

iMpuma-Koloni / Eastern Cape, Part 2

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A title is always a heading [*cap*].¹

Potholes and portals

There are two signs at the side of the road leading away from Salem, a small town in the Eastern Cape that has been at the centre of one of the most contentious land claim trials before South Africa's Constitutional Court. The first reads: 'Welcome to Frontier Country'. The second: 'Potholes ahead'. The potholes offer themselves as further signs, but perhaps only in the way an inkblot solicits a transferential reading. What do potholes signify? Infrastructural disintegration? Erosion in the connective tissues of the region? Perhaps for some they are marks of social division associated with everything 'the frontier' has come to signify. All responses against which the discipline of History would caution, reminding the reader of the problems that have been pointed out, since at least the 1970s, with the hypothesis of 'the frontier' as an

¹ J. Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, P-A. Brault and M. B. Naas (trans.) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 13.

originary scene of social division in South Africa.² We have no intention of undoing the critical distance History has taken from a liberal 'frontier tradition.' The past two years, however – the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdowns, states of disaster, gender-based violence, police brutality, mass protests against the racism that that brutality exposes ... contagion, conflict, isolation, containment, confinement – have only intensified the close but enigmatic association between these signs.

The project from which this special issue emerges began in 2019 in a joint workshop in the Eastern Cape, entitled, *iMpuma-Koloni Bearings: An Other Cape?* It brought together colleagues and postgraduate students from Rhodes University (RU), the University of Fort Hare (UFH), the University of Minnesota (UMN) and the University of the Western Cape (UWC). The call to this workshop embraced a commitment to critical history, aiming to think critically about Eastern Cape History, and to think History critically from the Eastern Cape, reconsidering the implications of the discipline in the colonial and apartheid project.

Locked down in 2020, but pursuing, if warily, lines of flight enabled by necessity and by the possibilities of digital technologies, we presented *Sounding the Land* at the 2020 Makhanda virtual National Arts Festival (<https://soundingtheland.co.za/>). *Sounding the Land* is an ongoing project of interdisciplinary multi-media collaboration between the History Department and the Cory Library for Historical Research at RU, the SARChI Chair in Social Change at UFH, the National Arts Festival and the South African Heritage Resources Agency. It drew together a combined team of scholars and artists to reinvigorate and reassess debates on the impact and legacy of the settler colonial project in South Africa's Eastern Cape through discussions of the historical certainties that define the debates on, and the meanings of, settler colonialism over time.

The special issue emerges, then, out of *iMpuma-Koloni Bearings: An Other Cape?* and *Sounding the Land*, the work of which is gathered together here in the pages of *Kronos: Journal of Southern African Histories*, formerly – and by this we mean to allude to what we take up more explicitly later, namely, the long shadow of the Cape – *Kronos: Tydskrif vir Kaaplandse Geskiedenis / Journal of Cape History* until 2000.

2 As the hypothesis goes, frontiersmen's isolation from the influences of the European mother country and contact with people understood by frontiersmen as utterly different, stand as the conditions under which racialised group consciousness hardened. This hardening, so the hypothesis goes, was attended by fearful, often violent apprehensions of those falling outside the group, and without the intervening forces of a liberal civil society, fear and group consciousness were left to mutually reinforce each other: group consciousness begot fear of others, which led to a reinforcement of a laager mentality and, thus, more fear, more group consciousness, more violence. I. D. MacCrone, writing not so much of a continuity of his interwar present with the eighteenth-century frontier as a deferred arrival, the *Nachträglichkeit*, the afterwardsness, of 'the frontier', referred to a 'frontier mentality': I. D. MacCrone, *Race Attitudes in South Africa: Historical, Experimental and Psychological Studies* (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Press, 1957, first published 1937), 281. For MacCrone, this was not the slow festering of a wound as its infection spreads across the social body, but the return of the unresolved conflicts of the frontier as a fearful bodily state expressed in acts of racial hatred. In 'The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography', a seminar paper first presented in 1970, Martin Legassick tore into MacCrone's text, drawing attention to the limits of understanding what became apartheid as a form of madness. For Legassick, the definition of the frontier in MacCrone's book simply does not withstand scrutiny. As he notes, there were theories of difference at the Cape colony from the outset; such theories, and the practices of othering to which they gave rise, were neither formed on, nor even more prevalent at, the frontier, but were an integral part of Cape liberal civil society itself. For Legassick, 'the frontier' was not purely and simply the site of inter-racial violence and the hardening of group consciousness, but one of ambiguity, an uneven, heterogeneous zone of mutual influence, cooperation, and conflict. Whatever conflict occurred on the frontier, and there can be no doubt that there was violent conflict, Legassick argues, should be understood as an effect of the extension of the Cape colony into the interior. Martin Legassick, *The frontier tradition in South African historiography*. Collected seminar papers, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 12, 1972, 1-33.

For a long time there has been anxiety over ‘the complicity of history in sustaining forms of power’.³ Leslie Witz, Ciraj Rassool and Gary Minkley were far from alone in perceiving a ‘historiographical rupture’⁴ in the 1990s. Keith Jenkins’ *Re-thinking History*, first published in 1991, can be read as popularising this ‘rupture’, and interventions such as Premesh Lalu’s *The Deaths of Hinsta* have drawn attention to the discipline’s ‘silent maintenance of the epistemological regime that enabled colonial domination’.⁵ But certain presuppositions have remained firmly rooted. History remains, as Qadri Ismail puts it – and this introductory essay has been written largely in response to Ismail’s critique of History, reread in the wake of his passing – a mode of authorising ‘truth claims’ that are ‘usually emplotted in narrative form, by a (rational, autonomous, sovereign) subject in the present, of an object termed the past, in which events are caused by and/or happen to (other) subjects’.⁶

One hears, for example, from the former President of the Southern African Historical Society, Enocent Msindo, in his 2019 address to attendees at the Society’s annual conference, that ‘African history has to be highly forensic in approach’, after which he tasks the discipline with studying ‘other histories’, which it must, in an ‘intense, painstaking’ way, go about ‘reconstructing’.⁷ Not making, not constructing, but ‘reconstructing’ – in what Adam Sitze has called the ‘epistemological peace and quiet’ of theory-free empiricism.⁸ The substance of Msindo’s address is a list of the many new, as yet ‘unstudied’ ‘objects’ on which History should go on doing its work. But after so many ‘turns’, so many critiques of History from various quarters, ‘can we, to put the matter as simply as possible, carry on like this?’⁹

If we point here to a local iteration of the difficulty of exceeding History as the disciplined practice of producing objects of knowledge – objects sealed in a past that must be ‘reconstructed’ through a practice that reconstitutes the sovereignty of a knowing subject whose present remains uninterrogated, and ‘erases difference’ even as and when it shifts its attention to previously ignored ‘other histories’ studied,

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- 3 Premesh Lalu, ‘When was South African History ever Postcolonial?’ *Kronos*, 34, 1, 2008, 279. The Philosophy of History has of course posed epistemological questions from the eighteenth century, but the kind of questions we have in mind emerge in the 1970s. See, for instance, the 1970s essays published in M. De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, T. Conley (trans.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). See also T. Ranger, ‘From Humanism to the Science of Man: Colonialism in Africa and the Understanding of Alien Societies’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 26, 1976, 115.
 - 4 L. Witz and C. Rassool, ‘Making Histories’, *Kronos*, 34, 1, 2008, 9. Witz and Rassool are citing L. Witz, C. Rassool and G. Minkley, ‘Who speaks for South African pasts?’, paper presented at the South African Historical Society Conference, ‘Secrets, Lies and History’, University of the Western Cape, July 1999. Cf. P. Lalu, ‘When was South African History ever Postcolonial?’, 279, who, in 2008, was still writing of ‘the postcolonial anticipation of epistemological rupture’.
 - 5 A. Sitze, ‘History and Desire’, *Safundi*, 13, 1-2, 2012, 174.
 - 6 Q. Ismail, ‘(Not) at Home in (Hindu) India: Shahid Amin, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and the Critique of History’, *Cultural Critique*, 68, 2008, 214.
 - 7 E. Msindo, ‘Presidential Address: Rethinking Histories of Southern Africa and the Contemporary Challenges’, *South African Historical Journal*, 73, 2, 2021, 237, 238. Jean M. Allman’s Presidential address to the Association for African Studies Association the same year offers a different story, calling on the field to acknowledge History’s relation to power, at least at the level of the ‘gate-keeping’ role of, particularly, white male scholars. J. Allman, ‘#HerskovitsMustFall? A Meditation on Whiteness, African Studies, and the Unfinished Business of 1968’, *African Studies Review*, 62, 3, 2021.
 - 8 Sitze, ‘History and Desire’, 178. Msindo is clear that theory is not his thing – he is not, he says repeatedly, a ‘postmodernist’.
 - 9 Ismail, ‘Home’, 214. Indeed, ‘questions of epistemology’ have been raised not only by those whose work is labelled poststructuralist, but have been presented to the discipline in public, and run through the mills of its sphere. The Salem land claim, for instance, which saw Professors Giliomee and Legassick offer their expert testimony, turned into a ‘conflict of epistemologies’, and while that conflict was primarily between ‘judicial fact’ and ‘historical truth’, the case also demanded reflection on the ‘underpinnings’ of the discipline and its notion of ‘truth’ as the provisional outcome of deliberation. R. Ross, ‘The Wizards of Salem: South African Historians, Truth-telling and Historical Justice’, *South African Historical Journal*, 70, 4, 2018, 653, 634. For a critical consideration of Ross, and his neglect of oral testimony in the case, see J. Bezuidenhout, this issue.

