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Encountering apartheid publics: an essay film on Hendrik Verwoerd as public symbol 1958-1966 and implications for counter-publics today

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Encountering apartheid publics: an essay film on Hendrik Verwoerd as public symbol 1958-1966 and implications for counter-publics today.

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Bridget Kenny (Sociology)

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Abstract

The policies of separate development under Verwoerd created the material conditions for apartheid and capitalism to thrive, but it's the hypothesis of this project that the pomp and ceremony, the suit, his speeches and performative statecraft, created the affective conditions for his thinking to make its way from the past into our present-time. This is a discursive inquiry that draws on political theory, psychoanalysis, feminist theory and essayistic film theory to explore how the slipperiness of apartheid discourse makes it impossible to counter it on its own terms. Verwoerd symbolised a pernicious 'covering over' of irreconcilable ambiguities in apartheid discourse that was used to construct and stabilise whiteness against 'other' constitutive subject formations. The second part of the creative project is an essay film, *Verwoerd's Smile*, that uses an 'apartheid' and colonial archive to attempt to show up its own discriminatory logic. The film's *failure* in doing this has a productive value that is instructive for understanding how the cloak of invisibility that shrouds whiteness from being seen doing its work, also protects it from being dismantled. Understanding this has implications for radical projects concerned with undoing apartheid.

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The *Broederbond's* official biographer A.N. Pelzer writes an impassioned introduction to the compiled English and Afrikaans volumes of Hendrik Verwoerd's speeches. In it he describes Verwoerd as having possessed a "personal charm and vivacity which immediately created a refreshing social atmosphere and gave one the feeling of having access to the spirit and soul of the man" (1966, XIV-XV). This project begins from the sense that there is something pernicious about what Hendrik Verwoerd came to symbolise at the time that he was South Africa's head of state. It's furthermore suggested that this Verwoerdian influence has made its way from the past into our present-time, where it reverberates in the quiet violence of daily erasures and gestures that smudge over a "fight for the oppressed past" (Benjamin, 1968, 263). This project is compelled by a sense of urgency, then, to understand how apartheid's so-called architect manages to rule from the grave.



Figures 1 & 2: Left: The building in Amsterdam where Verwoerd was born and where his father was a partner in the corner grocery store. Right: One of the earliest photographs of the Verwoerd family in Wynberg, Cape Town after emigrating to South Africa in 1903. From left to right are pictured, W.J. Verwoerd (father), Len (brother), Anje (mother) and Hendrik at six-years-old (Pic: Hefer and Basson, 1966, 15).

Shortly after entering parliament in 1948 Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd assumed leadership of the National Party in the Senate. Two years later, in 1950, he joined Cabinet as Minister of Native Affairs, a portfolio he would hold for eight years before being elected in 1958 as leader of the National Party and as South Africa's Prime Minister (Hefer and Basson, 1966, 9-11). It is this period from 1958-1966, of Verwoerd's reign as prime-minister, that this project is concerned with. It is not concerned with details about 'the man' himself but with what 'the man' as head of state came to represent then, from the vantage point of the present time. The point of looking back to this period of time is because of the sense that so many of our inherited notions today about whiteness, and all it has come to represent, have strong resonances with how a certain apartheid-training manifested in the public imagination of Verwoerd's milieu. The project first tried to come at the problem by asking what a historical inquiry into this period of 'high apartheid' might be able to unearth. Dunbar Moodie's seminal work *The Rise of Afrikanerdom* explores in detail how Afrikaner nationalism invoked a particular Calvinist "civil religion" in which personal and public spheres of life were crafted along lines of gender and race (Moodie, 1975). The realm of the family (the private) was organised as the domain of women whilst the political (the public) the domain of ('white') men. Posel (2001) clarifies further that modernisation was fueled by the National Party's drive to win white electorate votes and Verwoerd's charismatic statesmanship as prime minister in 1958 was instrumental in cementing this unity between English and Afrikaans-speaking 'whites'. The late 1950's to the late 1960's were apartheid's golden years and the new prosperity for an 'Afrikaner' bourgeoisie is pertinent for how, especially after the South African war, Afrikaners in the Boer republics were "frequently labelled an inferior 'race' themselves within British perception" (Maré, 2011, 622). As Posel points out, the mantle of 'whiteness' "provided a means of reward as well as discipline" and "promised a lifetimes' worth of social economic, and political privilege to the beneficiaries" (2001, 103). Dan O' Meara's (1983, 1996) two volumes on the workings of the capitalist state over a period of sixty years, from 1934-1994, is an incisive contribution to understanding the shifting and divided blocs within the Afrikaner capitalist state. His aptly-titled work *Volkskapitalisme* levels a critique against an overly historicist approach though and states that "Apartheid was much more than a policy to advance the interests of NP supporters" but that it "secured the interests of the entire capitalist class, enabling all capitalists to intensify the exploitation of African workers and so raise the general rate of profit" (1983,

p.247). Yet, O'Meara's approach appears to suffer from a class reductionism that still elides bringing this 'much more' into view.

Aletta Norval attempts to outline why a cohesive analysis of apartheid is so arduous and finds that -

> …the logic of apartheid cannot simply be reduced *either* to a discriminatory *or* a discerning one; it is *both* one *and* the other, and yet not reducible to either. This characteristic is what makes it unrealistic to analyse apartheid discourse in terms of its overt classificatory logics: for the latter do not succeed in capturing the ambiguity and undecidability inherent in, and at the heart of the discourse of apartheid – an ambiguity characteristic, not only of apartheid discourse, but of modernity itself (1994, 123-124).

This ' irreducible ambiguity' in apartheid discourse goes to the heart of the difficulty with attempting to respond to the topic – both in the filmic and written forms. One of the earlier editors on *Verwoerd's Smile* (the title of the film project) commented on the transcript cut-outs from the film archive stuck up onto my wall: "It looks like you're trying to solve a crime," she said. I thought this was astute in describing exactly what I failed to do: solve a crime. The 'solution' to the crime of apartheid does not lie in the past but in how we come at this past in our present-time. And so perhaps the difficulty of interpreting this past is instrumental to understanding something about the crisis of our present. The study thus shifted its focus to look at what is *not* being brought into view by a purely historical account of apartheid.

> Politics starts in the animated inhabitation of things, not way downstream in the various dreamboats and horror shows that get moving. The first step in thinking about the force of things is the open question of what counts as an event, a movement, an impact, a reason to react (Stewart, 15-16).

The study's inference from what Stewart asserts here is that what may come across as an 'ordinary' and 'everyday' affect might also have vested in it something of political importance. I have thus returned to the starting point, back to the arresting 'event', which in this instance is that sense that Verwoerd's very 'presence' in space communicated something being covered over. His outward confidence and congeniality, in other words, concealed an ambiguity about apartheid discourse that Norval points to. Chapter 2 explores the nature of this irreducible ambiguity in more detail by analysing Verwoerd's

public speeches as they relate to constructions of the nation and specifically to *fixing* and centring 'whiteness' in the nation's imaginary.

