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Remembering the Past, Informing the Future: Writing the familial and communal as acts of memorialisation in Coloured literary texts

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Declaration

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Date: 08/02/2022 Signature: C. Van Roy

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Abstract

Within the realm of South African literary studies, Coloured literature- that is, literature which speaks to or reflects on the experience of being and living Coloured in South Africa, is often underrepresented. This is in part due to the complicated history attached to the emergence of the identity which is informed by a racist and oppressive past as well as the ever-changing definitions of what Coloured identity is, how it operates and who it can define. As such, the task of unpacking what it means to live and experience Coloured identity can often be reflected alongside themes of familial and communal memory which serve as the only modes of information through which Coloured people, subjected to an indeterminate and under- recorded history, can make sense of their ever-fluctuating senses of identity. In aid of these ideas this paper discusses Richard Rive's *Buckingham Place: District Six*, Zoë Wicomb's *October* and C.A Davids *The Blacks of Cape Town* and focuses on the manner in which memory and forms of remembering emerge in each novel as a complicated but necessary source of information that enables the subject to engage in various forms of identity exploration for the purposes of self-discovery or identity preservation. This paper also reflects on the ways in which Coloured identity and experience is grappled with across generations, especially by those who are left behind with the task of unravelling complicated histories and painful pasts.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements **2**

Abstract **3**

Introduction **5- 20**

Chapter 1:

Communal memorialisation

in Richard Rive's '*Buckingham Palace': District Six* **21- 34**

Chapter 2:

Burdens of the Past and the legacies thereafter **35- 56**

in Zoë Wicomb's *October*

and C.A Davids' *The Blacks of Cape Town*

Conclusion **57-58**

Bibliography **59-62**

Introduction:

The category of Coloured literature, that is, a literature that defines, explores or is interested in the experiences of the marginalised racial group identified as 'Coloured'[1] in South Africa is a field of study that has been somewhat neglected in literary analysis. The reason is that Colouredness, or the experience of being Coloured in South Africa, is enshrouded with a history and lineage that complicates not only how we have come to view these experiences but also how people who self-identify as Coloured have come to view themselves (Farred 2000, Adhikari 2005). These opinions are informed by a history of racial discrimination and disenfranchisement that has left the Coloured community, for the most part, splintered in divisions (Adhikari 2005). The racial segregation imposed by the apartheid government only heightened these already tenuous identity formations of the Coloured community and much of the literature that has emerged, post-apartheid, with regard to these experiences have likewise represented the fragmentation and uncertainty that has become part of the experience of Coloured people in South Africa or what Zimitri Erasmus calls "the condition[s] of being Coloured" (Erasmus 2001, 13-14).

The history of Coloured identity in South Africa has had a series of transformations (Adhikari 2005) that have been intimately related to the ways in which these identities, and the people whom they define, have been able to operate and navigate themselves within various environments. How we define Coloured identity is thus not only a point of inquiry and has been for decades, especially for the purposes of any literary analysis (Adhikari 2005) but these interrogations have resulted in more questions than concrete answers. This is partly because of the ambiguity and tensions which are attached to the history of Coloured identity in the country but also the continued lack of engagement with these forms of experience, particularly in literature thereafter. Both elements are what this thesis attempts to address. The history of being, living and navigating Colouredness in South Africa is a tarnished legacy. The institutionalisation of the term Coloured began as a result of the apartheid government whose main goal during segregationist South Africa was to "create a new legal and bureaucratic machinery for racial classification" (Posel, Race as Common Sense: Racial

[1] The use of quotations signals a relationship to Colouredness that aligns with the historically prevailing understanding that dictates "both opposition to the enforced classification of people into racial and ethnic categories and distaste for ethnocentric values" (Adhikari 2005). This thesis will subsequently refer to Coloured sans quotations, with the understanding of the "rapid change the identity is experiencing in the post-apartheid environment" (Adhikari 2005, intro)

Classification in Twentieth-Century South Africa 2001, 98). As such 'non-white' citizens were relegated into distinct racial categories which in turn separated entire communities from one another, under the maxim dictated by the Proclamation of 1967 as outlined by V.A February (1981). Not only did this reclassification affect all non-white South Africans but it also created, or further complicated what was already an ambiguous understanding of Coloured identity. Colouredness became understood as an arbitrary delineation of 'otherness', captured within the Population Registration Act of 1950, as defining "a person who is not a white person nor a native"[2]. This definition, due to its vague and non-identifying description was then extended to specify that: "under [the] Proclamation of 1967: 'The Cape Coloured Group shall consist of persons who in fact are, or who, except in the case of persons who…are members of race or class or tribe [otherwise identified] are generally accepted as members of the race or class known as Cape Coloured" (February 1981, 5). As such the category of Coloured became a confusing and ambiguous delineation which only increased the confusion among Coloured people (here referring to those who were categorised unanimously and without consent under the identity) themselves. As a result, the term Coloured largely held a racist association, especially when regarded by the white dominant power at the time, as it was meant to define "a more or less homogenous group" (February 1981) but who were also at the same time denied any agency regarding this identity and those who had to bear it. February outlines how the Theron Commission of 1976 made this distinction clear regarding the lack of agency Coloured people were afforded in their own identity, noting how it ensured that there was "no such thing as a peculiarly 'Coloured' culture" (February 9) and that essentially "one should stop viewing the Coloured population as a community which is culturally different, and which can be culturally distinguished from the White population[3]"(9).

Such legislation resulted in further divisions within an already fragmented community; not only were Coloured people separated racially from whites (as indeed many groups were) but they were also disallowed the sense of culture that might have unified these groups of people together. As such these racial classifications worked in order to ensure a distinct separation among the racial groups under apartheid and, as Deborah Posel (2001) notes, there was a sense of a "reassuring promise of a lifetimes worth of privilege for those classified 'white', [whereas] classification as 'Coloured' or 'native' had the more unsettling finality of sealing a

[2] Section 1 (iii) of the Populations Registration Act referenced in Deborah Posel 'Race as Common Sense: Racial Classification in Twentieth Century South Africa' (2001, 102)
[3] (Theron 1976,506)

person's fate to a lower on the ladder opportunity, reward and power from then on, and removing the prospect of mobility" (Posel 68). This was of course the point of the law, to create a division that would prevent uprising caused by racial cohesion and shared communal attitudes - which is part of the reason why many Coloured people became members of the African National Congress, the Non-European Unity Movement and later the Black Consciousness Movement that actively opposed apartheid. The latter unified all "non-white" categories under the notion of Blackness which became a better option for these communities when Colouredness was disregarded both as an identity and a culture (Adhikari 2009, 11-12). In fact, this association or acclimation under the banner of Blackness is what continues to denote the experience, at least outwardly, of Coloured people in contemporary South Africa. The reason being that part of the intentions of redress in post-apartheid South Africa involves an understanding of marginalisation and inequality that privileges the majority. This means that the main groups who were marginalised during apartheid can be thought of as a singular entity that stands against whiteness. As a result, in addressing these inequalities the methods presume that Blackness is the all-encompassing representation of marginalisation and thus foremost subjected to redress. Posel outlines the logic behind these redress methods, noting:

> [One of the] principle instruments designed to undo apartheid's inequities- the Employment Equity Act- defines three 'designated groups' in respect of whom preferential employment is authorised: blacks, women and the disabled. [the] category 'black' is not defined directly but is intended to encompass all those previously classified as 'African', 'Coloured' or 'Indian'. Its logic is to link the terms of redress directly to a history of racialised disadvantage in terms of which the distinction between 'African' and 'Coloured', for example, bears directly on entitlements to preferential treatment (Posel 75).

These histories highlight the reality of the complications which the designation of being Coloured held within South Africa. Colouredness was either viewed as an outlier in the era of apartheid, and thus given an arbitrary placeholder identification - at least this is the view that has been attached to these histories - or in an attempt to address these complicated histories it is altogether disregard as a distinct identity, that can exist or should be separated from the larger idea of blackness. These lineages continue to impact the way in which Colouredness is regarded in South Africa and as such Coloured people often fall into a category regarded by Pirtle, due to their "grouping [of] those who fall somewhere between, or outside of, the more solidified Black African and White groups in South Africa" (Pirtle 2021, 146) as representing "part of the racial middle in South Africa" (Pirtle 146). This "in-betweenness" (Erasmus 2017) associated with Coloured identity in turn influences the perception of Colouredness and the validity the identity has within the social and political constructions of the nation. In

addition, it also impacts the performance and lived experience of those who identify with these classifications and affect how they make sense of their position within the country-aspects which the solidification under a united sense of 'Blackness' very rarely, if ever, takes into account[4]. Due to the prevailing undesired negative connotations attached to Colouredness scholars such as Mohamed Adhikari (2009) have attempted to redress these perceptions in the hopes of reassigning the construction of the identity onto the bearers themselves, which would entail reforming what it means to be Coloured in contemporary South Africa. Adhikari cites part of this reality in his exploration of Coloured identity, noting how:

> In nearly all general histories of South Africa, Coloured people have effectively been written out of the narrative and marginalised to a few throw-away comments scattered through the text…ever since its emergence in the late 19th century, coloured identity, its nature and its implications it holds for South African society have… been the subject of ideological and political contestation (2009, 1-2).