now, by those previously considered the ‘objects’ of History – it should be underlined that Ismail includes what are often taken to be exemplary instantiations of critical history. Msindo’s address would find itself in the company of Dipesh Chakrabarty’s ‘ubiquitously cited *Provincializing Europe*’, which, Ismail argues, identifies a problem in, and with, the discipline of History – ‘that Europe, understood as a “hyperreal” and not a geographic entity, is effectively the subject of all histories, including those of the (real, geographic) non-European world’¹⁰ – and then ignores it. What Ismail finds so disagreeable is Chakrabarty’s claim to have stepped outside of the Eurocentrism of the discipline, to narrate ‘hidden histories not destroyed by Eurocentrism’, a move that ‘effectively’, and ‘unconsciously’, fastens the project to an identity politics of nationalism.

To render this as a matter of ‘repression’, to say that ‘epistemological peace and quiet’ requires keeping critical questions at bay, out of consciousness, can, without sufficient care, fall into the trappings of the ‘frontier mentality’ hypothesis; if there is a ‘repression’ at work here, it is a matter of what occurs under what Samuel Weber calls ‘conditions of impossibility.’¹¹ Put differently, when Ismail writes that ‘[t]he trouble with dead white men is that some of them are not men, many not white and an alarming number not even dead’, it is an observation about an episteme of which History is a part, not about individual psychology.¹²

Is there a path out, beyond the episteme? The crises of the present, we want to suggest, offer the possibility for thinking otherwise, for loosening a grip on our modes of reading. ‘Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past, and imagine their world anew’, Arundhati Roy writes: ‘This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.’¹³ The Eastern Cape, while bringing into stark relief collapsing infrastructures, the effects of late capitalism evident in disturbing intensities, can also be considered, in Roy’s terms, as a portal, a gateway not just for a reckoning with the settler colonial racialised past that haunts South Africa as much as it does other parts of the world, but also a vantage point for new directions of research and practice in the arts and in the academy, and for a return to critical ethical thinking and teaching that is commensurate with the signs of our time. Aiming for this, and calling for it at *iMpuma-Koloni* Bearings: An Other Cape? and *Sounding the Land*, we maintain doubts that we too have misread the signs, have not been able to abide by the possibilities for critical thinking the Eastern Cape holds. We nonetheless would like to try to conjure something of that possibility here.

10 Ismail, ‘Home’, 215. For a more sympathetic but equally rigorous reading of Chakrabarty, see A. Skaria, ‘The Project of Provincialising Europe: Reading Dipesh Chakrabarty’, *Economic & Political Weekly*, 44, 14, 2009.

11 S. Weber, *Institution and Interpretation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 75.

12 Q. Ismail, *Culture and Eurocentrism* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 1. Put another way, we are referring to the relation between institutions and thinking. ‘Institutions’, Mary Douglas notes, ‘systematically direct individual memory and channel our perceptions into forms compatible with the relations they authorize’. For Douglas, ‘the hope of intellectual independence is to resist, and the necessary first step in resistance is to discover how the institutional grip is laid upon our minds’. M. Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (Syracuse University Press, 1986), 7, 92.

13 A. Roy, ‘The Pandemic is a Portal’, *Financial Times*, 3 April 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>.

The Eastern Cape presents a vantage point that is simultaneously conditioned by space – the ‘frontier’, the Bantustan, the margin – and by the political and the philosophical. It is a place, in short, from which to question, an intriguing problem space, a fault line: a remarkable physical, material, geographical, ecological space that can also be considered a conceptual space, a political space, a space that looms large in the historical imagination. Here, several lines intersect and clash, become faults, seize time and space: different climatological and ecological zones; different geological formations, oceans and coastlines; colonialism and conquest; a settler frontier; apartheid social engineering; a setting in which, as Crain Soudien has written, ‘there was and continued to be resistance’ to the pillage and plunder.¹⁴ The Eastern Cape is a landscape of colonial containment and destruction, of aesthetic beauty and contradiction, of settlement, and of discursive possibility. The long and tenacious history of resistance demanded the violent imposition of colonial power, land appropriations, and settlement, but also a rescripting of ‘how the *people* inhabiting the social landscape of the country should be as human subjects.’¹⁵ The Eastern Cape, we propose, enables a way of thinking with and at the limit, thinking from the limit, the margin, the ‘frontier’, but also from the limit that this fault line, this space, this place, this territory posed for apartheid, and poses for the post-apartheid. From the Eastern Cape, one might consider what Roy calls ‘dead ideas’ and the conceits and certainties of History, particularly African History, despite its commitment to justice and transformation.

The shadow of the Cape

Before saying more about the papers presented at these two workshops, now revised for publication, we want to reflect on another conference that took place in 2017, two years before ours, out of which the edited volume, *Whose History Counts? Decolonising African Pre-colonial Historiography*, emerged. We do so because there is something held in common here, more than a shared focus on the Eastern Cape, namely, the Eastern Cape as a place from which to question.

The broader project of which this 2017 conference held at Nelson Mandela University (NMU) in the Eastern Cape was a part considers ‘the precolonial historiography of southern Africa,’ as Lungisile Ntsebeza, in his introduction to the volume – the third in a series – states.¹⁶ Their project, Ntsebeza claims, aims to ‘challenge the widely-accepted notion that the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in 1652 marks the point of departure in studying and understanding the history of southern Africa.’¹⁷ The conference was held in the first place because the Eastern Cape was ‘conspicuous by its absence in the two earlier volumes of the project’, and whereas

14 C. Soudien, ‘New Accents on the Social: Thinking on South Africa’s history at UWC’, *South African Historical Journal*, 2018, 4.

15 Soudien, ‘New Accents’, 4.

16 L. Ntsebeza, ‘Whose History Counts? An Introduction’ in J. Bam, L. Ntsebeza and A. Zinn (eds.), *Whose History Counts? Decolonising African Pre-colonial Historiography* (Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 2018), 1. Southern – not South – Africa, for ‘the notion of a nation-state, such as South Africa, is a colonial construct’, *Ibid.*, 2.

17 Ntsebeza, ‘Introduction’, 1.

the previous conferences held in Cape Town had been ‘white and male-dominated’, the one held *in*, and focused *on*, the Eastern Cape ‘turned out to be path-breaking’, and saw previously marginalised subjects – ‘black women’ – come to the fore, posing questions about ‘epistemological and methodological issues.’¹⁸ Like ours, the event that led to *Whose History Counts?* seemed to present a different vantage point, and more than a simple focus on a ‘precolonial history’ *in* the Eastern Cape, it is a move to question, from the Eastern Cape, the very foundational assumptions of History’s relationship to time.

Commenting on the first section of this third volume, a section comprised of female authors only, Ntsebeza notes the way they interrogate how ‘Africans’ have provided ‘primary data’ for histories written by ‘European scholars’, the way they suggest that ‘Africans should write history from their vantage point’, and, looking back, that ‘Africans’ can be seen as already having done this. As Ntsebeza writes of Nomalanga Mkhize’s chapter, because ‘South African historiography has been a white record of black actions’, there has been a lack of ‘recognition of the many scattered writings by black South Africans’ who made a ‘contribution to South African historiography as historians in their own right.’¹⁹

There is every reason to affirm such a position. As Helen Bradford and Msokoli Qotole write, ‘black historians of South Africa have probably far outnumbered their white counterparts. Typically, however, they published in African languages and in the popular media arenas which most scholars have yet to explore.’²⁰ Turning to ‘black art and thought since the early twentieth century’, Bhekizizwe Peterson similarly notes: ‘In black communities, the attempts to envision and elaborate alternative understandings of history were acts of knowledge production that negated imperial and colonial modernity and especially their politics of racial subjection and exclusion.’²¹ What happens to History here, to the discipline? Firstly, it becomes, at least in part, more porous, accommodating, integrative, with new members contributing to historical studies being recognised, capped, as it were; those who were previously the ‘objects’ of History are now eligible to become, if they are not already legible as, its knowledge-producing ‘subjects.’ While this is important, there are also clear limits to it. As Ismail, puts it, ‘making the object subject’, treating ‘groups hitherto objectified [...] as sub-

18 Ntsebeza, ‘Introduction’, 3.

19 Ntsebeza, ‘Introduction’, 8. For many it will now seem commonplace that ‘primary sources’, as Leslie Witz and Ciraj Rassool write, literally themselves ‘make histories’ and ‘contain within themselves pre-existing historiographies’, an observation they make in looking back to historiographical shifts that took place in the 1990s. Witz and Rassool, ‘Making Histories’, 1, 7, 9. But this has also been routinely disavowed, archival records treated as ‘raw materials for the construction of thickly detailed narratives’. N. Penn, *Rogues, Rebels, and Runaways: Eighteenth Century Cape Characters* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1999), 6. Perhaps Witz and Rassool’s position is not, then, as commonplace as one might think, and many historians in the positivist tradition still do treat ‘primary sources’ as empirical data, not as text, and the archive as a ‘source’, a repository, a container, not a construction or discourse. This is of course not the only conclusion to come to about Penn’s work; it has been said that he ‘self-consciously locates his storytelling experiments in the [Carlo] Ginzburg tradition [of microhistory]’. A. Bank and N. Jacobs, ‘Introduction: The Micropolitics of Knowledge Production in Southern Africa’, *Kronos*, 41, 1, 2015, 16. At the risk of belabouring the point, this is an epistemic issue, and not a matter of personal psychology.