To recap, if the policies of separate development under Verwoerd created the material conditions for apartheid and capitalism to thrive, then it's the hypothesis of this project that the pomp and ceremony, the suit, his speeches and performative statecraft, created the affective conditions for what Coetzee calls 'apartheid mind' to flourish (1991). It's suggested that this 'mindset' is about an automated and unquestioning acceptance of 'whiteness' as a stable subjective formation – against which all other (unstable) subjectivities are measured. This essentialist thinking is also then what I suggest has endured into our present-day. Apartheid thinking, says Coetzee, "is likely to resist coercion, as thinking generally does", even after apartheid laws are abolished and its practices opposed (1991, 1). If we do not "reopen the coffin and remind ourselves of what apartheid looks like in the flesh", he explains, then we risk sending its thinking underground where it can mature and eventually "emerge in action" (Coetzee, 1991, 1). Unlike legislated racism or forms of chauvinistic violence that have already shown themselves through action, the *thinking,* which accompanies it is far more opaque. And it is the particular way in which this thinking is *covered over* by Verwoerd as the nation's symbolic head then, that has informed how whiteness has been able to assume a veritable cloak of invisibility in this day.

Removing the historical limitations of this inquiry led me to draw on conceptual ideas from political theory, psychoanalysis, feminist theory and essayistic film theory. The essay film form– often identified as a hybrid, experimental form that emerges from periods in 'crises' – has allowed for an interpretation of the topic unfettered by an expectation for the film to be slotted into any one genre. Laura Rascaroli contends that the essay film needs to be understood on its own terms in relation to the ideas it fleshes out. The particular film's ethics, says Rascaroli, thus "consists in establishing each time the ground rules of its own coming into being, and of its relationship with both subjectivity and with the world" (2016, 300). The film has been constructed using state archive and propaganda footage from 1958-1966 in order to explore this cloak of invisibility donned by whiteness in this period.

Chapter 3 deals with the making of the film, the process and specifically the challenges of working with a 'colonial' and apartheid state archive. Suffice it to say here that I wanted to use the archive 'against itself' - without narrative intervention. I wanted the apartheid archive to show up its own flaws and work towards its own point of crisis. This did not work. Rascaroli expounds on this idea of failure in the conceptualisation of an essay film thus -

> The constant reestablishing of its own conditions is a deeply moral gesture that presupposes the possibility of failure, and that inscribes into the text the conditions of its own undoing. Such an attitude is, needless to say, profoundly antithetical to cultural-hegemonic modes" (2016, 300-301).

This failure, as well then, is instructive for seeing apartheid's 'irreducible ambiguity' at work in the archive and the limitations of using techniques like juxtaposition to subvert its meaning. I found that the visual archive used in this film is designed to foreclose its own subversion. I decided in the final cut of *Verwoerd's Smile*, the essay film submitted with this project, to thus include my voice through narration. I did so reluctantly, and I did so only, in the end, to generate a certain productive and critical value from linking a Verwoerdian milieu to a future-present time. The degree to which *this* will succeed or fail is beyond the scope of this project and is elaborated upon further in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 offers a stream of interconnected provocations for thinking and doing the world anew in ways that sabotage the future Verwoerd had imagined.

CHAPTER 2: THE DOUBLE-BIND OF APARTHEID MIND



Figure 3 Suid Afrika Eerste / South Africa First (De Wildt, 1964)

This chapter conducts a discursive analysis of Verwoerd's speeches to get at what Aletta Norval calls the "irreducible ambiguity" in apartheid discourse (1994, 139). As the state's symbolic head, Verwoerd – in profoundly distinct ways from the National Party leaders before or since him – embodied this thinking, shrouding it in a slippery veneer of coherence. I try to think alongside this Verwoerdian discourse, which obsesses over difference, discriminates, essentialises and *simultaneously* performs this thinking as natural, sane and rational. I refer to slogans on the banners where Verwoerd delivered his speeches as a framing device to enter into this analysis. These banners function as public headlines that echo a particular linear temporality discernible in his speeches, presenting the nation as a veritable monolith, unshaken by time. Ultimately then, I attempt to depict the multiplanar ways in which a Verwoerdian discourse functioned to stabilise 'whiteness' on the horizon line of this imagined nation. I've drawn on multiple disciplinary fields in order to free up the conceptual language that I use to weave a theoretical thread through this analysis, which is, hopefully, less equivocal and at least half-ways more cohesive than I have found apartheid's thinking to be.

The challenge is to explore how apartheid thinks its nation's social identities into being, without myself relying on the essentialised categories it employs. In her correspondence with Ernesto Laclau, Aletta Norval uses a number of theoretical categories to analyse apartheid in ways that go "beyond the essentialism that has marred so much of the…work on South Africa" (1994, 135). I draw on three of these categories – the constituted outside, the logic of difference and equivalence and political frontier - to analyse how Verwoerd's speeches, his words, instilled an ambiguity into signifiers like 'apartheid', 'race' and 'volk'. This ambiguity introduced a duplicity in how language is used. Words and their

'signifiers' are not stable but are manipulatable according to the function they need to serve in any given moment.

The banners referred to brandish slogans that reinscribe a linear temporality of a past-present-future, echoing a narrative pattern in Verwoerd's speeches in which he invokes pride in a heroic past of hard-won struggles, relates these to problems in the present and formulates a solution that guarantees a future prosperity and happiness for the generations to come. Benedict Anderson in his much-cited work on the origins of the nation draws on Walter Benjamin's notion of "homogenous, empty time" time to explain how nationalism was birthed, how it finds concrete expression through 'print capitalism' in the West and how it spreads globally. Ultimately the nation is "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson, 2016, 15). He explains further,

> The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history (2016, 31).

I would like to stay with this idea of nationhood as a stabilising force to show how Verwoerd makes ambiguous use of the concept 'race' – itself inherently unstable – to set up the nation as a stabilising construct. Norval theorises about how the dominant inside of this nation is itself defined by an 'otherness', which is positioned on the outside (1994, 136-140). Thus - a dominant 'Afrikaner nation' only comes into being by virtue of how that which is '*not Afrikaner'* is constituted on the outskirts of this nation. We are notably now, also crossing into psychoanalysis, and Jacques Lacan's symbolic arena of how subject formation is constituted by an otherness, rendering untenable any inherent fixity about such subject formation. It is only by virtue of – and through - the 'constitutive outside' then, as Norval points out, that nationhood and an 'Afrikaner' subjectivity achieves its stability (1994, 136-137).

Apartheid follows a logic that relies on setting up 'differences between people' as either positive or hostile. I'd like to turn to a commonly quoted definition of Apartheid by Verwoerd, in 1961 -

> Our policy is one, which is called by an Afrikaans word 'apartheid'. And I'm afraid that has been misunderstood so often. It could just as easily, and perhaps much better be

> described, as a policy of good neighbourliness. Accepting that there are differences between people. But that while these differences exist, and we have to acknowledge them, at the same time you can live together, aid one another, but that it can best be done when you act as good neighbours always do (icon, 1961).