Adhikari has attempted to tackle the history of Coloured people and in turn provide a working means of identification for which we might be able to view the negotiation of Coloured identity in present society. Adhikari's exploration is thus vital for the purposes of this research in order to premise an understanding of Colouredness outlined by "social constructionism" (Adhikari 2009,13) that is interested in the making and performance of these identities. In this way his understanding refocuses the attention from the racial discourses that established the divisions within the community and urges for a rethinking of Coloured identities. Adhikari's social constructionism opposes previous iterations of Coloured identity - which his work in *Burdened by Race* (2009) likewise addresses - that premised understandings of Colouredness as something which "developed naturally, and…to be the result of miscegenation" (Adhikari 2009, 7) or who regarded it solely as an "artificial concept imposed by the white supremacist state" (Adhikari 2009, 11-12)[5]. These earlier conceptions of Colouredness dominated public and personal views and as a result influenced the "historical writing of Coloured people" (Adhikari 2009, 7) and subsequently informed the way in which Coloured people were perceived and the agency, or rather lack thereof that they were allowed. It was thus not only a matter of marginalisation that affected Coloured people during apartheid but also subsequently that "their historical agency is effectively denied" (Adhikari 2009, 8) within records of the past. As a result, the presence of Coloured people in

[4]See Pirtle (2021, 154) and Adhikari (2009, 11-12)

[5] These ideas refer to the 'essentialist' and 'instrumentalist' understandings of Coloured Identity outlined in Burdened by Race (2009)

a large period of South African literature is almost non-existent or, as Adhikari notes, “where they do appear, Coloured people are presented as inert, faceless beings who are acted upon by whites and are incidental to the main narrative” (8). This in turn has resulted in the reality that within a significant portion of the literary archive “Coloured people and their ancestors are little more than bystanders to the unfolding drama of South Africa history” (Adhikari 2009, 8). An example of these effects in practice can be seen in Sarah Gertrude Millin’s *God’s Stepchildren* (1924) which reflects the prevailing and dominant racist and oppressive attitude towards Colouredness - or ‘mixed’ identities - of these time periods, that made its way into literature. Millin’s text, as J.M Coetzee (1980) notes, regards Coloured identity as a ‘flaw’ that essentially exists as an “inherited reminder of a fall from the grace of whiteness” (Coetzee 44) and in this sense reflect the initial reactions to and representations of Coloured identity in literature. In order to counter these dominant perceptions that have plagued Coloured identity and how it is written about and explored Adhikari offers a means of understanding these processes that most leniently describes people who might identify under these terms. In this way social constructionism intends to reposition the identity of Colouredness back onto those who bear it and, in this way, suggests and validates Coloured people and their expression of culture, community and ways of being that this term might instead represent.

One of the prevailing ideas about Coloured identity that is flagged by Millin’s work is the notion of the ‘incidental’ relationship of Coloured people to both their identity and the history of South Africa which implies a relationship to Colouredness that disregards the agency of Coloured people in these processes of identity construction. These tensions in part explain the reason why literature which overtly attempts to deconstruct these ideas, instead of perpetuating them, is difficult to find within early South African literary work. The difficulty in trying to concretely define or write about a lived experience that is itself subject to ambiguity and points of query is that it complicates the overall idea of redress and a forward thinking ‘rainbow nation’ that have encompassed the post-apartheid imaginary which is very much concerned with premising a ‘non -racial’ language and sense of being in favour of what Whitney Pirtle (2021) calls a “common humanity” (2021, 154). This means that any attempt to speak about the concept of Colouredness continues to be impacted by the notions that disregard the identity as being nothing more than a by-product of racial hybridity despite the fact that the existence of Coloured people within South Africa increasingly suggests otherwise. According to Pirtle these assumptions have had its own sort of repercussions for

these communities because it made it difficult not only to "clarify how groups, especially Coloureds, were being defined or distinguished in the new South Africa" (Pirtle 154-155) but to negotiate these uncertainties alongside the emergence of a "powerful re-formation process [embodied] as Black" (Pirtle 154-155). The presence of Coloured people thus became enveloped within these imaginaries to essentially "re-mak[e] the Black South African category…to be one that signifies, most broadly, non-whiteness" (Pirtle 154-155). These ideas are important to note in order to situate the state at which Colouredness - inadvertently or perhaps inevitably - found itself in relation to the rest of the country and by virtue of these histories informed much of the writing about Coloured experience and identity at the time.

Beyond the dominant assumptions about Colouredness that have persisted throughout history there is the suggestion by Adhikari that Colouredness as an identity, can be separated or viewed apart from the scope of apartheid and the assumptions that these histories imply. This would mean that Coloured identity could outlive and transform beyond its beginnings and come to mean something besides what its emergence represented. In the wake of the 'new non-racial' democracy the Coloured community especially was left facing the prospect of these realities while carrying the weight of a racially tarnished and ambiguous history and a future that was undetermined. This subsequently left Coloured people, and the Coloured community - previously and concurrently defined as such - with feelings of "fragmentation, uncertainty and confusion" (Adhikari 2005, 186-7). Due to these continuous shifting attitudes towards Colouredness scholars such as Adhikari and Zimitri Erasmus emerged, attempting to provide a revised understanding of Coloured identity that resists the instability of history that these constructions have had. For Adhikari, the idea of social constructionism, which has already been flagged, develops the idea that "Coloured identity cannot be taken as a given but is a product of human agency dependent on a complex interplay of historical, social, cultural, political and other contingencies….[and is] an ongoing, dynamic process in which groups and individuals make and remake their perceived realities and thus also their personal and social identities" (2009, 13). This understanding of Coloured identity lends itself to the idea of identity as being in motion and constantly changing, which is a point Erasmus and Adhikari share in terms of their construction of these identities and why both scholars are important for following the shift that the definition of Colouredness has undertaken. Erasmus, like Adhikari, contends with the past definitions of Coloured identity and how it has created a negative association between Coloured identity and the performance of such, noting how:

> The racial discourses in South Africa have made it impossible to see Colouredness as an identity that could be understood and respected on its own terms…it has always been understood as a residual, in-between or 'lesser' identity- characterized as 'lacking', supplementary, excessive, inferior or simply non-existent" which in turn led to 'discomfort' among some Coloured people with the idea of being coloured [and have resulted], on the one hand, in attempts to reconstruct a sense of purity based on claims to ethnicity and indigenous roots, or on the other, a complete denial of this identity. These negative characterizations and denials have contributed to the marginalisation and trivialisation of Coloured identities in relation to processes of building identity in post-apartheid South Africa (Erasmus 2001. 16).

These attitudes towards Coloured identity that Erasmus outlines shaped not only the national perception of Coloured people but also how they viewed themselves and is thus a theme which can be seen recurring in Richard Rive, Zoë Wicomb and C.A Davids by shaping the way the authors and their characters struggle with their identity. Erasmus is conscious of these tensions and is interested in reworking the previous iterations of Coloured identity that influenced many of these insecurities. Erasmus's theory of creolisation is thus important as it relates to the interest in rejecting the view of Colouredness as simply a product of "race mixture" (2001, 16) but rather argues more for the various influences that has led to the transformation of these identities which, as Erasmus notes, are "distinguished not merely by borrowing, per se, but by cultural borrowing and creation under the very specific condition of marginality" 16) which in turn has resulted in "creolization" (16). Like Adhikari, Erasmus does not deny the influence that apartheid had on Coloured identity formations but is more attentive to how these inscribed forms of being were then taken, reshaped and transformed into what the lived experiences of Coloured people in contemporary society would highlight. As Erasmus notes, "although it is true that apartheid played a key role on the formation and consolidation of these (and other) identities, Coloured identities are not simply Apartheid labels imposed by whites. They are made and re-made by Coloured people themselves in their attempts to give meaning to their everyday lives" (2001, 16).

The process of creating meaning becomes the main justification for the interest in the history of Coloured people and specifically what these processes entailed. By refocusing the identity in this way not only is Colouredness validified beyond the notion of an aftereffect of the apartheid racial classification system but it also suggests that the various explorations of this identity should be taken seriously and treated as valid forms of identity exploration. This in turn would broaden the scope of what is possible to explore, develop and investigate in terms of Coloured experience, subjectivity and ways of being as it appears in literature which is interested in these questions. In focusing the transformation of Colouredness within the

category of literature it becomes possible to assess how these ideas proposed by Adhikari and Erasmus which insist on the significant role that Coloured people have "in the making of their own social identities" (Adhikari 2009, 14-15) emerge and allow for deeper explorations into the nature and performance of Coloured expression in South Africa.