20 H. Bradford and M. Qotole, ‘Ingxoxo enkulu ngoNongqawuse (A Great Debate about Nongqawuse’s Era)’, *Kronos*, 34, 1, 2008, 66.

21 B. Peterson, ‘Spectrality and Inter-generational Black Narratives in South Africa’, *Social Dynamics*, 45, 3, 2019, 350.

jects [...] is a political shift, not an epistemological break.²² Or, rather, it might accompany an epistemological break, but nothing is guaranteed. Secondly, the questions raised constrain – or, rather, productively unsettle – ‘a factual account of the Eastern Cape’, and the reader, Ntsebeza states, should not expect any empirical histories of the Eastern Cape in the pages of *Whose History Counts?* The questions posed, then, are both political and epistemological. Nineteenth century black writers, for instance, are belatedly recognised as contributing to historiographical debates, and that recognition threatens to dissolve the stratifying historiographical field into which they will have been integrated. Ntsebeza, for clear and important reasons, opts to underline the political rather than the disruption wrought by the epistemological side of these double-edged questions. But as Witz and Rassool write, ‘admitting’ ‘sources that need to be made into proper history [...] into the ambit of history can begin to alter the conceptualization of the profession’, and ‘breaking down [the distinction between source and history] not only inevitably broadens the field of history and historians, but it also allows for much more complex and nuanced understandings of the circulation of different historical meanings and interpretations.’²³

This double movement stirs within *Whose History Counts?*, the title of which asks to be read in at least two ways, along two lines that are not immediately reconcilable, and indeed, sometimes work against each other. *Whose History Counts?* recognises and admits new ‘historians’, whose accounts are validated, made to count. But the question also becomes not simply a matter of counting, of accounting, as it were, but, at least potentially, a reconstitution of historical knowledge into something like a ‘disputatious field of engagement’ through which ‘pastness is framed and claimed.’²⁴ In this sense, it asks whose History merely counts, adds more numbers of historians to a field of inquiry these additions leave unchanged? But, staging this critical question, it must include itself, address and implicate itself, and run the risk that it may not be able to have and eat its graduation cake.

These questions unsettle empirical histories of the Eastern Cape; they productively ‘blur’ an image of ‘historical clarity’, to draw here on Patricia Hayes commenting on photography and student protests, and in doing so they offer ‘another way of seeing that is not clear and stable.’²⁵ The narration of this ‘blurring’, however, is lucid, focussed, and there is little choice for Ntsebeza but to give a clear historicist account of the way these questions surfaced in the Eastern Cape. To explain the articulation of

22 Ismail, ‘Home’, 213. As Achia Anzi writes in Part I of this Special Issue: ‘Epistemologically speaking, to decolonise is not to introduce more postcolonial authors into the curriculum nor to retrieve colonised artefacts to their original sites. Important as they are, these measures do not alter the terms of the conversation and at times camouflage the crux of the problem.’ Lalu, too, has reflected on the limits of ‘the [object] of history’ becoming ‘an historian’. Lalu, ‘When was South African History ever Postcolonial?’, 275. This can be looked at historically, but it has also played out around the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, which was tasked with producing knowledge about the past that would stabilise the nation, drawing, it is true, on a few professional historians, but who did not by any means govern the narrative. See A. Du Toit, ‘The Owl of Minerva and the Ironic Fate of the Progressive Praxis of Radical Historiography in Post-apartheid South Africa’, *Kronos*, 36, 1, 2010, 262–263. On the role of ‘assistants’ in the production of anthropological knowledge, see A. Bank, ‘The “Intimate Politics” of Fieldwork: Monica Hunter and her African Assistants, Pondoland and the Eastern Cape, 1931–1932’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34, 3, 2008, 557–74.

23 Witz and Rassool, ‘Making History’, 7.

24 L. Witz, G. Minkley and C. Rassool, *Unsettled History: Making South African Public Pasts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 14, 15.

25 P. Hayes, ‘The Blur of History: Student Protest and Photographic Clarity in South African Universities, 2015–2016’, *Kronos*, 43, 1, Special Issue: What is the University in Africa for?, 162.

these questions, Ntsebeza turns to ‘the current context surrounding higher education in South Africa’, ‘a context that was,’ Ntsebeza writes, ‘fundamentally different from 2014.’ As Ntsebeza states, the conference was ‘held at a critical moment that was characterised by a student-led rebellion against what students dubbed “colonial” education.’²⁶ In the student protests Ntsebeza hears a revolt against the education provided at historically white universities, like the University of Cape Town (UCT), which, as an ‘open university’, has always presumed itself to be on the right side of History, seen no reason to examine the implication of its liberalism in the colonial governmentality apartheid inherited and reworked. Protesting students at UCT, Ntsebeza writes, ‘put the issue of decolonising the curriculum back on the agenda,’ an issue we are told, raised earlier in a ‘fierce and acrimonious debate at UCT in the late 1990s.’²⁷ The students, having woken up this dormant debate, then ‘compelled academics and intellectuals more broadly to confront foundational issues around epistemology and methodology.’²⁸

To be clear, so to speak, the blur of *Whose History Counts?* is what we appreciate, what we acknowledge as almost impossible to hold onto, and what we ourselves, and all the papers gathered here, can only gesture towards. The narrative that frames the unsettling questions that make factual histories impossible cannot but draw on the conventional concepts of the discipline of History. Chief among them is ‘context.’ This is not to propose a ‘decontextualised’ or ‘ahistorical’ understanding of these questions, and some notion of ‘context’ – ‘circumstances’, a ‘setting’, a ‘situation’, an ‘environ’, and so on – may be unavoidable. What ‘context’ strains to think, however, is the way the ‘pastness’ that history produces ‘bears the cultural marks of the present from which it is purportedly distinguished.’²⁹

One alternative line of approach – one among several others – is offered by the concept of a ‘scene’, which would entail what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls, thinking both with and against Dominick LaCapra, a ‘transferential relation’ with the past.³⁰ ‘All history’, as LaCapra comments, ‘must more or less blindly encounter the problem of a transferential relation to the past whereby the processes at work in the object of study acquire their displaced analogues in the historian’s account.’³¹ To suggest a scene of transference is not to propose a different or larger ‘context’ – the Eastern Cape as a part of the world, though such a claim may well be important to make – but to suggest an analytic predisposition where the past does not remain – indeed stubbornly refuses to be – separated from the present.

Transference is a concept lifted from psychoanalysis, where it generally refers to a ‘long-forgotten memory trace [*Erinnerungsspur*] of a scene’, and ‘the activation of this scene.’³² In its more clinical meaning, it is understood as a process whereby a

26 Ntsebeza, ‘An Introduction’, 6, 4.

27 Ntsebeza, ‘An Introduction’, 6.

28 Ntsebeza, ‘An Introduction’, 11.

29 Bennet cited in Witz, Minkley and Rassool, *Unsettled History*, 17-18.

30 G. C. Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 207.

31 D. LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 11.

32 S. Freud, ‘From the history of an infantile neurosis’ in J. Strachey (ed. & trans.), *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XVII, (London: Hogarth, 1953 [1918]), 46.

patient has ‘transferred onto the doctor intense feelings,’ affects from early scenes of life reproduced in the present.³³ Insofar as such affects become concentrated on the analyst, it is thought to be a kind of cordoning off of ‘pathological processes,’ isolating them from ‘ordinary life’ so that they can be treated. It is also, as a dragging up of the unconscious part of a ‘revived conflict’ onto the terrain of consciousness, a translation, or, rather, as in dreams, a transposition from one medium of communication to another.³⁴ To transfer, to translate, to transpose: all are concerned with confining ‘pathological processes’ *within* the boundaries of the analytic relation, but they all also evoke, at the very same time, border crossings, from one plane to another, from one language to another, and from one medium to another, breaching – and this is what we want to underline – the frontier between the past and the present, where ‘the objective times of past and present are confused, often indistinguishable.’³⁵ Whatever misgivings there may be within the discipline of History about psychoanalysis, transference, as Joan Wallach Scott puts it, ‘disrupts the temporal order of conventional history.’³⁶

To point out that something from the past is repeated in Ntsebeza’s account – to note that questions raised by ‘black women’ in the Eastern Cape are placed into the ‘context’ of, even reduced to, recent Cape history, and that the vexed historical issue of integration reappears not only in the content of the book’s analyses but in the form of this volume, attended by all the conflicts integration has entailed – is not to indicate an individual act of repression, much less individual culpability; it is, rather, to begin to make sense of what occurs, in that volume and this Special Issue, under ‘conditions of impossibility.’³⁷ Transference refers to what is acted out in ‘the relationship between *the power of the historian’s analytic frame* and the events that are the object of *his or her study*.’³⁸ And there can be no thinking of that relationship if it does not, at the same time, attend to the ordering of the polymorphous into a racially inflected gendered opposition, here between ‘black women’ and a ‘white and male-dominated’ disciplinary apparatus.

