and “Aesthetics of Existence”’, *Foucault Studies*, 19, 2015, 137.



Figure 3: Manzana, c. 1955.

well as exercising the freedom to do so, is what comprises care of the self, in which self and care are not separate, but interrelated concepts where the self does the caring, but is also the object of the care.<sup>35</sup>

If we extrapolate care of the self, here read as ‘the self, taking itself as a work to be accomplished’,<sup>36</sup> to an aesthetics of existence, as ‘practices of creativities, whose form cannot be given in advance’,<sup>37</sup> this opens up a range of possibilities for acknowledging the individuation of the subject.



Figure 4: Visiting Esidadeni, c.1964.

Another image. Three women walking, with the expansive grasslands behind them, where cattle graze. A mother and daughters? Three friends? A chance coming together? It is impossible to tell. The two women on the left of the photograph, wearing dresses, skirts and tops are young, possessive, confident, even if the women on

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>36</sup> P. C. Henderson, *Aids, Intimacy and Care in Rural KwaZulu-Natal: A Kinship of Bones* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 127.

<sup>37</sup> Smith, ‘Foucault on Ethics’, 135.

the left holds her hands behind her back, holding a photographic hesitancy or pause perhaps? The woman on the right is equally confident – at home in this space – mid-stride, as she also holds the gaze of the camera. Her hands, too, behind her back, suggestive of a practised routine of walking rather than a masking or inhibition. The apparent familiarity, if not the intimacy between the three, certainly undoes notions of encapsulated difference as it, too, hints at an independence of movement. Are these women ‘forging new ways in a world for which rural men had not yet devised rituals and rules’?<sup>38</sup>

This sense of women’s agency and movement in Ingle’s photographs is a pervasive theme. Given its subject material, this implies reading against an ethnographic and historiographic grain, where the homelands are figured as the gendered patriarchal site of rural social reproduction, amidst sanctioned impoverishment and dispossession and where ‘building the homestead’ – the *umzi* – is its spatial and temporal basis, located as the resistant basis of indigeneity and difference in ‘rural regimes of value’ and in ‘family breakdown.’<sup>39</sup>

This rural regime of value has two dimensions, constituted around a notion of ‘double-rootedness’, which largely reproduces the narrative of male migrancy constituting the dominant rural subject position,<sup>40</sup> rooted to the countryside, while women are rooted to the homestead (*umzi*) (except when they ‘escape’), located even more stongly within static rural tradition and outside of migrancy. It is noteworthy how often, in Ingle’s photographs, men sit, talking, holding sticks and pipes, and wearing



Figure 5: Celebration, 1959.

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38 Mager, ‘Migrancy’, 264

39 Again, we would acknowledge the historiography that points to the complex readings of the homestead and of the dynamics that shape various uneven and changing social and material relationships, but would also suggest that these are focused on on-going static ‘rural’ notions of the homestead detached from migrancy, except in terms of migrant returns, remittances, cattle investments, amongst others. See Bank, ‘Entangled in Patriarchy’ and Mager, ‘Migrancy’, for useful overviews and critical reflections on this literature. See also J. and J. Comaroff. ‘Home-made hegemony: Modernity, domesticity, and colonialism in South Africa’ in K. T. Hansen (ed.), *African Encounters with Domesticity* (New York: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 37-74; and D. B. Coplan, *In the Time of Cannibals: the word music of South Africa’s Basotho migrants* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

40 D. A. Fay, “‘Keeping Land for Their Children’: Generation, Migration and Land in South Africa’s Transkei”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41, 5, 2015, 1083-1097.



Figure 6: Qebe, July 1973.

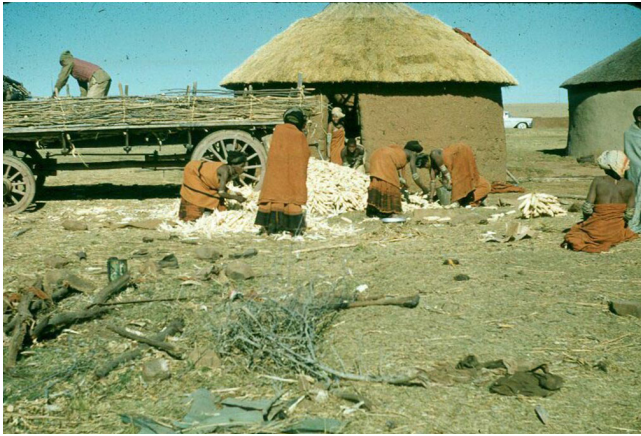


Figure 7: The harvest of izikhwebu (mielie cobs) is brought home by a large wagon. One hut is newly thatched, 1959.

hats. Patriarchs sitting while women work. A not unfamiliar image, but one that resonates across the landscape – as returned migrants overseeing the customary, when not attending to cattle. Differences of age and seniority also mark the social masculinities constituted through these photographs, differentiating herding, ploughing, slaughtering and what are identified as the ritual moral economies associated with them.<sup>41</sup>

While we do not seek to deny the powerful patriarchal, ‘traditional’ and capitalist labour reservoir regimes of oppression, marginality and determined poverty and violence that marks out women’s lives in the homelands, the static constitution of these ‘rural’ and ‘traditional’ subjects of the homelands and the *umzi* remain pronounced in the literature.