From the historical foundations underpinning Coloured identity and its construction, to its transformation that Erasmus and Adhikari outline, this thesis argues that one way that Coloured people have had to adapt to and rely on methods in order to make sense of their history as it informs their self-identity and their sense of belonging is through the spaces of memory and remembering which becomes the only source of information of their past when historical records of history have often disregarded these experience. As such an active engagement with personal and private memories, within the spaces of the familial and communal - where these memories are contained and have been passed down through generations - can equip Coloured people with the tools needed to begin unpacking and interrogating the influence that these histories have on their lives. Memory thus serves as the foundational source of information for marginal Coloured people and in general "overlooked experiences" (Baderoon 2014, 11) that have been "disregarded" by history (Baderoon 2014, 11). The spaces of the family or the community are thus most suited to allow for these explorations of identity construction and ways of being to emerge because they operate with an understanding of identity that is founded on the idea of it being a product of its bearers and thus subject to and able to transform based on various factors such as history, environment, bias, as well as social and cultural influences. Analysing how memory and the process of remembering becomes a vehicle for these engagements in the work of Richard Rive, Zoë Wicomb and C.A Davids thus becomes the central interest for the purposes of this thesis.

History, Memory and Literature

Richard' Rive's *Buckingham Palace: District Six (*1986), Zoe Wicomb's *October* (2014) and C.A Davids' *The Blacks of Cape Town* (2013) are three novels which interrogate the complicated history of Coloured identities and the influence that it has on the individual who is trying, in particular ways and moments in time - in terms of the grand narrative of South Africa - to grapple with these lineages. In order to do so, each text makes use of different forms of memory to retrieve sentiments of the past that they are recalling into the present, or rediscover repressed histories and truths that are only accessible through the medium of

memory. In this regard Rive, Wicomb and Davids negotiate memory in various ways that differ to previous national paradigms of "memory, mourning, reconciliation and recovery" (Samuelson 2007, 2) and instead are interested in memory a means of navigating the space of the personal in order to commit to processes of recovery, affirmation and discovery. Each text maintains an expectation of memory to hold and provide information that is no longer accessible or unable to be accessed through any other means. The investment in memory is founded on the assumption that beyond the notable "limitations of memory" (Duncan, Stevens and Sonn 2010) such as its "reliability and its accuracy as a record of past events, [as well as] the importance of analytical caution when utilising memory as a data source because of the nature of false memories, reconstituted memories, conflated memories, and so forth" (Duncan, Stevens and Sonn 2010, 16) it nevertheless becomes the case that "memory or memory traces and fragments remain powerful sources of information" (Duncan, Stevens and Sonn 16). This means that the reliability of memory while understandably tentative is still important especially in cases like the history of Coloured people that might have been erased or disregarded within larger archival projects, and memory is the only remaining source of information that exists.

The interests in the importance of memory as a record of the past is what influenced various kinds of redress methods in post-apartheid South Africa such as most notably the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well as the Apartheid Archive Project (2009)[6]. The Apartheid Archive Project focused on a means of redress that was aimed at allowing ordinary South Africans to "to tell and make public their stories…[and thus] it [was] hoped that the archive will serve to counter the tendency that has come to characterise post-1994 period of silencing people and their claims about, and versions of, their past" (Duncan, Stevens and Sonn 14). The Apartheid Archive Project thus represents an example of what the possibilities of grappling with the past or history through memory can initiate or prompt in terms of providing a space for marginalised or disregarded voices in the post-apartheid nation. This is because the project assumes that "past experiences…will ineluctably re-inscribe themselves in the present if they are not acknowledged and dealt with" (Duncan, Stevens and Sonn 14). Thus, there is a need to contend with the past in particular ways and what these scholars argue for, and which the Archival project intended to do, was provide a platform where these experiences could be highlighted, as Duncan et al note:

[6] Duncan, Stevens and Canham (2014, 283)

> The project argues for the importance of fully comprehending and re-engaging the past if we are able to understand the present and imagine the possibilities not only for the analysing and understanding the past and its resonance in the present, but also creates spaces for an imaginary in which we can construct new and collective identities, subjectivities and positionalities that may offer up alternatives to the highly binaried and racialised social relations that continue to characterise contemporary South African society (Duncan, Stevens and Sonn 14).

The expectation is that the past will always influence the present and the future, so it is important to engage with these experiences to better understand and develop personal subjectivities. In this regard the reliance on personal experiences inscribes a certain credibility on memory and remembering for these purposes. Duncan, Stevens and Sonn discuss how memories are often the only source of history that ordinary people have to their past and thus in order to acknowledge their experiences and allow them to make sense of their present moments it is important for these processes of remembering the past and engaging with these histories to occur. In this regard, the project is important for foregrounding the initial work that this thesis attempts to use in relation to the literary texts of Rive, Wicomb and Davids; arguing that each author engages with similar principles to this project in order to record and discuss familial and communal histories that exist only in forms of memory. By making this the main source of information in each text the respective authors are thus ascribing a weight onto the value of memory and remembering that is inextricably tied to marginal legacies and the way in which people are able to or expected to recount and engage with their pasts in order to better understand their present and influence their future.

Each author this thesis will discuss uses personal memories - either in the form of familial, communal or private memories, as the vehicle through which they can recall and re-enter their pasts. Rive, Wicomb and Davids thus use these principal forms of memory to initiate the process by which their protagonist or narrator can deconstruct the questions that plague their present attempts at making sense of their identity or their sense of displacement, which their past histories have subconsciously dictated. This is enabled by the nature of personal and collective memories, as described by Duncan et al:

> [Personal memories] are at times the only forms of data that can be accessed, as all other forms of records that could potentially be installed into an archive have been systematically erased. Personal memories also provide an opportunity to challenge totalising effects of official histories and many grand narratives that accompany them…personal memories must therefore at times be privileged as their functions are not only related to historical expansion and inclusivity, but also to providing alternative readings of histories themselves (Duncan, Stevens and Sonn 2010, 16).

Cultural and collective memories, which Rive's text negotiates, are an extension of personal memories, that enable or allow one to "preserve the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity" (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 130) through which meaning can be made and derived. Rive relies on both his personal memories - which his autobiographical sections enable - as well as the kinds of memories and experiences which arise from "a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behaviour and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation"(Assmann and Czaplicka, 126) in order to create the foundation for his narrative to set about recounting his childhood experiences and the memories which he cherishes that encompass his community and the people that he is insistent on preserving. Davids and Wicomb on the other hand commit to personal memories and familial histories as the main connection for each protagonist who is struggling to negotiate the influences of their past and the histories which contain secrets and unspoken truths that have filtered into their present life, and thus need to be engaged with in order to rarefy their future.

In this sense, not only does each author engage with the histories of the past but in order for these engagements to occur, each narrative is required to initiate a 'return' to the past - or the place which holds these memories - in particular ways. Memory is an active presence in each text that instigates various explorations which are inextricable and only possible through an engagement with the past that is conscious of these links, which relate to the nature of these processes of re-memory described by Divya Tolia-Kelly (2004) as being able to "mediate between now and then" (8). These forms of "re-memories"(8) that Tolia- Kelly refers to are "socially experienced" and thus are able to "become material and…shared amongst the [community]" which allow them to form the "social memory of the community, effectively linking [a] group through a sense of collective history." (Tolia-Kelly 8) which can be seen in the way Rive constructs and imparts meaning through his community and its inhabitants in Buckingham Palace. Each narrative thus engages with the ability of memory to deconstruct and configure the character's past, present and future in terms of their own self-identity and place in the world. In this regard the process of remembering and reconstructing the past despite varying degrees of success, becomes "inseparable from the motive to memorialise" (Rowlands 1993) - memorialise, in this sense, the individual and communal experiences that each novel outlines and which represents in some form a version of Coloured identity and experience. Rive, Wicomb and Davids negotiate the idea of remembering and memory

alongside the awareness of the slipperiness that memory can have when related to the marginal Coloured experience, and in this way the relationship to history that each text negotiates is reflective of the contemporary distance that each author adopts in relationship to their past. In this sense each protagonist is able to relate to their present experiences in ways which "contest, question and…refashion" (Gqola 2010, 20 their past and history and thus highlight the trouble of self-identity, and how history influences the ability of the individual throughout their daily negotiations of self.

Each author is also interested in how memory can be used as a means by which to memorialise or archive people and places, communities and experiences through narrative and in this sense each text engages with the questions of how to account for history and validify experiences that exist only in the ephemeral and have been subject to constant re-membering, transformation and alteration. Both cultural and familial memory that the authors engage with are thus understood to be both first-hand memories, in the case of Rive's, but also third generational memories that have been passed down over generations and thus are subject to a certain sense of removal that places those in the position of remembering with the task of recovering histories that they did not actively experience. Memory is thus loosely understood in each emergence in the texts both as "the way in which people construct a sense of past… [and] the memory of people who actually experienced a given event" (Confino 1997, 1386) as well as "the representation of the past and the making of it into a shared cultural knowledge by successive generations" (Confino 1386). In this regard memory enables both the engagement with the past that each novel is concerned with as well as the interest in preserving and commemorating experiences for the present by existing as both a "conscious and personal memory of past actions and events" and a "retroactive reconstruction of the past" (Kasabova 2008,332). For each narrative memory thus involves a retrieval of the past that can be reinscribed and recorded in the present through the process of remembering that each author is engaged in which allows "the past [to] belong to the history of the present" (Fassian 2008,316) and by extension enable the memorialisation for the future.