Here 'good neighbourliness' can be regarded as possessing a 'positive' inflection. The 'differences' meant here, though not stated, are based on constructions of race as these pertain to four so-called population groups and *enforced by law*: white, Indian, 'coloured' and 'African', and later, black. In his *Address to the Union Council for Matters Concerning Coloureds* in December of 1961, Verwoerd states that: "There is no reason why people who differ from one another cannot live close together. It just depends on how the differences are approached…. there is a difference between differentiation and discrimination" (Pelzer, 1966, 642-643). We see here how Verwoerd uses a logic of difference to "fix the relations among social agents as a set of differential positions" (Norval, 1994, 137). Thus, apartheid discourse attempts to construct social identities using "sets of stable *positive* differences" (Norval, 1994, 137, own emphasis).

Jacques Derrida, as though directly challenging Verwoerd's assertion, declares that apartheid "does not discern, it discriminates" (Derrida, 1985, 292). Almost inexplicably then, Derrida and Verwoerd, although in direct opposition to each other, are in this instance both partly correct. We know that apartheid discriminates. We also know that there are infinite, shifting differences between people. And so really – the 'irreducible ambiguity' inherent in apartheid allows it to *both* differentiate and discriminate as Norval elucidates upon (1994, 123-124). When a 'political frontier' calls for difference to be antagonistic, then Verwoerd is able to reconfigure 'the problem' (difference) to fit the (already preconceived) 'solution' (apartheid, nationalism, capitalism, separate development – and so forth). This is where Norval's concept of a 'chain of equivalence' is important. New alliances, so to speak, can be set up through a logic of equivalence where an 'other' can be portrayed as threatening the dominant inside. Thus, the so-called 'differences' of group identities – on one occasion highlighted as antagonistic – are pushed to the background when there is a new common enemy, and the need for creating a new political frontier.



Figure 4 Glo in God. Glo in Jou Volk. Glo in Jouself. / Believe in God. Believe in Your People. Believe in Yourself (De Wildt, 1964)

We see here too that *volk* as a signifier is able to refer to different groups at different times. *Volk* might resurrect a string of emotive and patriotic feelings of allegiance to the history of an Afrikaner *volk* – as distinct from English white subjects. As we will see later however, its ambiguity is put to use in ways that seek to unite these two 'groups'. In doing so though, the stability of one referent for *volk* is destabilised. Historians like Moodie (1975), O'Meara (1996) and Roos (2015) have amply demonstrated how Afrikaner intellectuals in Verwoerd's milieu put forward a "Christian nationalism, along with its core ideals of…*volkseenheid*…, which emphasized collectively the primacy of the *volk*, and that the individual could exist only through the nation" (Roos, 2015, 1173). And whilst not all Christians qualify to be *volk*, all *volk* would pretty much need to be God-fearing Christians, making Apartheid's discourse irreducible to fixed social groups or categories – *even as* the discourse itself is expertly wielded by Verwoerd to essentialise such subject formations, as and when is needed.

Addressing a crowd of young people, Verwoerd (unknown date) says –

> I want to thank you the youth of our fatherland for the cooperation and the success that we all contributed to. I thank you and I thank on behalf of you the almighty God of our fathers who strengthened our hand to make all of this come true, which means so much for our future (Unknown author, HF Verwoerd address to Youth, unknown date, archive).

Verwoerd – speaking for the youth in this instance – suggests having a direct line to God, thus performing the role of a veritable preacher. The clear trill in his voice evokes the idea of a charismatic man of God in the throes of a spiritual experience. It is thus also through him, and Him, that Verwoerd speaks for a nation, a young *volk*, chosen by God.

On 27 April 1962 Verwoerd delivered a speech at the Johannesburg branch of the 1820 Settlers' Trust. It was a fundraising event for erecting a monument to commemorate the English settlers. In a significant gesture of a government-business alliance, the state and the Chamber of Mines opened the fund with donations amounting to one hundred and fifty thousand rand (Pelzer, 160). But it is Verwoerd's gushing account of what unification in the new Republic means that we will look at more closely -

> At present we are still able to distinguish between the sons and daughters of the Voortrekkers and those of the 1820 Settlers, but it will not always be so. There will come a time when the whole nation, no matter who its rulers may be, will look back with grateful pride on its ancestors from all parts of the community. There will be an indistinguishable intertwining of us all and we shall all be South Africans, gratefully commemorating our forbears who served the country long before we thought it possible that we would all become united (Pelzer, 691).

This unified "we" and "us all" refers to English and Afrikaans-speaking 'white' subjects. Beyond this inner sanctum of the nation is the constitutive other – 'non-white'. But Verwoerd cites differences as antagonistic and irreconcilable when this works for the narrative at hand. Therefore, apartheid *must* discriminate in order to palliate these antagonisms. In his speech to the House of Assembly in January 1962 he says thus, "that it is only the policy of nation building, the policy of good neighbourliness which can hold out any hope that one will be able to eliminate racial hatred, which cannot be eliminated in an enforced, multi-racial state" (quoted in Pelzer, 1966, 666). When these differences no longer serve the purposes needed, they are thus rationalised as reconcilable.

Partha Chaterjee's primary critique of Anderson's imagined community thesis on the nation is that it leaves the post colony bereft of any imagination, particularly former African and Asian colonies of Empire. He states,

> If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? … Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized. (1996, p. 216).

What is of interest to me here about Chatterjee's argument is that "in the 1950s and 1960s, nationalism was still regarded as a feature of the victorious anti-colonial struggles in Asia and Africa" (1996, p. 214). It's worth noting however that the idea of a South African nation, unlike most of the continent, had not experienced an anti-colonial victory. Chaterjee goes on to argue that nationalism, "was entirely a product of the political history of Europe" and its inability to resolve its own "ethnic nationalisms" resulting in two global world wars (1996, p. 215).

It appears that the semblance of a South African nation in Verwoerd's era - at least in attitude, posturing and its own martyr-like imaginings of itself – resembled a post-colony on the one hand. On the other hand, of course, the apartheid state became the new coloniser within its 'own' borders. How strange then for the racist apartheid state to be on par with its African compatriots in emerging 'victorious' from one colonial struggle, seeking a strategic 'friendship' with its English subjects, only to be branded the new colonialists – from outside the country - and increasingly from within.



Figure 5 Republiek vir Eenheid / Republic for Unification (1961)

Verwoerd aimed to forge a new Republic independent of British interference – yet he was careful and pragmatic enough not to alienate English loyalties amongst white voters in

South Africa. In 1961, after declaring itself a Republic, South Africa's membership to the Commonwealth is withdrawn and footage of Verwoerd's parting words in London divulge an open passive-aggressiveness usually carefully managed: "Well, goodbye to you all. All I can say is, our opponents who wanted us out of the Commonwealth have won their wish but they've lost their cause. Goodbye!" (BBC, 1973, archive).

Back in South Africa in a later speech, long after this 'emotional outburst', he claims -

> When we had to leave the Commonwealth, the circumstances were such that it caused dishonour to nobody. No dishonour and no relinquishment of former friendships.

He continues to assure the crowd, with no sense of irony -

> My friends, the reason why we did not seek to make any grand event of this change (is) because we realised that we were not only building a nation but building a nation, which had to stand together for self-preservation - at the time when in so many parts of the world we were not rightly understood. (SABC, 1966, archive).