41 See P. McAllister, ‘Are concepts such as “margins” and “marginalization” useful for analysing rural life in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa?’, *Development Southern Africa*, 25, 2, 2008, 169-179.





Figure 8: Buying pumpkins, c.1960.

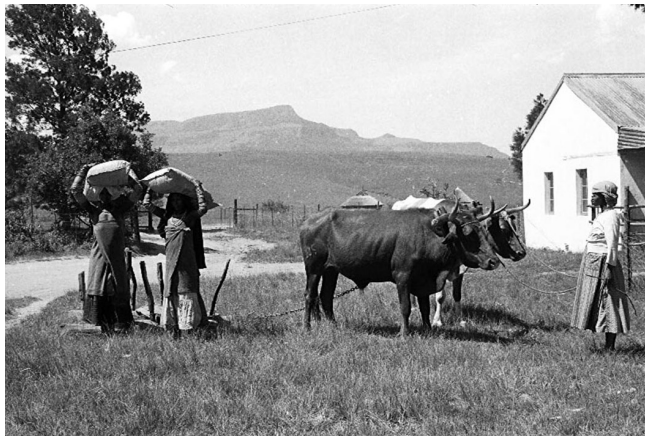


Figure 9: Wagon and span of oxen, 1964.

Yet, Ingle's photographs propose a more dynamic and less isolating sense of subjectivities. Consider these images where we associate movement with technologies of motion.

While there is nothing startling about them, we argue that these are atypical images. In the pervasive ethnographic modes of representation, movement is curtailed to the body, located primarily in ritual and the occasional image of home building or the gathering of firewood, ploughing or herding, and in the wider historiography, similar trajectories, if present, can be identified.<sup>42</sup>

The suggestive associations between the homestead, women's labour and the movement that they prompt, enable a rethinking of the relation between migrancy,

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42 While not holding Broster's books up as exemplary, it is worth noting that there is not a single vehicle or notion of movement or change associated, in these books. See Broster, *Red Blanket Valley*, as well as J. Broster, *The Tembu: Their Beadwork, Songs and Dances* (Cape Town, Johannesburg, London and New York: Purnell, and Sons, 1976); A. Elliott, *The Magic World of the Xhosa* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970); H. Campion, *The New Transkei* (Sandton: Valiant Publishers, 1976).

embodied subjectivity and place. Certainly, in one sense, we are reading movement relatively straightforwardly in relation to the presence of differing forms and modes of transport. While a selection, it is also worth noting that in many of Ingle's images associated with home (stead) lives, it is women who are implicated in the potential movement, travelling as a group on a trailer, on- or off-loading mealies, packing the boot of a motor car, or moving large poles and bags with cattle-drawn wagons. Small acts – working, exchanging, moving – not of breakdown (however constrained) but altering worldviews.

But they are also atypical images in the sense that they convey both the possible motions and movements that begin to unravel the more static conceptualisations associated with 'social reproduction' and 'building of the homestead', even when these are understood as historically 'fluid'<sup>43</sup> or as 'socially fragmenting'<sup>44</sup> under the intensified precarious conditions of existence in the 1960s and 1970s, into wider differentiations of the movement of subsistence, labour, gender and home in alternate local 'home migrant' meaning circuits and world views (of production, reproduction and exchange).<sup>45</sup>

Certainly, these forms of 'movement' should be necessarily read in relation to the differentiated homesteads and journeys they may contain, as well as in relation to the associative determined circuits of value on the move or implicated in their proximity to the kinds of vehicles imaged, to which we will return. Here, though, the home then, as a site of movement. As Ahmed et al. note, '[b]eing grounded is not necessarily about being fixed; being mobile is not necessarily about being detached'. They can, for the most part, be seen as circuits that place the homestead in motion and beyond those of male migrancy.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time, constraint and necessity mark these movements as visible circuits of material deprivation and need. Said differently, with the genealogies of migrant and 'native labour' in mind, these images double up as imposed 'cheap' circuits of subsistence, labour and exchange.

Ingle's photographs register the various regimes of work in and around the Mission Station (in the homelands, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s). Men's work is less visible, related to a clear migrant lack of continual presence, but also to spatial and temporal determinations associated with cattle accumulation, herding and ploughing, and homestead maintenance. The occasional images of these activities

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43 See A. D. Spiegel, 'The fluidity of household composition in Matatiele, Transkei: a methodological problem', *African Studies*, 45, 1, 1986, 17-35.