The central argument for the importance that memory has for each author especially on their insistence on the necessity to "recall, through reason the exemplary nature of the past in order to instruct the present" (Rowlands 1993, 143) is that when contending with histories of the past that have been undervalued in archival records memory becomes necessary in order to recuperate these histories. Each text thus flags the tensions that occur when one's history is entirely dependent on the indeterminate form of memory and thus for marginal Coloured

people one's history becomes inextricable from the project of re-memory. This highlights the necessity of memory for particular communities and the importance of accounting and recording these memories in whatever way possible in order to memorialise these discounted or underrepresented experience. Rive, Wicomb and Davids thus set about foregrounding what these engagements look like and how they enlighten forms and ways of being within marginal identities and their writing, which specifically highlights these experiences, uses memory and literature to validate the former and continue to preface marginal experiences and the importance of "handing down of meaning over many generations" (Hermann and Mitchell 2013, 261).

The 'return' to the past is thus significant in each author's work as it becomes a requirement for the narrator in order to negotiate a return to a history that they have in some way or another distanced themselves from. Additionally, each text is also concerned with negotiating a specific moment in the history of Coloured people that reflects the shifting relationship between themselves and their identity. Rive's text is centered around a well-known moment in Coloured history which is the forced removal of residents and the subsequent destruction of District Six (Farred 2000) that occurred during apartheid. As such his semi-autobiographical narrative reflects on the realities of living under the looming threat of apartheid and more specifically how the forced removals affected the community of Buckingham Palace, a communal set of cottages in District Six. In this sense Buckingham Palace functions as the organising community that aided, accepted and transformed the individuals who inhabited it and as such the sense of place that Rive has attached to this community, based on his personal investment to it, is what he is attempting to recall and reaffirm through his remembering processes and effectively memorialise. In this sense a lot of Rive's interest in *Buckingham Palace* aligns with the processes of Coloured identity construction during apartheid and how the people who held these identities negotiated their place in the world - with Rive's narrative highlighting the strong sense of communal and cultural memory and associations that bonded these people. As such through his text Rive is insistent on revisiting and 'returning' to these spaces that he, and those who can relate to the sense of community and culture that he outlines, longs for, remembers and is connected to.

Zoë Wicomb and C. A. Davids texts on the other hand emerge in the post-apartheid literary moment and as such their respective work is interested in dealing with the legacies and histories of the past, including the tensions that informed identity and experience, and how they influence the post-apartheid generation in the present. Wicomb and Davids thus share an

engagement in the way in which familial histories and personal memories, which often were not experienced first-hand, continue to affect the individuals who are left behind with only these memoires, stories and accounts of history which they become tasked, through the process of remembering, with interrogating.

In *October* the issue of self-identity that plagues Wicomb's protagonist Mercia is instinctive of the kind of explorative writing that Wicomb has previously engaged with in her earlier work, specifically with regard to "exploring the performative aspects of hybridized identity….[and] a pronounced self-reflexivity about links between politics, writing and notions of race and identity…[and how these formations] generates poses that can be provisionally celebrated, interrogated or shed"(Lewis 2001, 135). Wicomb has thus often related the espousal of identity, and particularly Coloured identity, along the lines of uncertainty and feelings of shame, and how these factors have "shaped Coloured subjectivities…. which is couched in a discussion of the biologist idea of 'miscegenation' and its association with shame" (Lewis 147). These ideas which for Wicomb informs the "talking about reinventing or refuting [of] Coloured identity" (Lewis 147) influenced a variety of her work, especially in *David's Story* (2000) and *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* (1987).

These texts, unlike *October,* were more orchestrated in terms of "order and chaos, history and textuality" (Driver 2010, 531) while reflecting an interest in the "fundamental unspeakability and the materiality of South Africa's history" (Graham 2008, 139). The immateriality of marginal Coloured histories and the repercussions thereof is thus not new to Wicomb[7] however where *October* emerges and aligns with this discourse is in Wicomb's continued investment and interest, as noted by Aaron Eastley (2017), in the experiences of "individuals [that are] both more settled and mature and yet still often deeply psychologically conflicted… [and although] strongly defined by their national and cultural origins - racial and cultural alienation still play a major role in [Wicomb's] narratives - diasporic/communal positionalities are repeatedly superseded in importance by personal, individual, idiosyncratic relationships and circumstances" (Eastley 2017, 158).

October is thus an amalgamation of these previous issues that Wicomb has discussed and the problem of identity that plagues Mercia can be read as being a symptom of her displacement from South Africa as well as the unstable notion of Coloured identity that haunts Mercia's sense of self. In this sense *October* is both an extension of these interests, but simultaneously a revaluation of the idea of history and its remnants in the present. Analysing *October*

[7] See Sue Kossew (2010)

through the lens of memory thus refocuses the historical and political thematic concerns that have occupied Wicomb's previous work and instead foreground the processes of familial memory and sense of space that is being negotiated and used as a tool to allow Mercia to re-evaluate her personal displacement from the family who she had 'left' with her inevitable return. Davids similarly interrogates the themes of family history and its impact on the present from the position of a displaced subject, Zara, who flees South Africa in an attempt to escape, like Mercia, the history of her family and the legacies of the past. Both texts thus grapple with the distended third generation marginal subject who, for the purposes of uncovering the secrets and buried truths that structured their familial histories, have to 'return' to their displaced pasts - either physically or psychologically, in order to find the sense of clarity that might illuminate their own position of detachment in terms of their self-identity. The distance that each narrative returns to is thus indicative of each respective author and their previous engagements which emerge in the narratives; for Rive this distance is enveloped in his previous insistence on "non-racialism" (Farred 16) that fuelled much of his previous writing[8] and his initial distance pre - *Buckingham Palace* which was concerned with "transcending Colouredness and achieving incorporative blackness" (Farred 2000, 14-15). His return to his past is thus a return to his position as a Coloured subject and his renewed interest and investment in these communities (Farred 30-31).

For Mercia and Zara - Wicomb and Davids' protagonists - these 'returns' follow their initial displacement from South Africa, which began as a way for each of them, like Rive, to distance themselves from the history and memories that occupied the space of 'home' in South Africa and more specifically Cape Town. In this regard, their respective transnationalism - that is their action of leaving or 'fleeing' South Africa, was born instinctively out of the desire to seek reprieve from these pasts and histories that embody these spaces. However, like Rive, what Mercia and Zara come to realise is that in order for the methods of self-discovery to be effective, and for them to be able to make sense of the way of being and their position as distended marginalised subjects, a return to the pasts that have been haunting them is necessary in order to allow these developments to occur. The three respective authors thus enable an interrogation into the history of Coloured ways of being, living and making sense of their selves that tracks the transformation from the era of apartheid (which Rive's text reflects on) to the post-apartheid moment of redress, and the

[8] See Richard Rive (Writing Black 1981) and Grant Farred (2000)

histories and memories that trickle throughout the present which Mercia and Davids' protagonists are tasked with handling.

Chapter 1: Communal memorialisation in Richard Rive's *Buckingham Palace: District Six*

Richard' Rive's *Buckingham Palace: District Six* is centered around the community of District Six that Rive, through his semi-autobiographical part fictional writing, sets about recounting the stories he remembers of the 'infamous' inhabitants of his neighbourhood cottages known as 'Buckingham Palace' (Rive 1986, 1). Recalling the tales he remembers as a child as he reminisces on the neighbourhood and the people who occupied these spaces leading up to the forced removals of the residents and the destruction of District Six (Farred 2000, 41) under the apartheid legislation's Group Areas Act that was put into place that "declared [that] District Six [was] a group set aside for white occupation"(Rive 126), the narrative sets about constructing a legacy of sorts, of the characters that Rive's text memorialises. Through his memories Rive is thus determined to create an archive of these stories that speak to a people and place that for Rive has been disregard, and through the memories he recalls his writing becomes a means to memorialise these experiences and thereby create a record for the kinds of attachments and connections that these spaces invoke.

The nature of autobiography

The text is separated by Rive's autobiographical sections which are interspersed throughout the narrative separating the fictional from Rive's personal memories. Within these sections Rive details the experiences of the community of District Six including the colourful characters and places that have had a lasting impression not only on the neighbourhood of Buckingham Palace but on Rive himself as well. The autobiographical sections entitled 'Part One: Morning 1955', 'Part Two: Afternoon 1960' and 'Part Three: Night 1970' (Rive 2) span a period of several decades from Rive's life in the District, his displacement and ultimate return following its destruction. The feelings and explorations that Rive invests within these sections allow Rive to present a personal reflection of experience that is tied to his awareness of the historical moment that he is recounting and the reality of the affects that these events had on the people who experienced these destructions. His autobiographical voice thus becomes a vehicle which grounds these real-life experiences within the narrative in order to attribute a sense of realism and validity to the conviction with which Rive sets about remembering these spaces. His autobiographical narrative thus provides an additional layer of sentimentality that is inscribed in the narrative and is testament to the allowance that is made

by this genre, as outlined by Sam Raditlhalo (2012) who notes how the autobiography enables "[a] self-presentation of a character against the backdrop of a larger canvas of the challenges of growing up and maturing in a (then) divided country and society" (88). Raditlhalo goes on to describe how autobiography can account for various explorations of the subject in terms of "a life being lived and reflected upon" (88-89) which for someone in Rive's position becomes a key aspect that he is actively returning to and reminiscing on for the purposes of memorialisation. In this way Rive's writing is testament to the tradition of autobiography and more specifically black autobiographical writing that has adopted the medium of memory and "life-writing" (Raditlhalo 88-89) in order to provide a "justification of a life whose narrativity becomes exceptional, whose contours and parameters the autobiographical act seeks to recount as justifiable and justified… [and to] bear testimony to the imagined, constructed self-fashioned out of the act of writing" (88-89).