Unsettling questions have long been posed from the Eastern Cape. They were raised especially, though of course not only, by an educated elite that, from the 1940s, could no longer be seduced with promises of ‘full citizenship in the modern state,’ ‘a black intelligentsia more numerous, less submissive and structurally distinct from their predecessors,’ who grappled with the tension between political integration

33 S. Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVI (1916-1917): Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (Part III)*, J. Strachey (ed. & trans.) (London: Vintage, 2001), 440.

34 Freud, *Introductory Lectures*, 438.

35 J. Scott, ‘The Incommensurability of Psychoanalysis and History,’ *History and Theory*, 51, 2012, 67.

36 Scott, ‘Incommensurability,’ 79. A transference scene is neither a disinterested history, nor a narcissistic one – in the former, the object of the past is safely over there, utterly different from the present, while in the latter, the knowing subject projects themselves seamlessly into and onto a past in which they see nothing but a ‘primitivised’ reflection of what is already familiar. On this, see LaCapra, *History and Criticism*, 72.

37 Nor is this to say that UCT student protests should be ignored, far from it. But consider the difference in the following formulation: ‘Over-and above the specific problematics that underpinned the “Rhodes Must Fall” and “Fees Must Fall” movements, there are a range of dilemmas and questions that are the culmination of a longer and larger trajectory of different groups in South Africa trying to make sense of the contradictions, tensions, ironies and paradoxes that are symptomatic of life under segregation, apartheid and post-1994 South Africa. Peterson, ‘Spectrality’, 345, emphasis added.

38 J. Scott, ‘Experience’ in J. Butler and J. Scott (eds.), *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 37, emphases added.

– whether into the ‘modern state’ or into the disciplines that authorise its past – and philosophical critique, a generation that ‘appropriated the universal terms of bourgeois liberalism but spoke them with an African accent’, thus questioning if not liberalism itself then at least ‘deferential alliance with white liberals.’³⁹ One is tempted to ask how a book devoted to thinking about the Eastern Cape can render the Cape the most immediate ‘context’ for the resurfacing of these questions. But what an appreciation of transferential dynamics puts into play is the question of how it would be possible to avoid such a ‘displacement of the past into the present.’⁴⁰

History has been for a long time, as Robert Young put it in 1990, ‘implicated in the long history of European colonialism.’⁴¹ Young’s *White Mythologies* is, of course, a dated text concerned with histories written under the influence of postcolonial theory. The concept of history at which it most directly takes aim is the one embedded in Marxian theory, and this concept comes, primarily, from philosophers, above all Hegel, not the discipline of History. There is every reason that historians will not see themselves implicated, or will see themselves as having *moved on*, as it were, to a place where the field has at once fragmented but also opened itself to multiple other influences, only one of which has been postcolonial theory, which has, some may say, passed its sell-by date. But such framings bear a notion of temporal, if not dialectical, movement that Young’s *White Mythologies* questions. In Gary Wilder’s terms, it becomes a ‘completed turn’, with ‘a before and an after.’⁴² To be clear, Young does not give up on History – and nor does Wilder; he looks to the ways in which those in the margins have ‘explored how history might be retheorized as multiple, in the torsions and tensions of different, sometimes incompatible, perspectives, stories, times.’⁴³ It is the dissolution of a stable perspective that Young asks to be recognised, a perspective the UCT volume on the Eastern Cape unsettles with one hand and cannot but reconstruct with the other – a double movement legible in its overdetermined title. This is not, then, an accusation levelled at a senior scholar, whose research and writing in African Studies is exemplary, and important. What we are pointing to concerns the difficult relation between the Cape and the Eastern Cape, and the way this relation recurs within a historiographical tradition that has shown marked resistance to the unsettling of its ‘perspectives, stories, times.’

How, then, to proceed? Ismail’s essay on History, on which we have been drawing, offers at the least a few suggestions. History, as he writes, is both ‘suspect’ and ‘necessary’, ‘an unqualified accomplice of imperialism’, and ‘unavoidable.’⁴⁴ As Ismail notes, reading Spivak, the outcomes of what she calls ‘information gathering’ – disciplinary knowledge claims – are useful in the short-term for denouncing injustices; in the

39 C. Bundy, ‘Lessons on the Frontier: Aspects of Eastern Cape History’, *Kronos*, 30, 2004, 19, 20.

40 LaCapra, *History and Criticism*, 72.

41 R. J. C. Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 2004, Second edition, first published 1990), xii.

42 G. Wilder, ‘From Optic to Topic: The Foreclosure Effect of Historiographic Turns’, *American Historical Review*, 117, 3, 2012, 726, 727. As Wilder notes, however destabilising such ‘turns’ have been, a ‘post-turn consensus’ usually leaves in its wake a ‘more coherent professional community’, with certain insights ‘selectively domesticated and others forgotten’. *Ibid.*, 728.

43 Young, *White Mythologies*, 2.

44 Ismail, ‘Home’, 211-212.

long run, however, they ‘will reinscribe and reinforce the sovereign, self-conscious subject, now also termed, and damningly from a postcolonialist, imperialist’. Ismail notes the way this tension reverberates across Spivak’s different essays, and there are scenes within which, for Spivak, a ‘political or strategic necessity for knowledge’ – historical and anthropological ‘information gathering’ – is more important than the ‘critique of the subject and the critique of knowledge’, even if the former is always also a ‘desire for mastery’.⁴⁵ She exercises, in these moments, ‘a politically interested refusal to acknowledge the undecidable’.⁴⁶ As Ismail underlines, this is ‘strategic’, always qualified. Placed in this ‘context’, the importance of the intervention of *Whose History Counts?* comes into view. Though Ismail offers no prescriptions, it is only, he suggests, by abiding by ‘the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of writing history’ that there may be a ‘coming to terms with the other’.⁴⁷ The difficulty of such an undertaking cannot be overstated, but the tensions of this provocation can be read into several of the contributions to this special issue, as we discuss later, even if both the contributors and we ourselves in narrating them, brush up against, and stumble over, them.

The other Cape

The invitation to contribute to this special issue invoked Jacques Derrida’s *The Other Heading* to speak, tentatively, of ‘The Other Cape’, or to ask the question: *iMpuma-Koloni* Bearings: An Other Cape? By ‘heading’, Derrida intends both a capital – a capital city, London, Paris, or Liverpool, say, or a Europe that at a certain point saw itself as ‘the capital of humanity or of the planet’ – and capitalism; the one colonises, incorporates – by assimilation or indirect rule – as the head on a growing geopolitical body, while the other integrates into an economy of measured equality. Inseparable, they are also distinct; at stake in both are universalism – others in the process of being brought up, caught under a heading, a destination – and homogenisation. Yet something other resists the totalising logic of the two capitals, and here Derrida notes the double bind of the heading Europe has come to recognise in and as itself, when he writes that,

It is necessary to make ourselves the guardians of an idea of Europe but of a Europe that consists precisely in not closing itself off in its own identity and in advancing itself in an exemplary way toward what it is not, toward the other heading or the heading of the other, indeed – and this is perhaps something else altogether – toward the other of the heading, which

45 Ismail, ‘Home’, 211-212.

46 Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 247. These lines turn back to the second line from Spivak’s ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, which Ismail reads. They amount, as Ismail reads her, to a refusal of ‘being consistently or rigorously poststructuralist’. Ismail, ‘Home’, 210.