44 See W. Beinart, 'A Hundred Years', 396

45 The literature on social reproduction, starting with Wolpe and Legassick's 'dual economy', where the homelands become the site of cheap migrant labour's reproduction, through the racialised constitution of dispossessed homelands, curtailed into subsistence agricultural land access as labour reserves; through to the literature that deals with gendered patriarchal controls that tied women's reproductive labour in terms of 'non-waged' gendered and subsistence work and as minors to households/homesteads is vast and is simply broadly acknowledged here. The related questioning of 'family' and 'household' and the links between domestic units and poverty, through to that which outlines 'family breakdown' and the decay of traditional structures of security and support as coterminous with female (and male) migrancy, or in other words as a household survival strategy, as the means to counter dispossession and build the homestead equally refers. For an excellent overview see Mager, 'Migrancy', 259-274.

46 Ahmed, et al, 'Introduction: Uprootings/regroundings', 10.



are routine, largely confirming interpretations that locate labour as predominantly migrant and the related ‘investments’ in the homestead and in cattle, in particular.

Two aspects though, are important for our argument here. The first is the ways that these forms of ‘homeland’ work sustain a tension and integrated differentiation between migrant waged work (itself distinguished by various forms of waged and other forms of reproductive work, as well as other forms of paid work, such as sex-work<sup>47</sup>) and homeland and homestead forms of non-waged work.<sup>48</sup> In other words, migrant labour is always already a form of labour whose meanings of work are mutable and not only defined by the wage relation.<sup>49</sup>

The second is, following Moodie, the ‘differences between waged work for Europeans and work for the homestead, ... where work for the homestead is generally seen as more positive.’<sup>50</sup> Beinart, though, locating youth rebellions against ‘working for the homestead’ (located in the practice of ‘running away from herding’), argues that ‘[i]t appears that waged work was sometimes, both then and especially now, seen in a more positive light than work for the homestead.’<sup>51</sup> Either way, the value and meaning of work remains unsettled, as does that of the working subject.

Elsewhere, Ingle’s photographs detail actual conditions of manual and waged labour, on roads, in quarries, around construction, identifying a presence of local male wage labour that simultaneously locates these practices within these ‘reserves of labour’. The circulation of these practices highlights, albeit in a limited and uneven manner, the limits of reading these spaces as ‘rural’, and as marked by the assumed absence of waged work, even if these cohere around the hospital, mission station and its infrastructures.

However, it is women’s work that is both much more visible, and possible to read into circuits of labour, if not necessarily always into those of waged work. As such, women’s work is not distinctive from male migrant labour and its circuits of waged and non-waged work, and between workplace and homestead. It is also worth remarking that, as women’s migrancy had increased from the 1940s, but had been curtailed by influx control in the 1960s, patterns of migration had also become more diverse. Transporting women’s migrant work experience back into the homesteads, whether through labour remittances, through labour returns, or through the various translations of association and connection, all served to transform localised meanings of work.

We are not romanticising existing women’s work, conventionally read as reproductive and subsistence-based in around the homestead and the fields, or that transitions, in its forms and meanings, lightened the work performed and endured. It was, and remained largely manual, routinised, repetitive, grinding and exhausting, as much as it was time-consuming and disciplined. If much of it remained in temporalities and spaces that were organised around ‘natural time’ and in disciplines of

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47 See J. Steinberg, ‘Bungityala’ in Delius et al., *A Long way Home* for an important recent commentary.

48 See Bank, ‘Entangled in patriarchy’ for a useful recent overview of these dynamics.

49 And, we would argue that the notion of forced ‘partial proletarianization’ does little to explain a structured subject position.

50 Cited in Beinart, ‘A Hundred Years’, 183.

51 *Ibid.*, 187.



Figure 10: Repairing the Umtata road bridge after the Xuka River floods, 1959.

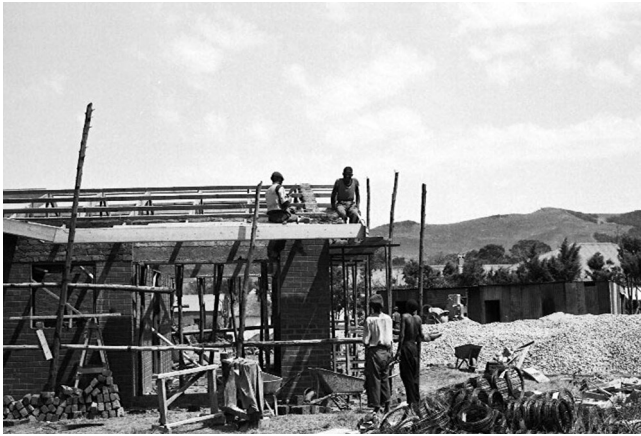


Figure 11: New Buildings under construction, 1963.