Rive's personal accounts assert a credibility to the experiences he outlines and, in some sense, justify, for the purposes of inscribing a sense of validity to the culture and people he explores, these experiences that he remembers. In this way Rive evokes the history attached to District Six as a symbol of the violence of apartheid and the effect it had on marginalised oppressed communities. But beyond these intentions, Rive is also interested in recuperating a past sense of community which for Rive is encapsulated within the daily coming and goings of Buckingham Palace and the importance it held for him as a boy and for those who share these sentiments. Grant Farred (2000) notes how Rive's intentional writing in *Buckingham Palace* reflects an awareness of his own subjectivity in relation to his environment and the importance these identities held within the time, noting how the text is instinctively "refracted through a coloured (and communal) lens…[and as such][his] writing explore[s] the pain, pathos, courage, pleasure, humour, and the resilience of District Six, the community he viewed as his primary home" (30-31). Through his memories Rive is able to recall the relationships that constructed his own sense of belonging within these spaces and which orientated for many their sense of home and belonging that the space of Buckingham Palace became. By combining his personal accounts of these spaces with the fictional narrative of characters who represent common characters and figures that were likely to exist within these communities - or who resemble versions of experiences that are able to be related to, represented in the text by Mary, Zoot, Pretty Boy and the rest of the untoward inhabitants of the series of cottages(Rive 1-2) - Rive constructs his own archival project that is invested in detailing and highlighting the experiences that affected these ordinary citizens of the

community. Tracking their lives leading up to their subsequent displacement from these places at the hands of the apartheid government thus serves to emphasise the lasting effects that these events had on the community at the time. It also outlines the ripple effect that persisted which influenced the lives of those who remember and had to live with the consequences that these events had. In this way he not only accounts for the unvoiced experiences of the displaced District Six community but more importantly, by foregrounding the subjective experiences of the ordinary marginalised person and using his own experience as a point of reference that contextualises the events as they unfolding, Rive simultaneously highlights the real life repercussions of District Six's destruction as well as amplifies and reaffirms the voices and experiences of those that were lost within the context of history. Rive's narrative thus becomes an alternative archive that is enabled by his personal investment in the place he recounts and the memories and forms of recollection that he uses to convey these stories. The expression of memories through fiction thus becomes the organising principle in the text, as Rive fictionalises the memories he recalls and the history he is writing about and against. This allows Rive to privilege the stories he writes about, both within the larger domain of historical experience but also to personalise his narrative so that it relates and carries a sentimentality and sense of kinship for the marginal experiences he details.

Buckingham Palace is organised around the plot of the forced removals of District Six, which was "home to the Coloured community for many decades" (Farred 2000, 41) and became, "in the wake of its deracination…as a metonym for the Coloured community" (Farred 41) and unlike Rive's earlier work his focus in this narrative it is not overtly concerned with the issue of anti-apartheid sentiments nor does it serve these purposes. Rive had previously, in work such as *Writing Black* (1981) expressed what he called a strong "non-racialism" (Rive 1981, preface) in order to focus his attention "on [his] experiences as a South African who is still voteless because of the colour of [his] skin" (Rive 1981, preface). As such, in these initial writing sentiments he was hesitant of and partially against his writing being "tied to ethnic labels" (1981, preface). This fervour and what Grant Farred (2000) calls his "commitment to non-racialism" (Farred 14-15) and his "preoccup[ation] with transcending Colouredness and achieving incorporative blackness" (Farred 14-15) is an attitude towards identity that Rive seems to have reimagined in *Buckingham Palace*. The reason for this shift in attitude, wherein which he chooses to foreground a predominantly Coloured community in his text is a

reaction to both his commitment to his intellectual ideal of non-racialism and his own personal politics and position in relation to the fiction he chose to write, as Farred notes:

> Rive was fervently opposed to any notion of race or racism, but his work is attuned to the unique resonances of 'black' as a political moniker….it is precisely because Rive subscribed to this complex and uniquely qualified notion of 'blackness' that he, the Coloured author who refused to acknowledge the apartheid state's racial designation, found himself in such an ideological bind in his fiction. Any attempt to 'overcome' Colouredness and write himself into 'blackness' is an implicit acknowledgment of his status as [a] Coloured subject (Farred, 16).

If this 'ideological bind' is the case then we can take his investment in the stories of *Buckingham Palace* as his re-entry or renewal of interest in these communities and experiences that he is so familiar with, and thus is intent on highlighting. Perhaps the reason for Rive's shift in attitude in *Buckingham Palace* is as an attempt to grapple with the "epistemological bind" (Farred 29) he found himself in, at odds with the conflicting needs he foresaw as an author "who simply wanted to be recognised as an intellectual" (Farred 29) but who "wrote primarily of the 'Coloured' condition" (Farred 29). *Buckingham Palace* thus offers an alternative understanding of Rive's previous interest in "trying to overcome and negate the very identity that afforded him public prominence" (Farred 29) and instead of Colouredness being a "political condition he sought to transcend" (29) what occurs in *Buckingham Palace* is an investment and return to Rive's persistent engagement with these identities. In this way Rive's renewed interest in this community, beyond his previous attempts to distance himself from the "appellation 'Coloured'" (Farred 29) reaffirms that "his act of disclaiming, invalidating, and opposing apartheid terminology did not turn upon the rejection of the Coloured community. He wrote not only from a sense of familiarity with this constituency, but out of a political and artistic commitment to the Coloured experience" (Farred 29). These sentiments translate into the narrative of *Buckingham Palace* through both the fictional descriptions of the characters in the community coupled with Rive's personal biographical sections. It can thus be argued that the overall theme of the text is the investment that the narrative has in recounting these marginal subjective experiences and the weight that the memories Rive recalls can hold not only for him personally but for the community and experiences which they represent. These efforts for Rive and for the narrative are enabled by the processes of remembering and memorialisation that frames the narrative.

Rive begins his narrative by describing the community and experiences that he is interested in highlighting, invoking in his narrative a sentimentality that is heavily dependent on his ability

to recall and translate his memories into fiction. In order to do so Rive often describes in depth the sense of place that he recalls, including the sounds, scents and feelings that he remembers of these moments which in turn create a vivid image of the kind of vibrancy and sense of community, with its "ripe, warm days…. dead bricks and split treestumps and wind-tossed sand" which all serve as an attempt to reinventing these spaces in his writing. Furthermore, Rive's continued use of "I remember" (Rive 1986, 1) within these sections only reaffirm the sense of intimacy that he is attempting to portray in these narratives. From the initial opening paragraph of Rive's text he signals a reliance on memory that persists throughout the narrative indicating the intricate link between Rive's memories of place and his experiences tied up with his narrative that is about to unfold. This correlative relationship highlights the way in which for Rive, his memories and the insistence of 'remembering' becomes vital for the project of encapsulating the people and places his narrative is concerned with - particularly those who occupied his childhood experiences and have since prevailed in his memories. Beyond merely detailing the "generalised custom-and-manners descriptions of Coloured life" (Wicomb 2001, 118) Rive's use of "I remember" (Rive 1) in his personal sections displays an active process of remembering that he is engaged in. These personal sections are meant to invoke both the personal sense of loss that Rive (as an attached member of this community) feels as well as beyond his own personal experiences, recreate the overall sense of place and people that he is remembering. These are the stories which he recalls, the tales of which have always occupied his fantasises and represented for him both as a child and as a writer, a reflection of his experiences of this moment in time, suspended in the stories of these characters.