47 Ismail, ‘Home’, 213-214, 215. As Lalu words this kind of undertaking, it ‘annotates its own failure in recovering subaltern agency as it makes possible a critique of theories of change’. Lalu, ‘When was South African History ever Postcolonial?’, 276. As Sitze reads Lalu, he offers ‘an approach to historical events in which the form of historical representation self-consciously politicizes its own implication in the content it conveys’. Sitze, ‘Desire and History’, 175. This is precisely what Ismail believes Shahid Amin’s Event, Metaphor, Memory stages, ‘the impossibility of writing history’, particularly ‘minority histories’. Ismail, ‘Home’, 240, 241.

would be the beyond of this modern tradition, another border structure, another shore.⁴⁸

From the 'other heading' to the 'other cape' is a short associative drift: the etymology of cape generally points to a 'promontory, piece of land jutting into a sea or lake', from the Latin, '*caput*', 'headland, head', and from the Proto-Indo-European root, '**kaput*, head'. The other heading and the other cape already imply each other. The Eastern Cape – in isiXhosa: *iMpuma-Koloni* – invites us, however, to pause for a moment longer. When we think of the Eastern Cape, it is the isiXhosa *iMpuma-Koloni* that evokes the relation to imperial power that has so dominated our historical understanding of this region of South Africa, this part of the world. One further variant of the word cape, therefore, is *koloni*, colony. If Europe bears 'an other heading', the possibility of a 'changing of the heading' and 'an other of the heading', we wanted to use this as a way of thinking the Cape and the Eastern Cape, the other cape, but also the Cape's extimate interior, its internal exterior, the lining of its outside at which, through peristaltic exertions, disciplinary technologies or ceremonial recognitions, it assimilates, admits, and produces an inassimilable residue, an other, 'the other of the heading'.

It is not beside the point, even if *The Other Heading* resists an identity politics, to note that Derrida is, and is not, European. 'If', he asks, 'I declared that I feel European *among other things*, would this be, in this very declaration, to be more or less European?' 'It is up to the others [...] *and up to me among them*, to decide.'⁴⁹ He writes from Europe, as an assimilated European, but also '*among them*', 'the others'. He inherits a European discourse, reworks it by making it true to its antinomies, from 'another shore'. He shows, as Michael Naas writes, 'the necessity of working with and from the Enlightenment values of liberal democracy while at the same time recalling that these values are never enough to ensure respect for the other.'⁵⁰

In his reading of Lalu's *The Deaths of Hints*, a book very much concerned with the Eastern Cape, Adam Sitze deploys the logic of Derrida's critique of Europe's 'analogic':

If disciplinary history takes its 'desire to know' to its rigorous conclusion, using historical techniques to examine the apparatuses that enable and inform its own desire for history, it will begin to generate questions that exceed, from within, the constraints of disciplinary history. Its identity as a discipline thus will have become identical with its non-identity as a discipline, for it will have pursued its own most defining intellectual desire past the limits it as a discipline sets for that desire. But if it resists taking its 'desire to know' to its logical conclusion, refusing to use historical

48 Derrida, *Other Heading*, 29.

49 Derrida, *Other Heading*, 83.

50 M. Naas, 'Introduction' in J. Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, P.-A. Brault and M. B. Naas (trans.) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), xlvii.

techniques to analyze its own desire for history, it will be obliged to acknowledge that only an arbitrary repression of its own defining desire, only a strangely studied incuriosity toward the very thing it claims to think – history itself – can save the discipline of history from itself. In this case too, however, the discipline's identity will have become identical with its non-identity, for it will have curtailed its defining intellectual desire in the name of preserving that very same desire.⁵¹

In *The Deaths of Hintsa* – a book about 'thinking ahead', and 'thinking a head', a book that abides by the terms of what exceeds History's disciplinary reason, its 'headings' – we have, we might say with Lalu, Sitze and Derrida, a project whereby History advances 'toward what it is not, toward the other heading or the heading of the other, indeed [...] toward the other of the heading'. But a book, too, that has been politely, if anxiously, ignored, or, as Sitze's notes, a book whose argument has been 'disavowed'.⁵²

Seeking to learn from this, we proposed an analogy between Europe and the Cape. At the same time, a metonymic and metaphorical association between a Europe that had always 'recognized itself as a cape', and the Cape, which saw itself as a part of Europe, and claimed for itself the status of being an example of a European heading – a *telos*, and a 'head [cap]' that 'has eyes', 'scans the horizon, keeping watch in a determined direction'⁵³ – transplanted onto the body of the African continent, acting out, and acting in the name of, Europe. The Cape, that is to say, like Europe, as a 'point of departure for discovery, invention, and colonization', and the Cape as part of Europe's self-presentation through which it attempted to cape all other places, but which always entailed an unstable relation to its 'other heading' and the 'heading of the other'.⁵⁴

That this responsibility was assumed by European colonists at the Cape with considerable insecurity – that, to use Fanon's phrase, the 'rank of man'⁵⁵ was granted only provisionally, and to European colonists who themselves had been othered by the consequences of industrialisation and enclosure – led to brutal spectacles of othering. One of the most ostentatious of which must surely be the Jan Van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival, celebrating the arrival at the Cape – not in 1652, but in 1952

51 Sitze, 'History and Desire', 175-176.

52 By disavowal, Sitze means something very specific: not repression, but a simultaneous acknowledgment and refusal, an attitude of 'yes, but all the same...'. To get into the details of this psychoanalytic distinction will take us too far off course.

53 Derrida, *Other Heading*, 19-20. He is referring here to Paul Valéry.

54 Derrida, *Other Heading*, 20. To think this through more fully would entail the relation between Europe – as a heading, a headland, and a cape – and the Cape, on the one hand, and Europe and South Africa, on the other, specifically what South Africa is for Europe, namely, a 'screen' onto which it 'projects'; as Derrida puts it, 'point by point, the silhouette of its internal war'. J. Derrida, 'Racism's Last Word', P. Kamuf (trans.), *Critical Inquiry*, 12, 1, 1985, 297-98. Perhaps not a point of projection, a heading, then, but South Africa and the Cape were always integral to its heading, its project, and to its other headings, not to mention the other of its heading.

55 F. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, R. Philcox (trans.) (New York: Grove Press, 2008/1952), xii.

– of the founding figure of a ‘settler nation.’⁵⁶ Leslie Witz and Gary Minkley call this ‘apartheid’s festival’, which entailed a procession of horse-drawn mail coaches carrying settler histories, heading from the interior to the Cape, their destination, where they met a theatrical float procession that doubled the journey, repeated what was already a repetitive undertaking, and redoubled Europe as heading. A Cape, then, for which Europe gave itself as the end of its itinerary, the Cape ‘heading for Europe’, which, as destination, was itself ‘heading for the universal essence of humanity.’⁵⁷ Europe and its heading, its placing of itself *at the head*, rendering itself *ahead* of the others it was first encountering and then ruling over, and, indeed, *as a head* through which so many were swallowed.⁵⁸

Interventions

Helena Pohlandt-McCormick and Gary Minkley’s ‘*Ukusebenza/Ukuphangela: Raiding the Work of the Future*’ concerns itself with the overdetermined and unstable word and concept of work. Work – close to but also related to labour – is generally translated into isiXhosa as ‘*ukusebenza*’, but it has another translation, *ukuphangela*, the work of ‘raiding’. Leaning on the research of Anne Mager, turning to Helen Bradford’s writing on the ‘violences of gender, work and indigenous meaning and dispossession in the Eastern Cape’, and returning to Minkley’s largely unpublished doctoral research on the twentieth century industrialisation of East London in the Eastern Cape, Pohlandt-McCormick and Minkley explore the ways in which this unstable network of signifiers – labour, work, *ukusebenza* and *ukuphangela*, each of which has distinct opposites, which sometimes return as the repressed difference of another related term within the network, as well as discreet but adjacent and analogous associative paths along which they touch and replicate each other, displace and condense meanings – allows not only a rethinking of race and class, but an encounter with inscriptions of gender in scenes of work, and in histories of labour. Pohlandt-McCormick and Minkley focus on ‘transitions in the meanings of male work and masculinist translations of the raid’, but, to invoke Spivak again, a thinker Pohlandt-McCormick and Minkley do not refer to *here*, ‘women outside the mode

56 G. Minkley and L. Witz, ‘Sir Harry Smith and his Imbongi: Local and National Identities in the Eastern Cape, 1952’, Paper presented at the History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 13-15 July 1994. L. Witz, ‘A Nineteenth Century Mail Coach, a Fifteenth Century Sailing Ship and a Bus Crash: Re-Thinking Collection and Display in Transport Museums’, *South African Historical Journal*, 63, 3, 2011. L. Witz, *Apartheid’s Festival: Contesting South Africa’s National Pasts* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003).

57 Derrida, *Other Heading*, 48. One might say that the Cape and its relation to the other cape becomes a part of a broader formation, and an iteration of it, an example of it, were it not for the fact that what is put in question in *The Other Heading* is precisely ‘analogy and resemblance’. Derrida, *Other Heading*, 61. Put in question, but not rejected out of hand. As Naas notes, Derrida works ‘within this logic and at its limits’, and ‘by not assuming either that one can give mere examples of this logic or that one can completely avoid it, Derrida allows us to begin to think what is and has always been unprecedented “in” this logic.’ Naas, ‘Introduction’, xxxi. We can see here the possibility that using Eastern Cape examples for staging the difficulties of history writing has the wager not only of finding new sources of ‘raw material’, but of reiterating an ‘analogic’.