The idea of apartheid and separate development being misunderstood, is a theme that runs throughout his speeches. After all, as historians like Dubow, Moodie, Posel have illustrated in multiple works, the early apartheid state was formed in tandem with global segregationist thinking in Europe and the USA. The apartheid state, as Giliomee points out, chose to break from this to pursue its own liberal variety of racism based on "paternalism and trusteeship" where "subordinate people had to be *helped* to… climb the ladder of civilisation according to their own aptitude and capacity" (2003, 389, own emphasis).



Figure 6 Die Struid Duur Voort / The Struggle Continues (De Wildt, 1964)

The reference to 'numbers' of people in different 'population groups' in Verwoerd's speeches is instructive to understanding how a racialised-thinking seeps into the language and conceptualisation of how apartheid carved up populations – so as to better control people. It is arguably a particular brand of racialised thinking peculiar to apartheid-based systems around the world. Threats in the society have to come from 'others' whose numbers have to be counted in order to determine how big or small the threat is. The criterion used to count these numbers is 'race' and class and chauvinistic self-interest increasingly wedded it seems to those who assume power.

This explains why 'the poor-white problem' and the problem of so-called miscegenation were of paramount importance to the early apartheid state. If a race-based style of capitalism could simply deal with class by ensuring that 'white' remained privileged and 'non-white' could be reliably assigned to lower classes – then one needn't even talk about class when referring to 'population groups' – because class divisions would already have been engineered into the equation- and become more fixed over time.

In a speech delivered in the House of Assembly in January 1962, Verwoerd is more blatant about this when he ostensibly "consider(s) the solution which a multi-racial state represents" (Pelzer, 663). He combats propositions put forward by the United Party, Progressive Party and Liberal Party for their respective democracy-based systems, and explains that "one-man-one-vote" systems might be "truly democratic and in harmony with the spirit of the times" but that this "would inexorably lead to Bantu domination. *Because in the long run numbers must tell*" (own emphasis, Pelzer, 663). According to Verwoerd, "(t)he result would inevitably be an injustice to all minority groups" (Pelzer, 663). This should make us pause to consider the limitations of democracy-based systems today based on "one-man-one-vote" where such societies have built into them historically-stacked racist, sexist, homophobic and classist structures already.

As Mare (2011) shows elsewhere, the use of population statistics and census, the numbers, and particularly "small numbers" were used by Verwoerd to further manipulate an argument for ethnic-based homelands to counter "Bantu domination" in a "multi-racial" state: "(S)eparate states must be created for the groups which originally settled here…", he says (Pelzer, 664). Here "the groups" refer to tribalized, ethnic-based,

"minority groups" of the proposed homelands he promulgated. A country in which there are only minorities and no majority would maintain privilege and hegemony of the Afrikaner and 'white minority' group. Using ethnic, tribal and racialised arguments to fuel enmity and mistrust amongst people only further secured hegemony for a privileged white elite. Verwoerd in this respect declares -

> The Whites… our Coloureds and our Indians…(t)hey must not think that the colour of their skins will protect them. The minority groups will all have to contend with an unrestricted domination by the Bantu if a multi-racial state comes into being" (Pelzer, 664).

Because the constitutive outside renders the dominant inside – and the white subject's identity – as *dependent* upon the constitutive outside or 'other' for its existence, this 'other' can always also be constructed as a threat if needs be.

Elsewhere Norval makes an astute point about how "apartheid discourse attempted to conceal the traces of its own discursivity by presenting itself as a transparent medium through which 'reality' could speak without mediation: that is, by presenting the (dis)ordering of society, which was a result of social and cultural construction, as natural" (1994, 139). It is here especially then that we see Verwoerd's prowess in performativity. He says, as if by way of illustrating Norval's point -

> I'm stating a general principle. A principle which I endorse in my own life and actions. I always choose for final solutions rather than hiding my head in the sand in order to think that I am safe for the present (Unknown author, Homeland Policy Speech, 1961, archive).

Again later, he declares that "we are creating permanent solutions, for whites and for blacks and creating prosperity for the future of whites and blacks (Unknown author, Homeland Policy Speech, 1961, archive). Verwoerd unabashedly suggests that solutions being proposed by him come with *guarantees of permanence*. He suggests in the above too that he is nothing if not a pragmatist, presenting 'final solutions' in the most transparent way. One has to ask – admittedly from the benefit of being in a present-time - how it is that so many 'modernised' people were unable to see through what appears so obviously now to be staged? "Perhaps it was his logical way of thinking," gushes Pelzer, "coupled with his ability to predict affairs ten years ahead, in their broad context and in detail, which in his speeches gave him the ability to unravel complex questions so easily,

step by step, calmly, with great confidence and *without notes*" (Pelzer, XIV, own emphasis). The suggestion here of course is that only one with an honesty of their convictions, surely, could deliver speeches again and again without a script? If this is true then we might say that Verwoerd sincerely, and unapologetically, *believed* in apartheid. He was not an apologist for it but its most eloquent proponent.

As Verwoerd says in the previously quoted 1961 *Union Council* speech: "The differences between some groups is much greater than between others but… it does not necessarily have to be a fact which is unpleasant or nasty" (Pelzer, 1966, 643). The implied racial differences are referred to – not as the social constructions that they are, but - as 'fact', and still later as, "just one of the facts of life" (Verwoerd quoted in Pelzer, 1966, 643).



Figure 7 Skep u eie toekoms / Create your own future (De Wildt, 1964)

I propose to conclude this lengthy chapter with a few temporal jumps. In our present-time we witness Hermann Giliomee, once considered a moderate, discerning historian of the period in question, taking a revisionist stance on apartheid and Verwoerd specifically (see et al Crowe 2016, Prew 2016, Giliomee 2012, 2016). He gains the outrage of one Martin Prew for romanticising Bantu education and 'airbrushing' from history "Verwoerd and his regime's" responsibility for it (Prew, 2012). One can almost sense Prew's frustration in battling to state what should be obvious: "The fact is that Bantu education

rationalised iniquitous segregation - any black person could see that the development of the various ethnic communities in parallel was clearly not equal" (2012). But apartheid's slippery discourse only gains traction when one attempts to counter it on its own terms. Giliomee says, quoting Verwoerd –

> It is ironic that Verwoerd today is branded as a racist when he was the only member of NP government in the 1950s who, as far as I know, is on record explicitly rejecting racist assumptions…he dismissed the idea of biological differences among the 'big races', adding that because there were no differences, 'this was not really a factor in the development of a higher civilization by the Caucasian race.' He also rejected the notion of different innate abilities. He observed that what appeared to be differences in skills in the case of Europeans and Africans were simply differences in culture due to historical experience (2012).

The term 'apologist' includes an implicit 'negative' in that someone is seen to defend, or apologise for, the indefensible. Is Giliomee apologising, as he defends, or, is he blatantly 'revising' history and his own previous position? One has to wonder what is being 'covered over', or, not being said explicitly? And if there is an apology embedded in what he is saying, what is being apologised for? How is apologising-while-supporting apartheid different to openly supporting it? The historian Saul Dubow says in this regard too that –

> (i) n terms of the segregationist discourse, culture represented a means of insisting on difference – crucially, without the need to define precisely on what grounds that difference was predicated, or whether such difference was likely to be temporary or permanent (1994, 359).