self-regulation, their work practices (and meanings) – *ukusebenza* – had been seen historically by mission and colonial discourses as most similar to the meanings of ‘civilized work’ (protestant, industrial).<sup>52</sup> These meanings of work endured, altered, shifted, both their unequal relationships to forms of patriarchal power and to wage labour, but in terms of their trajectories, neither men nor wage labour defined their insertion, or their grounded belonging in and as already (migrant) labour.<sup>53</sup>

52 See A. Mager, ‘Tracking the Concept of “Work” on the North Eastern Cape Frontier, South Africa’, in A. Fleisch and R. Stephens (eds.), *Doing Conceptual History in Africa* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), 73.

53 See F. R. Ames and W. G. Daynes, ‘Some impressions of family life in Tsolo (Transkei)’, *South African Medical Journal*, 47, 9, 1973 for a problematic, but usefully contemporaneous impressionistic sense. ‘Every able-bodied person is expected to work, and certain tasks are traditionally done either by men or by women. No woman would thatch a hut, plough or herd cattle. These are men’s jobs, but nearly all the hard work of the home is done by the women, about the only shared job being planting and hoeing mealies, and even with this the women put in many more hours than the men. ... Nowadays because there is less stock, and tractors are being used for ploughing, men who live in the area actually do little work, spending their time riding around visiting their friends and indulging in endless talking.’



Figure 12: Preparing fertiliser, 1966.



Figure 13: Harrowing, c. 1954.

Alongside providing an ‘image index’ of women’s labour and routines of work, from the homestead through to forms of waged labour (many of which are not reproduced here), we wish to turn to two photographs in particular.

Smudgy and slightly out of focus, its significance lies in its re-articulation of cattle, ploughing and women’s work. Conventionally men’s work excluded women from ‘cattle work’ and from ploughing, where women’s intensive task work in fields cohered around planting, weeding, hoeing and harvesting, although women did at times, lead animals.<sup>54</sup> In this, photograph, then, a woman ploughing. Unusual,

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<sup>54</sup> D. O’Neill, J. Sneyd, N. T. Mzileni, L. Mapeyi, M. Njekwa and S. Israel, ‘The use and management of draught animals by smallholder farmers in the former Ciskei and Transkei’, *Development Southern Africa*, 16, 2, 1999, 319-333. In a fairly extensive survey, they noted that only 3% of women, in the late 1990s ‘ploughed’.



Figure 14: Construction of Tsomo Dam, 1971.

if not exceptional,<sup>55</sup> it is suggestive of a counter-sense of flows and forms of work, formations of gendered labour and terrains of migrancy, even if they might have been determined by male migrant absence, by economic and subsistence necessity or by homestead circumstance. In these spaces of insecurity and change, more work for women, even as roles reverse.

A prompt, then for rethinking the value of women's labour and worth. Recent arguments, particularly of Siphokazi Magadla, have suggested that the notion of '*ukukhuthala*' (diligence, activity) defines women's industriousness (as wife) from within the homestead in ways that imply extension of this industriousness into collective circuits of labour in the 'family', in agriculture and within the 'ceremonial' (coming of age, funerals, church).<sup>56</sup> Perhaps, significantly, though, these extended intensities of work are based on prior and on-going movement of the home into and through circuits of migrancy, locating work, labour and 'building the homestead' in and through women's 'migrant' industriousness – migrant temporalities and spatialities, then, that complicate the 'natural' and the pastoral as they constitute migrant labour time in the homelands.

If the first photograph images migrancy in the homestead, in the cow and the field and the plough, this photograph reverberates with different analogies. The photograph of a woman construction or quarry worker, precariously balancing and moving a large rock on her head, while her right hand provides a stabilising force, grasped on to a truck lever, invokes the drill, the jackhammer, the rockface, the mine. In invoking this as a migrant image and this woman as holding the 'figure of the migrant' within 'industrial' temporalities, this serves a critical reminder that black women in

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55 In photographic image terms, see Constance Stuart Larrabee Collection, EEPA 1998-006, Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution. Caption reads: 'Transkei Woman Plowing Field, 1947. Original title by Constance Stuart Larrabee. Photographic image of a woman navigating a plow through a field. During this time, all over the Transkei region, women were at work in the fields because most young and fit men were away working at the mines.'

56 See Bank, 'Entangled in Patriarchy', citing S. Magadla, 'Matrifocality and shared motherhood', *Mail & Guardian*, 25 August 2017.





Figure 15: c. 1956.

the homelands are not just located in social reproduction, but also located within the discourses of ‘cheap native labour’.