58 The effects of this as it was acted out between the Cape and iMpuma-Koloni have been well noted. ‘A country had been dismembered, then partially swallowed by an empire’, Bradford writes of the nineteenth century Eastern Cape: ‘Neighbouring regions had been completely ingested, as settler capitalism, waxing fat on war and wool profits, threw its weight behind unparalleled colonial expansion [...]’. H. Bradford, ‘Akukho Ntaka Inokubhabha Ngephiko Elinye (No Bird Can Fly on One Wing): The “Cattle-Killing Delusion” and Black Intellectuals, c1840–1910’, *African Studies*, 67, 2, 2008, 213.

of production narrative mark the points of fadeout in disciplinary history.⁵⁹ Rather than reconstructing the work of ‘African women,’ restoring them to an agentive role in histories of worker resistance – an important undertaking – Pohlandt-McCormick and Minkley’s paper offers fragments on ‘elusive figures,’ ‘figures of fade-out,’ who ‘must exceed the system to come to us.’⁶⁰

Craig Paterson’s paper, ‘Notes on the Origin of the Chase: Artefacts of an Indigenous Racing Tradition in Transkei,’ posits an ‘archival artefact,’ *uleqo*, cattle racing, which he both carefully reads out of the available sources but which, he repeatedly states, is available only as a haunting presence. Tracing the transformation of *uleqo* into a form of horseracing, *umdyarho*, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Paterson shows how the latter, *umdyarho*, has been misunderstood as a derivative vernacular practice of European horseracing, an assimilation of a hegemonic cultural practice, which ‘neglects the indigenous African origins of the sport through the cattle racing tradition and presumes that, because horses were introduced by Europeans, and Europeans brought a culture of horsemanship, that that must have constituted the origins of horse racing by indigenous Africans.’ The search for and claim to ‘origins’ is one of the major tools of History, which Paterson utilises to resist a framing wherein ‘Europe acts, Africa reacts,’ even and especially where Africa resists, struggles, but he also uses it to posit *uleqo* as a specular artefact that troubles origin stories, specifically ‘a systemic privileging of settler narratives in the still-Eurocentric tradition on which historical study in the academy is rested.’ In unpretentious terms, Paterson stages, like Pohlandt-McCormick and Minkley, ‘the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of writing history,’ excavating the conditions of this.

Michelle Smith’s article, ‘Another Image of “community” at the South End Museum,’ considers the South End Museum in Gqeberha, formerly Port Elizabeth. As a ‘community museum’ concerned with forced removal, South End draws on many of the same exhibitionary techniques as the District Six Museum in Cape Town, but, as Smith argues, the ‘visual devices in South End Museum’s exhibitions of the destruction of *this* suburb refigure the genealogy of forced removals and simultaneously loosen the ground on which an idea of “coloured” resides.’ Here, Smith plays with the ‘spectrality’ of community, and of the photographs the South End Museum mobilises. Drawing on Eduardo Cadava’s notion of the ruin of, and in, photography, and, linking this to the ruins of South End, Smith asks after the ways that the museum constitutes ‘an image of “community” by means of something which ruins what it intends to show.’ The crux of Smith’s analysis considers the archive and the community recalled at, and to, South End, the way it invokes ‘Khoi’ forced removals alongside others. But, to put Smith’s paper into the terms that we have been setting out here, instead of empirically documenting either the ‘Khoi’ forced removals or the ways in which they are exhibited, she bears witness to ‘the tensions and fractures’ of exhibition, most notably in re-enactments of ‘Khoiness.’ Ultimately, what Smith sees the museum ‘staging’ is not merely, or not only, ‘the past,’ but, also ‘the work of

59 Spivak, *Postcolonial Reason*, 244.

60 Spivak, *Postcolonial Reason*, 245, 246.

reenactment', this is what is on display, with 'lessons in remediating an archive.' Even as South End represents a 'community', it also exhibits 'the work of refiguring, re-enacting and acting on an archive, which unsettles "community"', Smith argues. What remains, for Smith, is 'a desire for "community"'.

Ross Truscott's paper, 'Frontier Mail: The Liberal Subject and the Post Office in South African Historiography', brings postcolonial theory and postal history into an encounter, sketching a history of the postal system that, from the eighteenth century, fanned out from the Cape to its interior, under Dutch and British rule. The post is posited as an instrument of colonial discipline, one that could be, and was, seized on to resist the control of the movement of black people. As he argues, however, the mechanisms used to control the movement of black people and the institution that allowed them to communicate at a distance – allowed them to dream, experiment, and resist that control – bear a kinship, the registration of their letters priming subjects for the mechanisms that would become the Population Registration Act: the wandering letter tracked down, the runaway slave returned, the raced subject bound to its proper location, all are caught in and by registration. Truscott's paper, like the preceding ones, invokes a non-historicisable trace, which converges – as in Paterson's paper – on an equine figure. If the post cart restages a long tradition wherein the mastery of the passions by reason is figured through a horse under control – Plato's *Phaedrus* may or may not be the zero point of this tradition – something exceeds this in the frontier mail cart that, Truscott writes, 'can only appear as a specular possibility withheld by a disciplining institution designed to minimise deviancy'. The paper ends with a question: 'Can the discipline of History see itself reflected in the frontier mail?' If histories of the post are possible, the question here is whether History can recognise in its object of study the conditions of possibility of the very disciplinary logics it would bring to bear upon it?

Jako Bezuidenhout's paper, 'Eroding the Past: A Study of the Approaches of Courts Towards Oral and Expert Testimony in the Salem Commonage Land Claim', considers 'the complex processes followed by courts when determining the admissibility of both oral and expert historian testimony'. Bezuidenhout goes back over the Salem Commonage case, which went before both the Land Claims Court and the Supreme Court of Appeal. 'The case', as Bezuidenhout notes, 'is unique in the sense that the dispute involves a commonage that was subdivided *via* a court order in 1940, resulting in the removal of the remaining black African population from that land'. In addition to considering the submissions of Herman Giliomee and Martin Legassick – two historians who differed, often acrimoniously, with each other – the court's overseeing the claims to the Salem Commonage admitted Msile Nondzube's oral testimony. While the courts pointed to the 'dangers' of 'hearsay evidence' – and Bezuidenhout likens the position of Nondzube, accused of 'fabricating history', to that of Nicholas Gcaleka, the healer-diviner from Butterworth who claimed to have found the skull of King Hintsá, about whom Lalu writes in *The Deaths of Hinstá* – he also acknowledges the way Judge Edwin Cameron 'agreed that the laws of evidence must be adapted so that this type of evidence can be accommodated and placed on an "equal footing" with the written historical record'. If the past is 'eroded' in the

processes by which these different, conflicting accounts of the past rub against each other, what is left, Bezuidenhout suggests, is 'the bedrock of historical justice'. While courts are often accused of a forensic, positivist paradigm, we see here, in this piece, the entwinement of the political and the epistemological as it plays out before the law, which assumes final authority in interpreting 'evidence' of various kinds.

Abraham Seda's 'Fighting in the Shadow of an Apartheid State: Boxing and Colonialism in Zimbabwe' reflects on 'a trans-national dimension to settler colonialism in Africa', looking specifically at the ways in which Zimbabwean officials turned to South Africa for guidance on how best to regulate boxing through legislation, given 'fears that the sport might empower colonised Africans to challenge white authority'. Seda's paper can and should be read as an intervention in its own right into histories of sport in southern Africa, but it also speaks to the special issue theme. Boxing matches in colonial Zimbabwe, as elsewhere, made white settler colonial communities more than a little nervous; even if fights could be contained within the ring – and, as Seda notes, they could not, nor did spectators always stay out of the ring – their meanings could not be. Indeed, there were constant fears from colonial officials that the rules of combat would not be obeyed, and that fighting would spill onto the streets. Examining the measures used to regulate boxing in colonial Zimbabwe, Seda argues, we see something of the model employed in South Africa as it travelled. Fights across the colour line may have occurred elsewhere, but not in colonial Zimbabwe, not even prior to their proscription in the boxing legislation transposed from the South African state. Boxing regulations were anticipatory of their meaning beyond the ring, designed to quell in advance uprisings to come. Preventing matches between black and white fighters, this legislation acted not only on future rebellions, but on any possibility that such battles might recall the past, restage and, in a sense, rewrite it. What settler colonial responses effectively foreclosed was boxing as public history rather than merely an object of historical inquiry. The question Seda places before us is how to understand these reactions to boxing in relation to the Eastern Cape as battleground. Without valorising boxing in any form, the settler colonial state foreclosed any possibility that the former might produce knowledge of the latter, that Nkosana 'Happy Boy' Mgxaji or Vuyani 'The Beast Bungu', both of whom hail from Mdantsane outside East London, might unsettle understandings of Eastern Cape pasts.