The impression these memories left on him are encapsulated by how Rive introduces the main characters of his narrative, as he writes: "in the evenings we would stand in hushed doorways and tell stories about the legendary figures of District Six, Zoot, Pretty-Boy and Mary" (Rive, 4). These 'legendary' figures are an amalgamation, in a way, of the sense of place and feeling that Rive is trying to recall and preserve through his process of remembering, of which his narrative becomes an extension of. The narrative becomes a means by which Rive can reconstruct, from his memories, a sense of place and belonging that he remembers of his experience and through so doing reaffirm the value and significance that the community he recalls has within the history of South Africa but more importantly for those who relate to and remember, as Rive does, what these spaces represented. In this sense Rive's work is an instinctive act of "re-memory" (Farred 42) that is "the 're-membering', the

putting back together, the public reassembling of District Six. From shards of memory, fragments of loss, insistent nostalgia and historic opposition, District Six is given a renewed and politically charged public life by (as well as in and through) Rive's fiction" (42-43). These sentiments are not only expressed through the fictional narrative that occupies his text but can also be felt through the moments when Rive's autobiographical voice engages in these acts of remembering, which signals the effort being made in the interest of recollection or resemblance, as he details experiences that would occupy his days such as the "Friday evenings [which] were warm and relaxed [and] [w]e felt mellow because it was the week-end and payday"(Rive 2) or "Saturdays and Sundays [which] were different"(Rive 2). These interests service a process of nostalgic recollection where Rive is using his memories to invoke and reassert the value these experiences had on him, as he goes on to write:

> Saturday mornings were brisk, for some men must work and all women must shop. And Hanover Street was crowded and the bazaars and fish-market did a roaring trade…And in the evenings we would stand in hushed doorways…. or show off about our prowess with the local girls, or just talk about the ways of white folks…The young men went to parties or the bioscope, and the older men played dominoes or klawerjas on the stoeps… The older housewives came out with their wooden benches and sat apart from the men on the stoep and gossiped the mild evening away. And the apricot warmth of a summer Sunday morning when almost everyone slept late and mouldy cocks kept in postage stamps, asphalt yards crowed their confined calls to wake no-one in particular (Rive, 3-5).

In this way Rives narrative intentionally steers away from being overtly political, as his other novels have tended to be interested in (February 1981, 163) and instead *Buckingham Palace* represents an expression of a community that was occupied by "nurturing social practices"(Farred 43) such as the games that were played, or the activities that occupied the days of the residents, all of which according to Farred "signify a Coloured cultural continuity" (Farred 43). These moments not only signal a relationship between Rive and his community, but it is also an example of the set of practices and ways of being that spark recognition for those who relate to these experiences in a way which perpetuates and reinscribes these practices as a means of describing and understanding forms of Coloured identity construction. Rive's intention with taking care to describe these trivial, but deliberate forms of cultural practices thus highlight aspects of a shared collective experience that he reinscribes through memory, and in this way reaffirms the way in which Coloured people have, as Farred notes "through their various cultural practices, made themselves into a community" (43). These practices are testament to one aspect of the constant transforming and adaptive culture that Adhikari and Erasmus have flagged, and which is perpetuated in

Rive's writing, showing how in Rive's narrative navigating Coloured identity is an aspect that is "made through and sustained by culture. From one generation to another (from 'older housewives' to 'demure' young women) a whole range of traditions is forged and, more important, passed on. In their alienation from both black and white communities, their ingenious ways of perpetuating Coloured identity produces an enduring sense of self" (Farred 43).

Not only are these practices that Rive recalls a symbol of the way in which Coloured people have come to negotiate their identity, but through re-establishing these cultural practices or experiences Rive's narrative operates with this duality of understanding that is both engaged in affirming these practices through memory, and through writing them into a record - which his narrative becomes - further re-establishes the importance of these ways of being beyond the context of his memory from which they are being recalled. Thus, not only are the practices repeated and passed through generations - thereby ensuring a continual creation and transformation of culture - but the act of remembering and re-ascribing the experiences in the spaces of literature further validates these acts for the larger record or memorialisation of Coloured experiences. The latter is testament to the role that remembering, or memory allows which is to "create a space in which memories of the past could be inscribed [as well as] … for recovering and affirming ways of being and doing that have been silenced, distorted, and/or eroded" (Duncan, Stevens and Sonn 2010, 15-22). The processes of memory that Rive's narrative engages in is founded on "a collective and relational project that is central to cultural renewal and collective remembering [which] provides the resources for belonging and social identity construction[9]" (Duncan, Stevens and Sonn 21-22) and in this way Rive's narrative, through the interest in the experience of ordinary people and the forms of identity construction that they are engaged in, creates a sense of cultural renewal and collective remembering focalised around the community of District Six.

The use of the District in Rive's novel is an intentional contextual element because it represents a community that is "inscribed in Western Cape public memory as a loaded political symbol" (February 41) due to its importance that it had as a "home to the Coloured community for many decades" (February 41). Rive's novel is thus acutely aware of the weight the community has in terms of its representation within the Coloured community and one could argue this is precisely why Rive takes care to represent individual experiences within the text. These methods become a way of highlighting not only the importance of the

[9] Apfelbaum (2000) referenced in Duncan, Stevens and Sonn (2010, 21-22)

place itself within his memory but the individuals behind the community that he intends to memorialise. The so-called “legendary figures of District Six” (Rive 1986, 4) embodied by “Zoot, Pretty-Boy and Mary” (Rive 4) as well as the rest of the residents of the cottages Rive foregrounds, becomes the means through which Rive can reinforce the sentiments of community, perseverance and harmonious living that his autobiographical sections introduce. The characters he animates in his narrative, each of whom he dedicates a separate chapter in the text (wherein which he details the circumstances that led them to the District) focalises the narrative in such a way that the lived experience of each character is given a space to exist within a portion of narrative, and by extension, a part of the history that Rive is reasserting. *Buckingham Palace: District Six* thus becomes an extension of the apartheid archival project meant to redress and give voice to personal experiences but done so through the medium of literature. This shift allows the narrative to become an active form of memorialisation that is organised around both Rive’s personal remembering of his childhood growing up in the district as well as the fictional narrative that follows the lives of the residents - each in their own way highlighting an experience that can be related to, empathised with and most importantly made tangible.

The wilful characters of Buckingham Palace

Beyond Rive’s autobiographical engagements much of the narrative is heavily character driven, as Rive’s personal narration serves as an extension of the experiences of the characters who occupied the district. His autobiographical voice thus contextualises the narrative while providing a sense of reality that grounds the text - as often his personal sections will describe how the events that affect the residents manifested in the real world that Rive was reacting against. In this way the dual perspective constantly reaffirms the history which his characters are living in and are retrospectively symbolic of. For these reasons, each character that Rive describes becomes a symbol of an enduring experience that was representative of the community and their tenacity, or skill is likewise linked to the allowance that the community made for these identities to flourish. Rive attempts through his ‘legendary’ characters to affirm the notion of the perseverance of this ‘all-encompassing welcoming’ place that for Rive, and many who share the recognition of place, is represented by the district. These are the sentiments Rive leans into when recounting his character’s stories and they are meant to be a symbol for the kinds of people and experiences that might

be associated with the community of District Six. The sense of community that Rive creates through the nostalgia of place that is founded on the "memory of people- like himself- who actually experienced a given event"(Confino 1997, 1386) and the purposeful, non-judgemental fictional narratives operates under the assumption of the collective memories that these experiences dictate and which allow for "the representation of the past and the making of it into a shared cultural knowledge by successive generations"(Confino 1997, 1386). Rive thus recall his personal memories in order to invoke these feelings of mutual understanding but also to reinscribe and preserve the cultural memories associated with District Six that represent "the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity" (Confino 130).

Rive's community becomes a haven for untoward individuals like Mary, the 'Madam' of the "House of Pleasure" (Rive 1) or Zoot, the "Jive King of District Six"(Rive 17) - both of whom have their own tarnished histories that resulted in their arrival in District Six but who nevertheless, amongst this community, managed to create a space for themselves that reflected the resilience and pliability of these spaces and the people who occupied them. As such despite Mary's sexually promiscuous escapades which exiled her from her home in Boland (Rive 8-9) or Zoot's own criminal exploits which resulted in various visits to state penitentiaries across South Africa (Rive 15-16) both, upon arriving in the District, find a community of their own. Furthermore, they also become prominent figures in the cottages of Buckingham Palace, and likewise notorious figures of the community - Mary as the one and only "Mary and Madam of the Casbah" (Rive 10) who was well known throughout the community for both her business but also her willingness to help others (Rive 71) and Zoot, although sly and sharp tongued is commended as a loyal friend and member of his community (Rive 180, 189). Both represent a resilient attitude towards their less than favourable circumstances as well as an ability to create friendships that are founded on acceptance and understanding – traits which come to represent most of the inhabitants of the community. It is for these reasons that Rive assigns these characters the title of 'legends' in order to stress that it was not who they were that made them valuable or well respected in the community but what they came to represent. In this regard Mary, Zoot, Pretty-Boy, The Girls, The Boys and The Jungle Boys (Rive 1-10-11, 22, 27) - all of whom have equally untoward pasts or quirks that designated them as distinct characters of the community - are able to exist within Rive's Buckingham Palace among one another in a convoluted sense of harmony. The ability of the residents to find equal ground with one another - to aid each other

in their trivial exploits around the District - is premised on the assumption of the District that Rive asserts and what Farred calls a “triumph of social coherence” (Farred 430). Thus, the descriptions of the characters daily interactions highlight and solidify their presence and humanity that is inscribed through their faults and imperfections. They are given, through the space of the community, an environment to exist in which withholds judgement and instead affords these inscrutable characters the opportunity to make a home for themselves, in whatever way they see fit, within the allowances of the district. For these reasons, instead of the narrative being preoccupied with the looming destruction of the district Rive details the daily trivial experiences of these ordinary people; from the stress of the yearly Church Bazaar (Rive 62) or the rudimentary tensions between tenants (61-63), the romance between Zoot and Jennifer (48-49), the exploration of the budding romance between Pretty-Boy and Moena Leilik (91-93) or even the reaction of the residents to an imposing presence of the white man Mr Wilkens (37). These seemingly insignificant interactions that Rive details throughout the text becomes a way of insisting on the importance of the subjective, shared experiences while still being cognisant of what these experiences represent. Not only is Rive recalling the people and places which he remembers but he is also attempting to invoke, through these caricatures of people, the sentiments that recall a shared senses of place and space that occupied the actual community of District Six and the real lives that were subsequently affected by the forced removals.