And while similar, this image contrasts the temporalities of ‘industry’, but nevertheless invokes the temporalities of homestead and the absent male migrant in a portrait of homemaking, underscoring the migrant nature of non-waged work in the homelands.

Hayden White has argued that the figural structures historical consciousness because it structures narrative itself, but that it refigures retrospective correspondences or repetitions, altering ‘structures of time.’<sup>57</sup> In a different reading, Ionescu, via Lyotard, suggests that the figural is a disruptive force, questioning assumptions with regard to time and presentation, transforming a viewpoint and altering the sensible and the sensual.<sup>58</sup> Bamford has relatedly argued (also drawing on Lyotard) that the ‘figural is a realm of the unexpected’, mediated not through communication, but through intensities, where systems and significations are opened up and which discourse disallows. He argues that the figure is ‘the trace that indicates the presence of something which escapes presentation, displacing assumed presentations of view, disturbing notions of a fixed address and resisting assimilation to established orders, forms and means of signification.’<sup>59</sup>

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57 H. White, ‘The question of narrative in contemporary historical theory,’ *History and Theory*, 23, 1, 1984, 1-33.

58 V. Ionescu, ‘Figural Aesthetics: Lyotard, Valéry, Deleuze,’ *Cultural Politics*, 9, 2, 2013, 144-157.

59 K. Bamford, *Lyotard and the ‘figural’ in Performance, Art and Writing* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 17-21.

## The social / political

Movement and labour migrancy are again evinced in this photograph of an ambulance outside the All Saints Hospital, which the caption elucidates as ‘The first hospital ambulance donated by the Deferred Pay Board of the Native Recruiting Corporation (NRC), 1964’.



Figure 16: The first hospital ambulance donated by the Deferred Pay Board of the Native Recruiting Corporation (NRC), 1964.

Money and Glover have persuasively argued that the Deferred Pay Interest Fund reproduced the cheap and dependent recruitment of labour migrants in the Transkei in the critical period of the 1970s and 1980s, primarily through its use as patronage for local elites and mining propaganda, rather than it being spent on welfare projects in labour-sending regions (such as education or health) as it was intended.<sup>60</sup> However limited, though, we wish to draw together the ambulance as an actual welfare materiality of the Deferred Pay Board and as figural of the migrant at and within the hospital, but also in the landscape more widely. We do so whilst also bearing in the mind the formidable literature on the repressive, authoritarian, bureaucratic and coercive forms of racial state and ‘traditional’ indirect, administrative and governing power in its various forms and periodisations.<sup>61</sup>

60 M. Glover and D. Money, “‘Not Wholly Justified’: The Deferred Pay Interest Fund and Migrant Labour in South Africa’s Gold Mining Industry, c. 1970–1990”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 2021, 1–18. They say ‘much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a portion of the wages owed to African mine workers was deferred and remitted to them only at the end of their contracts. Mine workers did not receive this interest; it was, instead, deposited into a fund controlled by the mining industry. Although the fund had a mandate to spend on welfare projects in labour-sending regions, we argue that patterns of spending clearly show how it was used to support the reproduction of the migrant labour system. Payments were used as patronage for local elites, upon whom recruitment depended, and for distributing propaganda for the mining industry.’

61 Here, see, amongst others, L. Ntsebeza, ‘Structures and struggles of rural local government in South Africa: The case of traditional authorities in the Eastern Cape’ (PhD diss., Rhodes University, 2002); L. Ntsebeza, *Democracy compromised: Chiefs and the politics of the land in South Africa*, Afrika-Studiecentrum series No. 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2005). I. Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race: Native Administration in South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); W. D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or Consensus: The Development of Transkeian Local Government* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1975); R. Southall, *South Africa’s Transkei: The Political Economy of an ‘Independent’ Bantustan* (London: Heinemann, 1982); J. Peires, ‘The Implosion of Transkei and Ciskei’, *African Affairs*, 91, 364, 1992.



It is important to also recall that the homestead and the village<sup>62</sup> were themselves constituted and consolidated in formations of colonial governance, as the ‘... dispersed loyalties and rights and obligations of individuals within lineage structures to consolidate and concentrate loyalties within household units where production, consumption and reproduction activities could intersect in ways that were comprehensible to those running systems of governance – whether of the economy or the soul.’<sup>63</sup> Henrietta Moore has relatedly argued that the homestead or village ‘was not necessarily the horizon of either sociality, or of meaning making ... it was a spatial and temporal category essential to the problem of how to conceive of governance and development because the notion of the rural which came to characterise the African landscape was one of populations characterised as village dwellers.’<sup>64</sup>