Premesh Lalu's paper, 'In the Event of History: Reading the Mime of Memory in the Present of Public History', was written before *The Deaths of Hintsa* was published. A part of his broader Hintsa project, it was cut out of the book. It appears here revised, and rather than out of date, it will be clear that a reckoning with its argument has yet to take place. Lalu engages Public History here, noting how productive its notion of 'making history' has been – and much of this introduction has drawn on debates that have emerged in Public History – but he also takes as his point of departure a limit to Public History. It focuses not on the unmediated memory Social History reclaims, but on representation, considering how the past is mediated in the present – in Lalu's more precise phrasing, it 'apprehends the genealogy of the system of transmission through which the past, as object, emerged in the practice of the present' – but for

all that it leaves the 'spatio-temporal signifier', 'the present', unthought. To think through the genealogy of this problematic, Lalu turns to – returns to, but not strictly speaking – different nationalist narrations and commemorations of Hintsa, the nineteenth century Xhosa king who was killed by British soldiers in 1835. 'The paper', as Lalu summarises it, 'proceeds by running [...] public history and nationalist texts of memory [...] together so as to define a crisis for the discipline of history, a crisis where critical history may set about doing its work'. That work is, for Lalu, reading, in a present that offers anything but a secure and stable position.

In Candice Steele and Gary Minkley's paper, 'The Subject as Migrant: Refiguring the Migrant Image in the Eastern Cape', they draw on the remarkable archive of photographs 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, and in its gendered detailing of everyday lives in the so-called rural homelands. Steele and Minkley, drawing on a set of arguments relating to the 'figure of the migrant' and the 'migrant image', propose that the migrant subject in spatial (urban-rural) and temporal (modern-traditional) terms be re-engaged, and that it might be important to reframe the formulation that reads the subject as migrant. In essence, they argue that 'thinking from the vantage of "an other cape", we might want to consider that a projection beyond the profoundly gendered 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'. They propose that here, perhaps, a different trajectory in the ecologies of gender, knowledge, resource, time and place resides. Thinking with the figure of the migrant might open the way to reimagine a 'migrant subject', not as between urban and rural, modern and traditional, or between men and women, but rather as a human subject that, if resonating or reverberating as a migrant image, asks for this reimagining as a conceptual movement. The 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.

Sinazo Mtshemla's paper is entitled '*Pondo Blue(s): Working Through Sounding a Kind of Blue(ish) History of an Eastern Cape*'. It echoes a related concern with the ways that the Eastern Cape is routinely read as rural, traditional, and as 'Red'. Drawing on various resonances of *Pondo Blues*, a song composed by Eric Nomvete, and performed by his band the Big Five, most significantly at the 1962 Cold Castle Jazz Festival, Mtshemla argues for what she calls an atmospheric reading of the song and its sonic histories. She tracks the 'sonic and social relationships of disarray, change and improvisation that come together to rehearse *Pondo Blues* across space and time', tracking these through the festival, rehearsals, localities, ascribed meanings and political events, including the Mpondo Revolt. Against these readings, she proposes that the 'atmospheres of history' move us away from *iPhondo* as the provincial Eastern Cape, which is tied up with the rural, the ethnic, the backward countrified folk and the local, or of *Pondo Blues* as a mouthpiece for the Mpondo

Revolt, towards more expansive, even infinite senses of pasts and futures. Mtshemla draws on the different meanings that cluster around *iPhondo* – *iPhondo* as ‘provincial’ or ‘countrified’ Cape, but also *uPhondo* as ‘horn’, as *Pondo Blues* asks us to consider – to open up senses of ‘an other Cape’. Mtshemla argues, then, that rather than only read history as event – where Pondo Blues is a Xhosa drinking song, associated with ‘the bush’, or as representing the Mpondo Revolt – we turn to historical environments as sensed, atmospherically, individually, and collectively, to read them beyond the borders of our prescribed senses. As she states, *Pondo Blues* helps us to think about ‘a multiplicity of senses, senses that are not uniform or distinct but are in what we might call disarrayed translations, senses of an other Cape’.

Uthandile Njikelana’s paper, ‘*Intsebenzo izuza ntoni?* (What are the benefits of work?)’, explores the forms and meanings associated with what is widely described as ‘informal sector work’ in Buffalo City in the Eastern Cape. She investigates what she names as ‘scattered women’ working in what she identifies as the ‘public food making systems of work’ across four informal locations, and she provides a detailed picture of the extensive marginalised labour of these women’s daily lives. The paper provides intimate detail about the nature of working in the margins, the constraints of ‘informality’ and the setbacks of precarity that are experienced. As such Njikelana argues that despite an on-going belief in what is identified as a productivist work ethic and a desire for waged employment, the actual nature of work has significantly shifted to ‘informal work’ regimes which have their own historic and contemporary determinates of ‘wage-less work’. While public economic discourse emphasises the active, industrious and entrepreneurial poor in self-employment and self-making, where ‘entrepreneurialism is understood as a necessary, morally valuable step towards the creation of work itself’, the reality is a much more precarious form of ‘survival work’. Despite significant commitments to an onerous ethic and practice of self-work, hunger and impoverishment, marginal gains, and a wage-less life mark their lives and the meanings associated with ‘doing business’, of being ‘entrepreneurial’. Njikelana then proposes that while there is a current shift away from conventional meanings associated with productivist waged work, the newer discourses of ‘self-work’ provide new meanings of work while re-producing older forms of exclusion, constraint and marginality. Here, these women and their labour are read as a subject of disposable lack – as a working self, lacking ‘appropriate engagement’ with entrepreneurial initiative, and, again, determined by the gendered discourses and meanings associated with the working black women subject. As such, the paper further suggests, following Makhulu, that this marks a shift in the patterns of work from the ‘ideal-typical figure of the miner and migrant worker’ so dominant in the Eastern Cape, to needing to consider, in this other Cape, the racial and gendered meanings of black ‘self-wageless-work’, living precariously on spatial peripheries within the ‘stark and ever-expanding reality of inequality’.

Taking up the idea from transference that there are ‘long-forgotten memory trace[s] [*Erinnerungsspur(en)*] of a scene’ (above), two of the papers here pick up the ‘*Spur*’ – track, trace, or perhaps more apropos in this context, vein or scent – of

the making of those most questionable categories of race-making ('Colouredness') and of identity ('the settler') to activate the scene in which certain discourses were made.⁶¹ In Janeke Thumbran's paper, 'Headlands and Headings: Re-locating the Coloured Category', that scene is first the 'Cape Colony', 'the *geographical* heading of the Western Cape' (our emphasis) and, second, the 'Transvaal', that other heartland of Afrikaner identity and race-making – leaving aside for the moment the detour (translation/transference/transpositioning?) that Colouredness takes via the Eastern Cape, the 'frontier', a refusal of the imposition of British (European) rule and meaning, and the relationship to Khoisan people/pastoralists there. But there is another heading here, an *epistemological* one that is set out as headings of *bloedvermenging* or miscegenation on the one hand and identity claims ('a self-descriptor among the descendants of freed slaves') on the other. In invoking the Cape Census, an early Commission of Enquiry and the University (of Pretoria), the essay begins the work of tracing how the competing/different definitions of the concept of colouredness (as the object of a particular discourse, for example, of biological racism, miscegenation, racial 'mixing') became a category (of enumeration, of classification, of rule/policy/governance). In this the article usefully complicates any easy understanding of 'location', 'space', 'geography' and 'positionality'.⁶²

With his statement that Van Riebeeck arrived in South Africa in 1952, not 1652, Leslie Witz has claimed in earlier work that the historical event, if there is such a thing, finds its significance only in the time and place of its writing. In his interview with Helena Pohlandt-McCormick transcribed here, 'Commemoration | Centenary: Memorials and the Making and Unmaking of Settler History', this claim is pushed further to ask – given the context of the time in which *Sounding the Land* was produced and of a reappraisal of the 200-year commemorations, eventually cancelled due to Covid – *when* and by what means the '1820 Settlers' were actually written and inscribed in the landscape of the Eastern Cape. If that reappraisal of one of the most ambitious plans in South African history to quarantine, contain and control populations, its stubborn fascination in the present, and the inscription of that history once again raises questions about History being a Eurocentric discipline, then what we are asking (for) here is whether postcoloniality – not an identity or a location, not a body of scholarship that addresses a historical period after colonialism, but a writing, an other heading that critiques Eurocentrism, the logic of the heading – might not have served us better?