It seems to me then that there is a kind of 'covering over' happening when a cultural argument for racism and segregation is presented as a more benign alternative to a biologically-based racism - *as if* one is better than the other. I have been disturbed to hear this sentiment repeated in what would be considered 'progressive' movements – and I must wonder then if this might constitute a moment to watch and be aware of, an event in the making of becoming something more? I'm reminded of Stewart once again when she says, that "(t)here's a politics to difference in itself – the difference of danger, the difference of habit and dull routine, the difference of everything that matters" (2007, p16).

Finally, I want to end with a time-jump back to Verwoerd, in his capacity as an 'intellectual', some years before he will become prime minister. His PhD thesis for a doctorate in psychology completed in 1925 is titled *Die Afstomping van Gemoedsaandoeninge*, or, 'the blunting of emotions'. I've had the thesis translated from the Afrikaans into English by a journalist who is a first language Afrikaans speaker and her assessment is that it is written in a dense Afrikaans with archaic turns of phrase that are open to ambiguous interpretation.[1] And although the subject area is psychology and it concerns human emotion, it's interesting to note just how 'scientific' the experimental approach and the language is– as though human emotions subjected to a rigid procedural scrutiny produce reliable evidence upon which to predict future behaviour.

The term 'gemoedsaandoeninge', according to Verwoerd, includes for the experimenters sub-categories of sensual feelings such as pleasure and displeasure in relation to the senses, emotions and moods, although his study specifically investigates blunting phenomena in relation to the emotions (1962, 1-2, translation). Anecdotal and hypothetical examples are provided in the first part of the thesis as examples for how the blunting of emotions could lessen or grow over time. The following example is of particular interest here. Verwoerd states that "(t) he devotion of a citizen to his country of birth… forms part of a type of more longstanding and permanent emotion" (Verwoerd, 1962, 4, translation). While it is not the intention of this project to 'argue intent', it has to be said that there is a remarkable consistent interest here in how Verwoerd will come to conceptualise 'the nation' as a stable entity using - as we now have seen - ambiguous signifiers that allow, variously, for 'difference' to function in ways that favour a particular 'political frontier' needed at the time. And this frontier is 'needed' – lest *we* need reminding – because the *political will* appears set on segregating people on the basis of constructed subject formations that have had devastating effects on people's lives. We know this because we are in Verwoerd's future-time, living with these devastating consequences.

[1] A translation of most of Verwoerd's PhD thesis from its original Afrikaans into English was carried out by Claudine Mailovich. My comfortable understanding of the language has also been useful.

CHAPTER 3: COLONIAL ARCHIVE AS PRODUCTIVE FAILURE

There is a tension at the heart of this creative project that involves, as I see it, an interpretation of content and form, process and product. I use 'product' deliberately to express the idea that film, within the logic of market capitalism, must have saleable qualities. Although non-fiction film is, arguably, not expected to be as profitable as fiction, it is still deemed to need 'currency'. Its currency has to do with the film having a certain 'mobility' so that it can move through and 'do' a circuit of noteworthy festivals, perhaps catch the eye of a film executive with clout and influence. I have taken up this 'essayist' film experiment within the academy precisely because I wanted it to be free of these commercial imperatives.

And while the film is not directed at a healthy bottom line, attracting 'bums on seats' nor on purely entertaining an audience, I have been exceedingly aware of an audience in making the film. But this awareness of audience - not 'market' - is encouraged by intelligibility, by a drive to find filmic ways to get people to speak about a Verwoerdian discourse and to open up space for questions and debate across social and political barriers that might work to mute expression and dissent. This chapter is not focussed on the intended impacts on an audience, nor on an analysis of the film itself; the film 'as product' and its reception have in this instance taken a backseat. Suffice it to say that my hope for this creative project is that it provokes in its reader and viewer a desire to reflect upon how we've come to imbibe and regurgitate apartheid discourse.

Much like this written essay responds to a topic, the film *Verwoerd's Smile*, is a filmic response to the magnitude of Verwoerd's symbolic impact in the period 1958-1966 in cementing 'whiteness' as a stable category within the nation and public imaginary. The archive – and the film itself – is a kind of portal then through which one is able to glimpse how, during Verwoerd's milieu, the 'fabulous' years of the 1960's produced a public sphere that centred and stabilised whiteness. The archive from this period produced certain failures too, that are instructive for working with, and trying to subvert, this decidedly 'colonial' apartheid archive.

The decision to use only film archive for the project came about when I first encountered the footage that I would eventually have access to. I had some idea of what I might find in an archive that contained the 'official' versions of life in the 1960's as put together by the then-apartheid state and former British colonial authorities. But I did not expect to find what I did. These gaps that opened up between expectation and event, so to speak, marked out areas of interest for me about how the film might approach its topic. Some precursory notes about accessing this archive are thus in order.

The film footage was sourced from the National Film & Video Archive of South Africa (NFVSA) in Pretoria. I requested footage specifically on the period 1958-1966 available as 16mm and 35mm film reels. The film reels were old and those that had disintegrated or been damaged became unviewable. The reels could only be handled and changed by the archivist. Furthermore, the viewing machines were themselves in a poor state and so one could only really view a reel once. The 35mm machine was not working in the year of my visits (2019-2020), which meant I had to make a selection from these reels based on their brief loglines, which were handwritten onto catalogue cards. After several visits, I made a preliminary selection of material, sometimes, without having been able to view the material. I made the logistical arrangements for the film to be transported to Johannesburg where it could be transferred to a digital format (the telecine process). I managed to negotiate a global fee instead of the strictly per minute cost for the transfers. Once in digital form, I was finally able to properly view and work with the footage.

The footage itself consists of a vast collection of *African Mirror* newsreel, National Party (NP) propaganda films, SABC footage and raw footage of Verwoerd's speeches and travels recorded by unidentified cameramen – presumably in service of the national broadcaster, the NP and/or private individuals accompanying the Verwoerd entourage. Sandon reflects on how *African Mirror* was a prominent commercial newsreel that "promoted a sense of a new South Africa linked by modern communications and transportation, driven by industrial growth and technological innovation" and was "part of a developing world of global competition" (2013, 664). Of interest to us is that the archive places, as natural, only 'white', English and Afrikaner subjects, at the centre of this modernising impulse (2013, 664).

Because there are multiple 'sources' for the footage, establishing usage and broadcast rights would, according to the NFVSA archivist, mean tracking down each owner individually. Assuming it were possible to pay for these rights, there was still uncertainty about who actually owned the footage and to whom clearance costs would have to be paid. I managed to ascertain from the archivist that since the NP is defunct, most of its footage at least *appears* to belong to the current state department *Government Communication and Information System* (GCIS), but again, the archivist was unable to go on record about this. The NFVSA is a state archive. This is not of course a project about copyright or state administrative procedures – but what is relevant for this project is how the absolute ambiguity with regard to accessing and using this film archive underscores a similar 'undecidability' in apartheid discourse outlined in the previous chapter. Access is foreclosed even *as it appears* that it might be possible. I do think that there may be an invaluable research project in this for prospective scholars interested in film rights, historical archive and issues of access.