It is significant that the reality of apartheid, which emerges through the arrival of Inspector Engelbrecht - an agent of the apartheid government (154-155), occurs towards the end of the narrative after Rive has firmly constructed a harmonious, well-functioning sense of place and community through his fictional narrative. In this way the threat of the removals signals a violent, intruding force on the kinship that the community represents and by highlighting not the destruction itself but rather how it affected the residents personally, emotionally and socially (Rive 186-192) Rive signals his own overall investment in personal stories beyond the political narrative. This is further emphasised by the fact that the threat of apartheid and the ongoing repercussions it has for the experiences of the characters, while a recurrent presence, is not the predominant narrative that unfolds. Until the displacement of the residents occurs in the text the reality of apartheid only exists as an overarching, but predominantly dormant presence throughout the text. The characters themselves only become aware of or purposely alert us to these unspoken realities in subtle ways throughout the text and often through the interactions with the few white characters like Mr Wilkens and then

later Inspector Engelbrecht (Rive 132). Rive only prefaces the effects of apartheid in the lives of the characters in two instances in the text ; the first is through the forced removals that inevitably occur towards the end and the second occurs early on in the narrative when some of the residents go to a 'Whites Only' beach (Rive 95) and they are confronted with how their own existence within the community of District Six affords them certain ignorance with regard to the reality of their marginalisation - a fact that Zoot comments on after they are asked to leave the beach, as Rive writes:

> You know, it's a funny thing, but it's only in the District that I feel safe. District Six is like an island… in a sea of apartheid. The whole of District Six is one big apartheid, so we can't see it. We only see it when the white man comes and forces it on us, when he makes us see it…or when we leave the District…Then we again see apartheid. I know the District is dirty and poor and a slum, as the newspapers always remind us, but it's our own and we have never put up notices which say "Slegs blankes" or "Whites Only". They put up notices. When the white man comes into the District with his notices he is a stranger, and when we come out of the District he makes us realise that we are strangers (Rive 96).

This passage encompasses the way Rive organises the narrative in relation to the idea of race, marginalisation and community. The community of District Six in the text operates as its own cohesive system wherein which certain understandings of and for the reality of experience are made - such as the mutual sense of 'lack' that each resident is to some degree a victim of - this emerges through the display Mary's brothel that serves as the only means of employment and income for people like Butterfly or Fiela Vreters who regard working for Mary as a form of sanctuary (Rive 10) or the fact that Zoot and Pretty-Boy regularly scam their way out of paying rent to their landlord Katzen (Rive 19) or that most of what they own was either stolen or bartered for (Rive 31). These indistinct moments layout the financial and social state of the residents yet these moments are purposely not dwelled on by Rive nor do they dictate or define the characters; instead Rive inscribes these traits as quirks the characters possess, and which adds to the charm of the community of Buckingham Palace. Furthermore, like Zoot describes, race is not something that is overtly prefaced nor is the Colouredness of the characters treated as defining, or rather limiting traits and is only ever flagged when the characters are confronted, often by white people, with their 'otherness' – such as the derogatory comment made by the white man Mr Wilkens, who describes how he "loves *you people* and your hospitable ways" (Rive 40, emphasis mine). All of these are examples of the intentional writing that Rive is engaged in as he steers his narrative away from the obvious prevailing threat of apartheid and instead focuses on the daily experiences and interests of the victims of these 'grand' narratives and thereby, through his own processes of remembering, is

able to give a voice to these experiences. I argue that the purposes of highlighting these stories is to ensure that these experiences that are encompassed within the broader history of the destruction of District Six do not disappear against this backdrop of history and instead by making the people the subject of these events, rather than the event itself, Rive implicitly rewrites the personal experience back into the narrative. These engagements are thus only possible because of the memories Rive holds as well as the collective memories and associations that are held within District Six – all of which are premised on a set of "shared communication about the meaning of the past that are anchored in the life-worlds of individuals who partake in the communal life of the respective collective" (Kansteiner 2002, 188-189) which the community of Buckingham Palace embodies.

In recalling these sentiments of place through memory Rive's narrative emphasises the ability of these memories to carry the weight of these experiences and become narrativised for particular purposes. This is the overall motive, one could argue, behind the insistence on the stories that Rive inserts in his text, and which is cemented by the end of the narrative when all the residents have been forced to leave the community of Buckingham Palace. Rive's personal sections reflects these feelings of despair that plagued the actual residents at the time who were forced out of the homes as he writes:

> Everyone in the District died a little when it was pulled down…as I stood there, I was overwhelmed by the enormity of it all. And I asked aloud… 'How will they answer on that day when they have to account for this? For the past will not be forgotten.' The south-easter swept the voices of accusation and recrimination into all the houses into which the people had been driven…And the people on the bleak Flats whisper and remember what greed and intolerance have done to them. And they tell their children and their children's children because it must never be forgotten (Rive 126-128).

These sentiments likewise echo through his fictional narrative of the characters who have become symbols for the people and experiences that were displaced. Zoot encapsulates the totality of the repercussions the removals had for the residents, the community and by extension the ways of being and living that would continue to be influenced by and affect these marginal identities, as Rive writes:

> "This is not the end. It is only the beginning. The greedy people who have taken away our homes will soon have to answer to us. they thought that they had reduced us to [sub-humans[10]] but they lied. We are living proof that they lied. We must always tell our story to our children and to our children's children…we must tell them how they split us apart and scattered us in many directions like the sparks form this fire. They are trying to destroy our present but they will have to deal with our future. We must never forget" (198).

[10] (Rive 151)

These words echo the beginning of the narrative and Rive's insistence to 'remember'- to reassert, retell and pass down from generation to generation, as Rive is doing through his narrative (and which memory allows) and through these processes remember and re-establish these experiences for the purposes of preserving and memorialising what these memories represent. Rive's insistence to remember is an insistence on the need to record and narrativise and in this sense continue to create "through the forging and taking ownership of collective memories, social categories"(Duncan, Stevens and Sonn 2010, 21), the forms of being that represent marginal Coloured identities who " redefine themselves, and in the context of reclaiming previously elided collective memories, opens up the possibilities for re-imagining the nature of the individual and social groups available and subject positions for the present and future" (Duncan, Stevens and Sonn 2010, 21-22).

Rive's narrative - both his personal autobiographical sections and his later character driven inserts, reflect the kinds of cultural productions, forms of self-identification and relational community practices that for Rive linked the residents of the District and it is this sense of place and shared community that is necessary to remember, and what Rive's narrative intends to do. Rive's processes of engaging with memory allows both the significance of the District to be established but more importantly the community and Coloured experience that his characters represent, all of which symbolise that which Rive's is longing for. Thus while his narrative may at times be romanticised - elsewhere he has previously referred to the "slum" reality of the District (Rive 1990,112) - for the specific interests of the narrative I argue that his intentional remembering of the "sense of belonging"(Rive 1990, 112) and communal harmony that his narrative describes, *Buckingham Palace* reassesses these ideas in order to explore different ways of being and living that is specific to the community and people he is intent on memorialising.

Rive's remembering of District Six and his insistence to 'never forget' the people and experiences that these spaces represent thus practices what Andras Keszei (2011) describes, of "the past [that] is made into history- constructed into analysis, narrated into interpretation, fashioned into stories, made serviceable as assumptions and ideas, which are then released into public circulation[11]". Rive's narrative functions both as an archive of history that portrays the unrepresented voices of the community of District Six as well as an alternative form of relating to these histories that are unearthed and recounted through memory and the processes of remembering. Using these tactics in his narrative Rive is able to invoke a shared

[11] Eley (2011, 555) referenced in Keszei (2017, 804)

sense of place that is attached to the memories he recalls, and, in this way, he can reinscribe the value that these histories had for the people who remember and relate to them, as well as create a record for these forgotten experiences within the archive of literature.

Chapter 2: Burdens of the Past and Lineages thereafter in Zoë Wicomb's *October* and C.A Davids' *The Blacks of Cape Town*

If Rive's interest lies in the preservation of communal, or collective memories in order to re-affirm the experiences that they hold through literature, then Zoë Wicomb and C.A Davids respective texts steer more introspectively into the processes of memory and how it operates within the space of the family.

Forms of memory

Familial memory, as outlined by Astri Erll (2011), is a kind of "intergenerational …and collective memory" (306) which is constituted through:

> An ongoing social interaction and communication between children, parents and grandparents. Through the repeated recall of the family's past- usually via oral stories... - those who did not experience past events first-hand can also, share in the memory. In this way an exchange of 'living memory' takes place between eyewitnesses and descendants (Erll 306).