If what Lalu calls for is a 'politics of reading', this is taken up by Maurits van Bever Donker in 'Between Problem and Critique: Wither the Postcolonial?' In this review essay, van Bever Donker reads Achille Mbembe's *Critique of Black Reason*, Nahum Dimitri Chandler's *X: The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought*, and Ismail's *Culture and Eurocentrism*, asking after the reading program for which these three

61 Freud, *From the history of an infantile neurosis*, 46.

62 Listening, or rather reading with Qadri Ismail, as we have done several times in this Introduction, returns us to the potential hubris in and nagging doubt about the vantage point from the Eastern Cape claimed here, to ask his question: 'Isn't location a concept that has exhausted itself, if it ever had any purchase or rigor?' Q. Ismail, Comments on student papers, Interdisciplinary Centre for the Study of Global Change, University of Minnesota, 2014.

texts ask. While not directly engaging the theme of the special issue, it approaches it obliquely through Derrida's *The Other Heading*, which van Bever Donker links to the 'other heading' that might be found in Fanon's words: 'All I know is that anyone who tries to read in my eyes anything but a perpetual questioning won't see a thing.' 'Reading in someone else's eyes', van Bever Donker writes,

[A] challenge that can only take place in the moment of a face to face encounter which, we probably need no reminder, is not necessarily peaceful; reading someone else's 'perpetual questioning', a someone else who the episteme produces as black.

There may be here, van Bever Donker suggests, a 'black questioning to guide reading'. As he sets this to work through Ismail's *Culture and Eurocentrism*, this leaves postcoloniality the obligation to 'read, and teach reading, so as to open space for futures that are not yet, and cannot be, imagined'.

Van Bever Donker intervenes in the name of postcolonial theory and the future. Achia Anzi offers a review essay that begins from a set of discussions on decoloniality, specifically a review by Arjun Appadurai of Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh's *On Decoloniality*. The difficult relation between postcoloniality and decoloniality is well known, and Anzi's intention is not to further exacerbate it, but, rather, to test the limits of what a decolonial notion of 'pluriversalism' may offer. Postcoloniality may well respond to the decolonial notion of 'pluriversalism' by asking if it is not a form of cultural relativism, which harbours its own universalism, and gives rise to identity politics. Anzi's response is that 'pluriversalism' can in fact be related to what Derrida calls the 'other heading'. In this way, Anzi reads 'pluriversalism' as an openness to 'other epistemologies in order to escape the tyranny of the future'.⁶³ This, Anzi suggests, is something different to the future onto which postcoloniality opens, and it is an attempt 'to delink from the futuristic episteme' that postcoloniality and colonialism hold in common.

The tension between the review essays by van Bever Donker and Anzi – a productive tension, to our minds – returns us to the matter of integration with which we began, and which we have been circling. Integration, as we have suggested, has been problematised many times, and perhaps most forcefully by Steve Biko. In discussing rejections of collaboration with 'the white man', Biko introduces an analogy that, like that of a head and a devouring stomach, is not just an analogy. Biko rejects 'integration' into an 'Anglo-Boer culture' because he is against what he sees, under the prevailing conditions, as an inevitable 'white-black stratification that makes the white a perpetual teacher and the black a perpetual pupil', a child, someone under the care of a guardian.⁶⁴ In a separate piece, Biko calls the Bantustans 'cocoons of repression', 'tribal cocoons', and 'no more than sophisticated concentration camps where black

63 A. Anzi, 'Coloniality and its Future', *Kronos*, 47, 1, 2021, 224.

64 S. Biko, *I Write What I Like: Steve Biko, A Selection of His Writings*, A. Stubbs (ed.) (Johannesburg: Picador, 2005), 74, 24.

people are allowed to “suffer peacefully”.⁶⁵ But the two assertions are related insofar as ‘cocoon’, for Biko, is that from which will emerge the adult form of a creaturely being, a ‘minor’ under minoritarian white rule, a ‘perpetual pupil’, or, we might say, a pupa. Banished to the Bantustans, black people are rendered, Biko suggests, as being in a perpetually transitional state. From ‘cocoon’ to pupa, and from pupa to ‘pupil’ and, thus, child, but also – and Derrida exploits this in ‘The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils’ – ‘the tiny image one sees of oneself reflected in the eye of another’.⁶⁶

The notion of a ‘perpetual pupil’ is one Biko invokes several times, as when he writes:

As people existing in a continuous struggle for truth, we have to examine and question old concepts, values, and systems. A man who succeeds in making a group of people accept a foreign concept in which he is expert makes them perpetual students whose progress in the particular field can only be evaluated by him; the student must constantly turn to him for guidance and promotion.⁶⁷

The need to ‘question old concepts’ recalls Biko’s Fanonian influences: ‘O my body’, Fanon concludes in *Black Skin, White Masks*, ‘always make of me a man who questions!’⁶⁸ But this ‘final prayer’ asks to be read alongside an earlier, introductory remark by Fanon, which van Bever Donker cites, and which asks to be read again: ‘All I know is that anyone who tries to read *in my eyes* anything but a perpetual questioning won’t see a thing.’⁶⁹ Fanon calls our attention back from ‘perpetual students’ to the ‘perpetual pupil’, to ‘the tiny image one sees of oneself reflected in the eye of another’.

The perspective Biko offers, *from the Eastern Cape*, in a paper presented *at the Cape*, can be caught, we might say, as Derrida says of Nelson Mandela writing from another ‘cocoon of repression’, another other Cape, or headland, in his ‘force of reflection.’⁷⁰ One cannot but read Biko trying to wrest from both ‘pupil’ and ‘student’ a capacity for what Stefano Harney and Fred Moten call in *The Undercommons*, ‘study’.⁷¹ Sitze, having learned from Biko, is once more instructive when he writes, this time from the perspective of UWC, that other Cape university, that there is a ‘revolt that study presupposes.’⁷² The claim rests and then turns on the Greek word for

65 Biko, *I Write What I Like*, 67, 95.

66 Jacques Derrida exploits in ‘The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils’, *Diacritics*, 13, 3, 1983.

67 Biko, *I Write What I Like*, 102, 104.

68 F. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, R. Philcox (trans.) (New York: Grove Press, 2008/1952), 206.

69 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 13, emphasis added.

70 J. Derrida, ‘The Laws of Reflection: Nelson Mandela, in Admiration’ in M. Tlili and J. Derrida (eds.), M. A. Caws and I. Lorenz (trans.) *For Nelson Mandela* (Seaver Books, 1987), 32, 14.

71 S. Harney and F. Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (New York: Autonomedia, 2013).

72 A. Sitze, ‘Study and Revolt’, *Safundi*, 17, 3, 2016, 292-293. Something of this is retained in the German *Streitschrift*, a pamphlet but also, more literally, a quarrelsome, argumentative or even fighting piece of writing. See A. Sitze, *The Impossible Machine: A Genealogy of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 6, where he is discussing Nietzsche’s *Streitschrift*, ‘On the Genealogy of Morality’.

free time, *scholē*, which provides, as Sitze notes, the root for both school and scholar.⁷³ There is, however, no easy way to marshal the ‘revolt that study presupposes’ because the terms are not intimately related, but, rather, as Sitze puts it, ‘extimate’ to each other. If ‘revolt’ dwells within ‘study’ – and if ‘revolt’ resides in historical inquiry, if not in the discipline of History – it is constantly repressed, banished, the ‘skollies’ separated from the ‘scholars.’⁷⁴

If there is something from which we can learn in Biko’s caution about the ‘perpetual pupils’ of integration, there is also a blind spot to be noted here. As the *Online Etymological Dictionary* tells us, Greek used a single word, *kórē*, for both ‘pupil of the eye’ and ‘doll,’ ‘literally, girl.’⁷⁵ Thus, the associative field slides from ‘cocoon’ to pupa left to die, to ‘perpetual pupil,’ ‘perpetual student’ and ‘pupil of the eye,’ but also – and Biko does not see this, though it is there to be read, in his pupils, as it were – ‘doll ... girl.’⁷⁶ In Biko’s ‘perpetual pupil’ there is recalled, just as symptomatically as in Fanon, what he forgets, and cannot see, the ‘blur’ of *kórē*, and the gendering of the work – of reading, of tracking, of attending to fragmentary traces, of working through, which requires a certain amount of acting out, repetition – that lies *before us*.

73 For Sitze, ‘the state of emergency is an exemplary instance of ascholia: particularly when a declaration of emergency includes a clause decreeing the closure of all schools, the state of emergency becomes the very paradigm of a political exigency that renders *scholē* impossible.’ Sitze, ‘Study and Revolt,’ 280, 281.

74 As Sitze writes, reflecting on the relation between ‘*scholē* and skollies,’ in Zoe Wicomb’s short story, ‘A Clearing in the Bush’: ‘It’s as if the idle skollie-boys to the exterior of the “bush college” were an “extimate” embodiment ... of the lexicon of *scholē*.’ Sitze, ‘Study and Revolt,’ 288.

75 https://www.etymonline.com/word/pupil?ref=etymonline_crossreference#etymonline_v_2880.

76 He ‘cannot tolerate attempts by anybody to dwarf the significance of his manhood.’ Biko, *I Write What I Like*, 74, emphasis added. The matter of ‘manhood’ recurs through Biko’s writing, and it is, one might say, a part of the unconscious of black consciousness, but it also should be understood in relation to apartheid’s systemic emasculation of black men.