In an important discussion of the complex and, in Zolani Ngwane’s terms, problematic formulation of the relationship between labour migration and the ‘myth’ of the homestead, particularly in relation to ‘family dissolution’. He argues that ‘the discourse of dissolution expressed through the idiom of migrant labour is not a continuation of earlier domestic struggles’, and that the motive for migration is to ‘seek alternative means of being local’. Ngwane suggests, then, that ‘[t]his cycle of departures predicated upon, and in turn anticipating, other departures in a simulacrum of exits with no clear beginning or end was, indeed, stretching the horizons of local identity and contesting the terms of its constitution.’<sup>65</sup> He argues, then, that the countryside (not the rural) is ‘the heterogeneous spaces of settlement within which discourses of migrancy – as embodied in commodities, new consciousness of space and exotic narratives – feature in ongoing struggles over the internal form of local households’. In these struggles, ‘constructs such as “family”, “tradition”, and “home”, become mobilized to naturalise certain patterns of social divisions over other possible ones’, but also disrupts these. In these spaces, then, as the temporalities of migrancy cohere, migrancy becomes a material and social, and a political act.<sup>66</sup>

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62 And there is a substantial literature of ‘betterment’ and the attempts to initiate villagisation, as well as the complex and intense struggles against ‘the trust’, related to planned stock culling, land reallocations and demarcations, etc. See, amongst others, F. Hendricks, ‘Loose planning and rapid resettlement: the politics of conservation and control in Transkei, South Africa, 1950-1970’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 15, 2, 1989, 306-325; C. De Wet, ‘Betterment planning in a rural village in Keiskammahoek, Ciskei’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 15, 2, 1989, 326-345; P. Hebinck, D. Fay, and K. Kondlo, ‘Land and agrarian reform in South Africa’s Eastern Cape Province: Caught by continuities’, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 11, 2, 2011, 220-240; L. Wotshela, ‘Quitrent tenure and the village system in the former Ciskei region of the Eastern Cape: Implications for contemporary land reform of a century of social change’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 40, 4, 2014, 727-744; P. McAllister, ‘Resistance to “betterment” in the Transkei: A case study from Willowvale district’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 15, 2, 1989, 346-368; A. Spiegel, ‘The Ambiguities of Betterment: a Transkei case study’, *African Studies*, 47, 2, 1988, 145-154.

63 D. F. Bryceson, ‘African Peasants’ Centrality and Marginality: Rural Labour Transformations’ in D. F. Bryceson, C. Kay, and J. Mooij (eds.), *Disappearing Peasantries: Rural Labour in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (London: IT Publications, 2000), 37-63, 45.

64 H. Moore, ‘Prosperity in crisis and the longue durée in Africa’, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 45, 7, 2018, 1501-1517.

65 Z. Ngwane, ‘“Christmas time” and the struggles for the household in the countryside: rethinking the cultural geography of migrant labour in South Africa’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 3, 2003, 681-699.

66 Following Arendt’s (1958) conceptualisation of ‘social acts’ as both ‘governing and beginning’, we propose, also drawing on Isin (2008), that to socially (en)act is to realise a rupture in the given-ness of the social and to necessarily attend to the unexpected, unpredictable and unknown of the social. We thus argue that social acts may be read against habitus, practice, discipline and routine as the ordering qualities of how humans form and conduct the social. Rather, social acts set actualisations in motion, but also a being that acts – within shifting forms of responsibility and answerability to changing affiliations, solidarities or hostilities – to ‘begin itself’ as subject. Social acts, then, articulate social agents both as object and as subject of history.

As such, we propose that migrancy, here read through the locality of the Ingle photographs, can be seen to 'begin itself' as migrant subject, rather than as traditional/ customary, pre-capitalist, pre-colonial, rural, or even as 'preservation', 'encapsulation' or 'capitulation to the modern'. And in doing so, we would argue, this also sets the pattern for 'naturalising acts of migrant citizenship that impact the society, following Balibar's<sup>67</sup> conceptualisation of *politeia*, describing a system of relationships that citizens themselves establish and which emerge out of the development of their own conflicts of interests and values.

Ngwane provides other glimpses of these acts – we wish to draw on one here. Discussing 'Christmas time' in Cancele in Mount Frere, he points to a number of aspects, but for our purposes here suggests that the differences in the forms of remittances, narratives and meanings associated with male and female migrant labour, including the measures of the female work implications and values entailed in maintaining the homestead led to a:

... '[R]e-domestication' of the women who otherwise spend most of the year in the public sphere – haggling with the chief over something or other, re-negotiating a credit line with the local store owner, attending parent's meetings at the local school, or killing a goat for meat. During Christmas time there is a general withdrawal of women from this sphere of public negotiations with the result that, for the most part, domestic economies themselves often come to a standstill, to pick up only in the new year. ... The 'wallet' also set in motion social practices based in the public sphere, especially for male migrants. Here, a migrant derives value from walking importantly about the settlement with 'cattle in his pocket'. ... Women migrants, on the other hand, are expected to receive people in their homes rather than go out on public self-display. In this way, their money was perhaps seen as being better spent on the inside of the house – on new furniture and new utensils, for instance.<sup>68</sup>