Figure 8 Film reel labelling, NFVSA archive, 2019



Figure 9 A first-round of reel selections viewed at the NFVSA, 2019

With regard to my own process on this project I'd hit a roadblock. While I was granted access to view the footage at the archive, on disintegrating film reels and machines, I was not allowed to transfer it to digital format so that I could properly view the footage (which constitutes 'use'). I was told that I first had to track down the respective owners and obtain permission for 'use' of the footage. But, of course, I could not know what footage to 'use' - and what would make it into the final film (and therefore whom I ought to 'track

down' for permissions) - until I could 'use' – meaning properly 'view' - the footage in digital format. And even if I made a semi-blind selection of footage, it would take an inordinate amount of time and resources – or money - to trace who the actual owners were and then to negotiate usage rights with each of them. If the state archive, the guardian of the footage, could not identify the owners, then what chance did I have to do this, without massive resources or influence?

I had not expected that it would be this hard, and at this point seemingly impossible, to access footage on apartheid in a post-apartheid state institution for use in a non-commercial student project that would be accessible to the public. It should be said at this point though, that, in my mind, there was a limit beyond which I was not prepared to compromise. This limit involved any interference from 'owners' of footage, or the state archive, in the final film by 'sanctioning' how the footage was to be used. Although never explicitly articulated in this way, I could see that all roads were beginning to head in this direction. Should the negotiations have reached this stage I would've been prepared to give up. I thus directed all my efforts to steering discussions on the 'terms of use' in our conversations, *away* from this. To conclude this segment then, I eventually negotiated 'usage' access on the basis that the film would be used 'for academic and research purposes only', and in so doing, I'd hoped to alleviate the anxiety I'd picked up on from the archivist about being held 'accountable' for granting access to footage that might be used by filmmakers in unsavoury ways. Again, this was not communicated to me officially, but enough anecdotes were provided to me about previous instances where filmmakers had done this, for me to get the message.

I approached the Wits Legal Department who brokered a negotiation between the three parties involved: myself as the student, Wits as the academic institution and the NFVSA as state guardian of the archive. A letter was finally agreed upon that grants me access to use the footage for academic purposes and protects the NFVSA against any claims against it should these terms not be honoured. It took approximately one year to gain access then to 'use' the footage, which is when I could finally have it transferred to digital form – so that I could assess what to 'use'.

The second and final 'gap' I had not anticipated encountering is harder to articulate. I will do so by attempting to connect how my encounters with this particular 'apartheid archive' allowed for thinking through the affective dimensions of how an 'apartheid public' sphere might've found grounding in Verwoerd's milieu. In order to make these connections however, I will need to move through time in ways that do not follow the chronological sequence of past-present-future.

Going through the archive has been difficult and painful and I've struggled to endure it. The excitement I'd first felt when I was granted access to simply view the reels in Pretoria dissipated when I got stuck in the actual viewing. I *thought* I knew what to expect but there is a marked difference, as it turned out, between a kind of epistemic *knowing* that events happened in a past-time during which one was not alive – and then being viscerally transported to this time by sifting through an archive and experiencing, again and again, the same *violence of erasure* that one encounters in a *present-time*. And by 'one' – in this present-time - I do not mean just 'me'. I also do not mean 'me' as representative of any particular constructed subjectivity – in terms of 'race', gender, class, 'culture', religion – and more.

I'd like to suggest that it is an erasure experienced by a 'constitutive outside' (an 'other') that is necessary for constructed subjectivities on the inside of an imagined nation to be granted their stability and essence - as a group identity - in *something else*. In Verwoerd's era – and it's this that becomes blatantly obvious from how the film archive at the time constructs this identity - there is a kind of fierce *training* that must take place to qualify and solidify oneself on the privileged inside of this nation, so as to be constituted as 'white'. The training for whiteness seems to be an aspiration towards: heteronormative desires, a 'male' dominance and political power, preparedness to go to war, 'feminine' docility and fragility, bourgeois refinement and taste, being moneyed, cultured, elitist and entitled, having a hard-working industriousness in work *and leisure*, ambitiousness and over-achievement, being territorial and unapologetic, modern and worldly, educated, rational and scientific, being compassionate but unbending towards other sentient beings and nature, Godliness, being conspicuously loving and charitable but also discerning about one's altruistic urges, and, having a healthy outward show of self-respect and

confidence that stems from a kind of vanity related to health, fit bodies, 'good looks', beauty and being seen to be an object of envy and desire. Becoming white was hard work.

Sara Ahmed calls for a phenomenological approach to whiteness that "helps us to notice institutional habits; it brings what is behind, what does not get seen as the background to social action, to the surface…" (2007, p. 165). These institutional habits are performed by bodies that make up public space, as well as by bodies who feel out of place in this space. Verwoerdian discourse helped define this public space "around whiteness", to use Ahmed's reference, such that "non-white bodies feel uncomfortable, exposed, visible, different, when they take up this space" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 157). Influx control laws essentially rendered 'black bodies' as outsiders in urban areas reserved for 'white' residents. In the film archive a noticeably judgmental tone creeps into British colonial films towards the apartheid state. However, it is the contention here that this serves only to position England, a former colonizer itself, as being 'on the right side' of increasing global outrage against apartheid – an outrage that rings decidedly hollow given Britain's own colonial legacy. Colonial memories appear to be short and selective. One picks up on a concomitant defensiveness and suspicion in the archive, from within the Afrikaner state, towards this outside world and its growing anti-apartheid stance.

Arlette Farge (2013) studies the judicial archives of Paris in the eighteenth century and finds the reports of the secret police to be both "intriguing and contradictory": "It puts on display the complexity of a monarchical system that sought to eradicate the popular sphere" (106). By popular sphere is meant the increasingly restless 'masses' of people in Paris at the time, relegated to society's lower classes. Farge continues by pointing out that "this system denied any value to popular opinion when it became critical, yet still pursued any signs of such criticism… that one might say, paradoxically, that it kindled and fueled them" (2013, 106). This bordered then on a kind of obsession, as she argues, by the secret police with gauging the emotional temperature of popular thought. Farge asks whether this may be a way for us accessing "representations of the 'muffled plebeian public sphere' that Jurgen Habermas has argued remained out of reach throughout the eighteenth century, except in the space of an instant at the beginning of the French Revolution?" (2013, 106-107). What is of interest to me here is how this apartheid archive similarly reveals not only the construction of a dominant subjectivity of what

whiteness means within Verwoerd's public sphere, but it allows for a deep reflection on how the 'other' constitutes this whiteness and is constituted by this whiteness through a non-antagonistic 'logic of difference'. This has implications of course – maybe optimistically so - for projects of resistance and creating counter-publics that cause ruptures along these contours of subject formation, which perform themselves as stable, fixed identities.

A final gap I'd like to address concerns an 'unintended edit' of the film. I was at the outset of the project keen to play with forms of juxtaposition and montage to subvert the archive and in so doing find the 'kinks' in an apartheid discourse and Verwoerd's symbolic armour. What I'd intended was to use the footage I *thought* I'd find to 'speak back'. Except I found very few voices in the archive that I could use to speak through. The tones and points of view were a mix of condescending, hypocritical and glorifying of apartheid. 'Whiteness' in all instances was presented as a 'given' and so omnipresent that it became virtually invisible. There was very little 'speaking other' in the archive to work with. There were however a stock-variety of cliched images of 'black bodies in pain', like the Sharpeville footage we've come to see so often. I made a decision almost immediately to 'ban' these images from the film – unless I could find a subversive way of 'repurposing' them in ways that would make us 'sit up' and genuinely 'see' how the pain of any 'other' is in fact a kind of mirroring of a dominant and centred whiteness. But this is not how the archive articulates 'black pain'. There is only one instance in the film where I use juxtaposition. About six-and-a-half minutes into the film I use the voice-over from the official National Party propaganda piece called "*Die Nasionale Party se Filmdiens Bied Aan…Ons Gaan Kyk" (The National Party's Film Division Presents…We Are Going to See)* and I place images of black people from the same archive over this. Whilst listening to the propaganda on how well the NP has been taking care of the white person and the white child (*die blanke en die blanke kind*), we see contrasting images of how poorly it is taking care of anyone deemed not to be white. There are also subversive overtones of how the archive infantilises adult men and women not deemed white. But this one moment of subversion in the film was not doing enough. My intention had not been to only simply juxtapose images of white privilege and black oppression. We've seen this before. I was interested in how 'we all' – all hues of black, white, male, female, young, old (and more) -

have been impacted on, in unconscious ways, by apartheid's implicit argumentations in Verwoerd's era, *in this day*.

Nonetheless, the outcome was that the film's first cuts did not 'expose' something new about apartheid discourse; the cuts instead presented Verwoerd in an almost 'glowing' light, and at best, in an ambiguous light. This was horrifying. Both my editor and I were kind of stumped. We'd done everything 'right' and yet it came out all wrong. In the end I did what I'd resisted all along, which was to insert myself into the narrative. Without prescribing what I think the film 'ought' to communicate here - I am keen to discover how it might (and perhaps together with segments of this written 'essay form') spark conversation, possibly a compulsion to do something, together, in our present time about systems of oppression that work in surreptitious ways to foreclose possibilities of solidarity of those in the margins.

In their work on the essay film Papazia and Eades (2016) explain how the form does not fit into either documentary or experimental formats because, what it is concerned with is the development of ideas. In the service of these ideas then, the form will follow the direction it needs to. This is also, I believe, why an essay film is so resistant to embracing 'genre' and conclusive outcomes that seek to pacify and console.

> This quality of digression, of interruption, of circling around an idea without bringing it to a scientifically rigorous conclusion suggests…first, its dialogic quality – that is, its apparent address to a reader, whether a specific person or any reader. And second, its refusal of conclusions: the essay film by nature defies all notions related to totality and fixity, the whole and the completed (Papazia and Eades, 2016, 3).

The decision to include my voice through narration occurred as a consequence of the project's failure to subvert a colonial archive by using its own constructed images. The inclusion of myself into the film's narrative might be viewed, certainly, as an auto-ethnographic tool. For me it's been a filmic tool, and a last resort, to *interrupt* the historical narrative, much in the way Papazia and Eades describe this.

A qualifying point about the narration might be necessary here. I wrote the narration originally as a preamble to the essay; it was a note about what inspired this project: my mother's lasting impression of Verwoerd as representing something quite evil, that 'we'

(people), have inherited and not dealt with. I discarded the preamble along the way and forgot about it. Only after multiple film edits failed to subvert the archive's colonial images and failed to link the period 1958-1966 to *another time*, a future-present time, did I revisit this written preamble. At this stage, I did not know how I would use the preamble in the film but I finally accepted that I needed to intervene. I knew that *being seen or heard on camera* would conjur for a viewer a certain 'body' that carried signifiers of gender, 'race', class, and so much more. I did not want this because I believed it would undermine the very point of this project: to *challenge* these categorisations that this very archive from Verwoerd's milieu has been so instrumental in constructing. Yet, I could not leave the archive unchallenged either. I ran into apartheid's double-bind once more.

A compromise was to record my voice, alone, by myself, once only, using my mobile phone. I did not want to rehearse it, to do multiple takes nor to use a professional studio booth for recording it. I wanted my hesitation, my uncertainty, to show, if it did. I experimented with laying this recorded voice over parts of the film. I liked the interruption this caused and I thought it served the purpose of ripping the archive *out of its time*. I wanted a viewer to be dislocated from this past-time in order to reflect upon how this Verwoerdian past impacted upon their own future-present time. I gave the recorded narration to my editor and together we lay it over the film.

The decision not to include any further contextualisation was very deliberate. There are no credits to the film. I attach my name and a date at the end because I take responsibility for it, flaws and all. This does not mean that others have not had a hand in the film – of course they have. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to McCoy Mrubata who generously granted permission for me to use tracks from his album *Kulturation,* produced together with musician Wessel van Rensburg. The collaboration between these musicians but also their Jazz 'revisions' of some well-known Afrikaner folk tunes is of course very significant for this project. But again, I wanted the music to communicate *through the music itself*. I certainly did not want to point to the people who made it, just like I did not want to point to myself in the film. Should I succeed in clearing the rights to show the film commercially then I will, of course, include a proper credit list at the end of the film. I might also, should that time come, wish to revise elements or whole parts of the film. Process demands this.

I began this chapter by pointing out how there is a tension at the heart of this project. The tension implores me to question why we make film and why I've made *this* film. I have not made it for commercial release, nor for accolades and in fact, I do not claim to 'own' it. Now that it's been made, it cannot be 'mine' alone. My hope is for its failures to have *productive value* for an audience. I intend, much like Nora Alter (2007) has expounded upon about the audio-visual essay form, to engage the viewer in meaning-making rather than to prescribe to, or entertain, a passive onlooker. Alter says about the essay film form:

> The textual track or layer sometimes directly contradicts the image track, creating within the total filmic text a jarring collision of opposites and complex levels of meaning that the audience must co-produce (2007, 48).

Perhaps the only 'check' to producing (and for an audience 'receiving') a pro-fascist or revisionist work or interpretation 'by mistake' is the political will and commitment to creating another world, a better one than this, which is, I would suggest, in a state of perpetual 'crisis'. This essay film does not draw neat conclusions nor does it offer easy answers. It offers provocations.

CHAPTER 4: PROVOCATIONS FOR REMAKING A WORLD IN CRISIS

I had fully intended to conclude with forays into how we might resist the continuities of oppressions that we inherit, how to 'undo apartheid'. But this project has changed me. I am still this 'me' except that I cannot go back to that place of needing to know what is to be done at every turn. This in itself is a 'doing'. And thus too, I suppose, a form of knowing. I am emboldened to mark this creative project as a teacher, an event and a 'political project', because of the courage and insights of many others who lead from radical margins. It is with the might of this 'many' in mind that I propose to conclude, not with certainties, but provocations.

The spark for this project began with another kind of inheritance – that of my mother's memory of Verwoerd as being the worst of Apartheid's heads of state. She'd lived through them all, from Malan to de Klerk, and her persistence in this belief stayed with me. Yet, it did not occur to me that her memory of something as trifling as a gesture, a smile, could be constitutive of the political and that her insight could be a 'political judgement'. Bell hooks speaks about how for African-Americans "the construction of the homeplace, however fragile and tenuous…had a radical dimension" (2001, 384). She continues thus-

> Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one's homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist... where we could restore to ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world (2001, 384).