Admittedly, the Ingle photographs, as already stated, primarily cohere in and through the All Saints Mission Hospital and its environs, providing selective, curtailed and personal photographic viewpoints. It should also be noted that much ethnographic, as well as state discourses and practices, including the recruitment and economies of migrant labour itself, were historically and continuously generated in and through these spatialities.<sup>69</sup> That said, we want to propose that her 'snapshot'

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67 É. Balibar, *Citizenship*, T Scott-Railton (trans.) (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 19.

68 *Ibid.*

69 The most visible is the work of Monica Hunter, where the trading store generated much of her ethnographic field research; M. Hunter, *Reaction to conquest: Effects of contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937, 1964). But see also T. K. Connor, 'Ambiguous Repositories: Archives, Traders and the Recruitment of Mineworkers in the Eastern Cape: 1900–1946', *South African Historical Journal*, 72, 1, 2020, 98–124; A. Bank and L. Bank (eds.), *Inside African anthropology: Monica Wilson and her interpreters*, The International African Library, series no. 44 (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

photographs read as migrant images, open up a means to read social and political subjects<sup>70</sup> into assemblages of migrant ‘citizenship’.

Acts of citizenship facilitate a reading of social subjectivities in the photographs that neither neatly conform to the visual comportment of an historical urban-rural dichotomy, nor subscribe to a linear notion of modernisation. By occupying space in different ways, by virtue of different apparel, body postures, gestures and differing itineraries, the subjects appear to re-assert a local temporal-spatiality in all of its myriad manifestations, creativities, limits and possibilities. These thwart simplistic assumptions about how individuality is commensurate with modernity, but also resist the synonymy of the construction of the native subject with the rural subject.

Rather, they invoke Henrietta Moore’s<sup>71</sup> ‘internally differentiated subject’, which, in following Mills,<sup>72</sup> recognises the constant negotiation and contestation of different subject positions constituted by the figure of the migrant, which, for individuals, means they are given to continually selecting and moving between these migrant selves and self-images through the course of daily life.

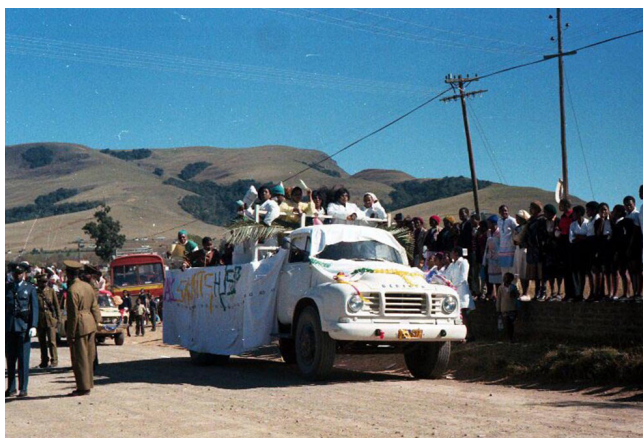


Figure 17: Parade, September 1979.

Here we want to apprehend Bhabha’s notion of liminal social drama,<sup>73</sup> which when harnessed to the concept of social acts, enables a different reading of the bus, for example, as located in the background of the parade image. The bus *as not* a vehicle of modernity – despite the signifiers of power and commerce as embodied by the bus company itself and the advertisement in the earlier images, then. And, *not as*

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70 Usefully and importantly, Suren Pillay has argued that ‘the political subject that remains inadequately theorised ... is the migrant worker’, who has always already conditioned South African politics. Admittedly, Pillay’s argument is that this political figure is located between subject and citizen (read via Mamdani), and within a politics that we ‘might not like’.

71 H. L. Moore, *A Passion for Difference: Essays in Anthropology and Gender* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), quoted in M. B. Mills, ‘Contesting the Margins of Modernity: Women, Migration and Consumption in Thailand’, *American Ethnologist*, 24,1, 1997, 38.

72 Mills, ‘Contesting the Margins’, 38.

73 H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), referenced in F. Kalua, ‘Homi Bhabha’s Third Space and African Identity’, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 21, 1, 2009, 23, in which liminal social drama is ... a process of celebrating dynamic spaces of cultural change, characterised by shifting identities.

a conduit for the inflow of urbanisation, but as a visual metaphor of movement that, when inverted, allows for the bus to be a vehicle that is taking away a specific way of being in the world, one that transcends the binaries of the rural-urban divide and the tradition and modernity dialectic. So as Kalua argues, for Turner, the liminal moment is ‘when the past has lost its grip and the future has not yet taken definite shape’, and for Bhabha<sup>74</sup> it is ‘an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment’.

Notwithstanding Scott’s injunction to theorise and historicise experience,<sup>75</sup> in visual terms, these ideas enable an understanding of acts that dethrones an oversimplified conferring of agency on subjects. At a broad level, while agency is helpful in allowing for and demonstrating the possibility and dynamics of movement, and thus seeing the rural beyond the stereotypes of a stultified place of abandonment, it falls short of being able to elucidate the complexity of the subjectivities and experiences that characterise the space of the rural and the subject *as* migrant. By reprising Stiegler’s concept of transindividuation, understood as the transformation of the individual and the collective through each other in a simultaneous process that is both personal and social,<sup>76</sup> these images further destabilise the associations and categorisations attributed to ‘the rural native subject’, but also divert the ‘logics’ of normalising ‘the human’ as the rational modern liberal citizen-subject.

## Conclusion

Recent work has increasingly questioned the usefulness of urban and rural as two counterposed conceptualisations defining society and history on the continent. Moore has argued that ‘[i]t is therefore increasingly difficult in contemporary Africa to divide the rural from the urban, experientially, emotionally, analytically or economically’,<sup>77</sup> while Bank has argued that ‘[t]he urban and the rural no longer exist as neatly separated categories or social, economic and political spaces, nor as an uninterrupted, hermaphroditic landscape of immiserating equivalence, even though the urban and the rural combine and reproduce themselves in increasingly similar forms. The analysis provided above questions the idea that South Africa can still easily be divided into discrete urban and rural spaces with distinct moral and social economies associated with the subject and citizen divide.’<sup>78</sup>

Alongside these arguments, both Moore (for Kenya and Zambia) and Bank have argued for the ‘urbanisation of the countryside’, where ‘the character of the rural is changing, but not because of improvements in agricultural productivity or accelerated agrarian transformation’, but has rather been driven by changing aspirations and

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74 V. Turner, *Blazing the trail: Way marks in the exploration of symbols* (Tucson and London: The University of Arizona Press, 1992), 133, as quoted in Kalua, ‘Homi Bhabha’s Third Space’, 24.

75 J. W. Scott, ‘The Evidence of Experience’ in J. Chandler, A. I. Davidson and H. Harootunian (eds.), *Questions of Evidence: Proof, Practice, and Persuasion across the Disciplines* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 363-387.

76 B. Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*, S Barker (trans.) (California: Stanford University Press, 2011), 17.

77 Moore, ‘Prosperity in crisis’, 1511.

78 L. Bank, ‘Migrancy, war and belonging: the cultural politics of African nationalism at Marikana’, *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 100, 1, 2019, 1-26, 21.

consumption patterns and on ‘complex ecologies of knowledge, resource, time and place.’<sup>79</sup> In the South African context, Bank further argues for the ways that ‘women with resources have led the urbanisation of the countryside’, driving ‘rural modernisation’ in the contemporary period.<sup>80</sup> But the enduring dichotomies of difference and of explanation remain in place: that divides rural and urban between the traditional (however dynamic) and the modern; between reproduction and production; between the pastoral traditional patriarchal authority and the individuated racial bio-political; in short between rural subject and urban citizen.

Perhaps, though, thinking from the vantage on ‘an other cape’, we might want to consider that a projection beyond the urban and the rural and associated notions of ‘double-rootedness’ might reconsider the figure of the migrant and the migrant subject as a means to rethink the subject of history in the Eastern Cape. Here, perhaps, a different trajectory in the ecologies of knowledge, resource, time and place resides. Recently William Beinart asked what it would mean to think ‘beyond “homelands”’.<sup>81</sup> Thinking with the figure of the migrant might open the way to reimagine a ‘migrant subject’, not as between urban and rural, but rather as a human subject that, if resonating or reverberating as a migrant image, asks for this reimagining as a conceptual movement. This figure of the migrant holds this trace as a presence of a different subject and towards an altered formation of the historical subject in the Eastern Cape.

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79 Moore, ‘Prosperity in crisis’, 1512.

80 Bank, ‘Entangled in Patriarchy’, 386-387. Bank argues, this postapartheid shift ‘...has not simply been a move away from cattle as a source of wealth for retirement to cash as the new mark of individualized consumption, social fluidity and mobility. The social fabric of the rural landscape has changed accordingly as social organisation for production, typically expressed through neighbourhood ploughing teams and work parties, has fallen by the wayside and been replaced by more matrifocal and family-centred forms of social organisation for consumption.’

81 W. Beinart, ‘Beyond “homelands”’: Some ideas about the history of African rural areas in South Africa’, *South African Historical Journal*, 64, 1, 2012, 5-21.