My political education I now see, began not in high school, but in the home. I was a high school student in Cape Town in the 1980's when a 'non-white' body in a school uniform constituted a threat to the state. At the time, I could not imagine a more brutal head of state than P.W. Botha. Yet it is in Verwoerd's milieu – and in a statesman often remembered as being remarkable for his intelligence and charisma – that I have found the cruellest of tricks played. Cruel because wantonly violent; a trick because covered over by congenial gesture.

Coetzee suggests that we continue digging into the past to understand apartheid's hold onto a present-time. We cannot achieve this though if we are seduced by performances of 'goodwill'. Coetzee says of apartheid's engineers:

> "(W)e ought at least to entertain the possibility that what animated these worthies may have been not the altruism they claimed but on the contrary the crassest absorption in their own passions and appetites, that their utterances may have been a cover for the deepest indifference to the fate of their descendants" (1991, 2).

Inspired by this provocation I'd like to turn to another anecdote in Verwoerd's PhD thesis, which claims that: "Someone from a high class who went backwards and eventually ends up in a slum (*agterbuurt*), with time, feels no shame about his grimy appearance and crude, neglected circumstances" (Verwoerd, 1962, 4, translation). There appears in this anecdote to be a parallel that emerges later with apartheid's preoccupation of so-called 'racial mixing' and the circumstances under which 'contamination' of whiteness might occur. Roos (2015) explores a kind of moral panic with regard to alcohol consumption and the subsequent *blanke tsosti's* (the white thug's) defiance to their drinking habits being controlled by the state. He proposes that the *blanke tsotsi's* "lack of cooperation" is an example of how "challenges from within white society helped to shape the broad parameters of apartheid-era whiteness" and "emphasizes the fluid, historically contingent essence of whiteness… constructed from both above and below" (Roos, 2015, 1189). Roos finds though, that white defiance at the time, "challenged particular forms of hegemonic whiteness, but not whiteness itself" (2015, 1189).

My further provocations related to this ask: What would it mean to challenge whiteness itself? And before even asking how 'challenging whiteness' might be done, there seems to be the question about whether a political-will exists to take this on in the first place. In other words, why would one who identifies as 'being white' or aspires to such an identification, commit "race suicide", to use Verwoerd's term - and what would this 'do' (Verwoerd quoted in Pelzer, 1966, 664)? What does a *refusal* to give up a self-identification as 'white' *do*? Using Verwoerd's logic against him and far more productively then, I would ask what does giving up on 'whiteness' today, and shirking one's 'shame' about not-being-seen-as-white-in-the-world, *do*?

Norval, much like Coetzee, considers whether the only way we might really be able to *do the work* of undoing apartheid is by holding it up as the constitutive other.

> Instead of being effaced once and for all, 'apartheid' itself would have to play the role of the element keeping open the relation to the other, of serving as watchword against any discourse claiming to be able to create a final unity. It is only then that this sickness, which has served as the signifier of all oppression, will be eradicated (1994, 157).

How long do we keep this enemy in sight though and what are the risks in doing so of resuscitating it? Is having a common enemy really the only basis for radical solidarity? Although with reference to 'America' Tina Chanter's (2008) insight about the impatience towards 'the race issue' is relevant to how a dominant whiteness on the inside of the nation becomes so all-present in the society that, as Sara Ahmed (2007) suggests elsewhere, we, unwittingly, begin to move in ways that *it* dictates. Chanter says -

> The overenergetic or premature effort to get rid of race as a meaningful category is worrisome precisely to the extent that it is allowed to obfuscate the profound and multiple ways in which race continues to structure material and intellectual privileges, and continues to facilitate the invisibility of whiteness. The rhetorical force of invisibility coalesces with that of the melting pot, hand in hand with the ideology of the American dream, and aligns itself with the spirit of competitive individualism, which is alive and well (2008, 215).

The challenge then is to undo apartheid without obfuscating racism; to challenge whiteness, without reifying it, as Ahmed warns (2007). Ahmed's phenomenological approach to whiteness and Chanter's warning about competitive individualism are instructive for what I hope I've been able to communicate with this project: that to undo apartheid, one needs to hold whiteness in full view, to see all that it has come to represent. Not for *me* personally, as an individual filmmaker and storyteller, but for *us*. Since being released here, this story has ceased to be mine alone. The film's failure in using the archive to bring into view the inherent violence of this archive is productive for understanding something about the superpower of invisibility that whiteness and apartheid discourse have when they go unchecked and continue to airbrush over an oppressed past. The provocation is that perhaps only by ripping it out of its *time*, are we able to see it for what it is doing.

The last of Verwoerd's PhD anecdotes I will refer to here, reads: "The strong homesickness which develops during the first time a child is no longer at his or her parent's home does not develop as strongly at a later stage" (Verwoerd, 1962, 4, translation). The resonances for this with 'home' and 'attachment' is, finally, important with regard to apartheid's policies and practices of separate development and forced removals, practices that, continue today in different guises.

In many ways this idea of 'homesickness' and Verwoerd's symbolic gesturing as a 'cover' for so much more that is going on, represents the beginning of this project. I remember that when we moved for the fourteenth time, I *decided* to stop counting. My sense of 'homesickness' may no longer be attached to 'place' but I do know that it is a virus, like the flu, that one with a predisposition is susceptible to catching. On the other hand, the potentiality of the gap that such a homesickness opens, allows for making 'homeplace' anew and for forging kinships in ways that *do something els*e.

In *Verwoerd's Smile* a Sowetan is asked whether he has a homeland. The ambivalence in his immediate reaction is beautiful, to me, seeing with my homesick eyes. He begins to say 'yes' and then gains the courage of his *knowing* and says 'no'. The initial 'yes' is a habitual, automatic response to a question that does not deserve the wisdom of the answer it ultimately gets. The 'yes' responds to a question that *really* asks whether, as a black man, the Sowetan has been assigned a symbolic home *elsewhere* – other than *here* – in the white man's urban home. In the response "I belong to Johannesburg" sits the quiet admonishment of a question that suggests 'home' is vested in *ownership* in land, when in fact, people belong to the land. The land can belong to no-one, it outlives everyone and therefore, surely, must 'belong' to everyone who finds belonging in it. The provocation then is whether, if people belong to the land, what claims of 'inheritance' can there be to its ownership?

And so, while Verwoerd is incorrect in suggesting that homesickness necessarily subsides when a child is ripped from its hearth, he also could not have known *then* that such ripping could become the beginning of something new. I doubt he cared to know either that the 'many' who stand in the wake of his 'contributions' to his imagined future – and our present – understand that "(t)he fact that we are here and that I speak these words is

an attempt to break that silence and bridge some of those differences between us, for it is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence" (Lorde, 1984, 75).

Finally, then, this project concludes with a provocation to continue the fight against a Verwoerdian-like 'covering over' of an 'oppressed past'. It is also a fight for the restoration of a humanity remade. This cannot happen, as Chanter argues, when "the resources to which I turn in my incessant attempt to shore up my own humanity in the face of the ideological war that is waged on it continue to have recourse to myths and legends that partake of racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism (p214-215). In knowing this, we might stand a chance of redoing a future-present that is in constant crisis, such that it flouts the one Verwoerd's contemporaries imagined he could predict.

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