The ongoing communication that spans generations and is able to allow future descendants, such as Mercia, Wicomb's protagonist, and Zara, David's protagonist, access to information that they otherwise would not normally have - due to their absence from these moments of history - thus becomes a vehicle for memory and allows it to provide missing information or clarity on matters of the family. In this sense then familial memory is especially important as it serves, in many instances, as the only source of information or an ephemeral 'record' of events in time that the individual, attempting to access these spaces, can reach. Both Wicomb and Davids' protagonists engage in a recuperation of familial memories that is enabled by a reliance on various forms of memory, such as histories, stories, letters, photographs and remembered experiences to "connect to the past and present events, and [thereby] represent new forms remembering" (Rajevic 2019, 731). These 'new' forms of memory are thus highly predicated on the act of reminiscence, which describes the process of "the recollection of past events or situations[12]". Vansina (1985) goes on to note how reminiscences are "bits of life history" and as such "essential to the notion of personality and identity… [as they] tend to project a consistent image of the narrator, and in many cases a justification of history of [their] life" (Vansina 1985, 8).

[12] Vansina (1985, 8)

Along with the structure and working of reminiscence to allow for the recuperation of history and the past through memory, it is nevertheless important to note that memories, as Vansina alludes too, are in and of themselves not the most fundamental or concrete source of data, as often in the process of memory work "events and situations are forgotten when irrelevant or inconvenient. Others are retained and reordered, reshaped or correctly remembered according to the part they play in the creation of this mental self-portrait" (Vansina 1985, 8). The process of remembering thus complicates the reliance that can be put on memories since they are subject to bias, confusion or fallacy and as such at any one point it cannot be certain that a memory will provide "a faithful reproduction of the past" (Erll 207). This problem of memory alerts us to the constant ephemeral sense of the past that we are working with when engaging with memory in these ways and is thus important to flag in order to understand how it influences that way the individuals navigate through these memories and to what extent we can fully rely on the act of remembering in the aid of recovering histories. The concept of dealing with a legacy of memory that has been inherited as opposed to subjectively experienced is thus one extension of the memory work that Davids and Wicomb are operating within, specifically relating to the realm of 'postmemory' described by Marianne Hirsch (2008) as "a structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience. It is a consequence of traumatic recall but…at [a] generational remove" (106). By postmemory Hirsch describes the relationship to inherited memories that were not experienced first-hand, and in this way relate to much of the memory work that Zara is engaged in but also the ways in which both Zara and Mercia unknowingly confront the traumatic legacy that their father's left behind.

As third generation recipients of these generational 'traumas' removed from the first-hand experience of these histories they are tasked with the project of sorting through these threads, which involve as Hirsch notes, "experiences that they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images and behaviours among which they grew up" (106). Although most of the memories Zara. and to an extent Mercia, are dealing with were not experienced first-hand these memories nevertheless, as Hirsch notes, "were transmitted…so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right." (106-107). In this sense "inherited memories [or] narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness" (Hirsch 106-107) that occurred in both Zara and Mercia's pasts create effects that "continue into the present" (106-17) becoming "the experience of postmemory and the process of its generation" (106-107). Furthermore, the elusiveness of memory and the past also suggests the inherent

repercussion of marginal histories such as that of Coloured people who have been "written out of the narrative" (Adhikari 2009, 1-2) of South African history and yet in lieu of an archive, have been left to exist solely within the inconsistent, unstable realm of memories and only accessible in instances where the interests to recover forgotten histories arise. The problem of memory is thus a pertinent one as it emphasises the importance of the recovery process that each protagonist will engage in wherein the issue of memory and remembrance is founded on what Erll refers to as being "a reconstruction of the past achieved with data borrowed from the present…and prepared furthermore, by reconstruction of earlier periods wherein past images have already been altered[13]"(2011, 307).

Understanding the slipperiness that familial memories can have is important for highlighting the inherent complications in recalling moments from the past when memory is the sole access to this information. Family memories are not unencumbered by these complications as in many case stories of the past "may ring 'true', but they are never an accurate 're-presentation' of past events. Family memories amalgamate what are taken to be elements from the past with perspectives, knowledge, and desires of the present" (Erll 307). These processes are then further entangled when applied to a history and memory that is implicitly elusive such as what we know and this thesis has outlined, of the past of marginal Coloured people. Compounding the ambiguity of memory with the ambiguity of the history of Coloured people provides a complex interrogation of these two spaces and the information that we might be able to gain from either. Essentially, when looking at the history of Coloured individuals through the lens of memory, the question becomes how to negotiate the reality of these experiences which are only present or existing and accessible through memory, while still being cognisant of the fact that memories are not in every instance reliable. Nor are those who remember, as in the case of Wicomb's and Davids' respective protagonists, entirely void of their own biases or implicit alterations that they invoke through their remembering processes. These ideas, I argue, are precisely the complications which enshroud the history of Coloured people and influence the act of relating to these experiences. Both Zara and Mercia are faced with the history of their family that requires certain methods of excavation, of which their own memories and process of remembering is the only solution for. Zara and Mercia are thus intimately involved in remembering moments in their familial history that are simultaneously tied up in the complicated traumas that

[13] Halbwachs (1980, 68) as referenced in Erll (2011, 307)

plagued Coloured marginalised subjects during apartheid and how they negotiated these feelings of discomfort and identity.

In this regard both Wicomb and Davids are interested in the lineage of the Coloured experience which entails a history that is rife with tensions and ambiguities in part due to the slippery nature Coloured identity had in South Africa - as Adhikari and Erasmus discuss, but also because of the influence these tensions had on the people who these identities and categories represented. Erasmus describes that to be Coloured was to understand the "discomfort… among the[se] conditions" (Erasmus 2001, 13-14) and often meant that "respectability and shame [were] key defining terms of middle class Coloured experience [which in turn meant that] the pressure to be respectable and avoid shame created much anxiety" (13-14) which Zara and Mercia are reflections of. This condition of shame and respectability influences not only the lives, as Erasmus describes, of ordinary Coloured people living the marginal Coloured experience but also the ways in which they identified with themselves and the rest of the world. Taken a step further as third generation descendants of these experiences, both women are faced with the problem of history coupled with their own various sense of identity that is reminiscent either of the ambiguity with which Coloured people occupied various spaces - as Mercia is constantly at odds with her father's idea of being a "good…decent Coloured man" (Wicomb 15) or the conscious decision to operate on the margins of these identities - which Zara has, through her parents teaching, always attempted to do by "[The] simple act of refusing race a place in their home…Because race, as important as it was in South Africa, was also simply unimportant. And even when they were forced to declared race - black in unity, rather than coloured as they were technically classified - privately, Zara's parents still held the truth" (Davids 34).

The history of Colouredness that is, to a certain extent, a history of familial, communal and collective memoires and experiences imply a series of contradictions in their creation and yet, despite this, these forms of recovery - especially of histories and experiences that were overlooked, displaced or disregarded - are only possible through processes of memory. Thus, it often becomes the task of the individuals such as Mercia and Zara, who have inherited these histories and are confronted in particular ways with the legacies of their familial pasts to uncover whatever truths their own memories, and memories of memories might bring to light.

Returning to the past

The problems of memory, the return to a tenuous past and the attempt to reconstruct a sense of familial history are the themes and tensions which Zoë Wicomb's *October* (2014) and C.A Davids' *The Blacks of Cape Town* (2013) are constantly interrogating. Each text is concerned, in their own way, with how to reconcile history through memory that is grounded within the unit of the family, and each narrative reflects the difficulties that arise in every step to do so. A recurring theme that both Wicomb and Davids' are interested in is the inescapable reliance on memory and remembering in order to enable any kind of recuperation in terms of history or the past. In the attempts of their protagonists to make sense of their present circumstances and understand how the events that resurface will continue to influence their future ways of being and self-identity, the act of remembering becomes a vital tool at their disposal. Remembering thus enables Zara and Mercia to begin their own process of rediscovery through memory but it also forces them to face memories of their past that were repressed, neglected or overlooked for the purposes of finding within these tenuous histories the answers that they are both searching for.

October is a novel that explores the intimacies of 'home' and family and what is means to long for and want to escape both. Mercia, the protagonist, described as "a woman of fifty-two years who has been left" (Wicomb 9) finds herself throughout the narrative trying to reconcile her displacement from the home she has built for herself in Scotland, away from her family and the home she returns to upon receiving a "please-come-home"(Wicomb 16) letter from her brother in South Africa. The issue of 'home' that Mercia grapples with is to be understood "not only [as a] physical or spatial condition but also social and habitual… The essence of home lies in the recurrent, regular investment of meaning…[where] people construct their geographies of home at the interface between their self and their world." (Terkenli 1995, 325-326). The prospect of returning 'home' discomforts Mercia, who expresses her anxiety around what a return to home might mean, noting how "the thought of the Cape as home brings an ambiguous shiver - the small town in Klein Namaqualand, Kliprand…How could anyone want to live there? Why would anyone want to stay there? These are questions that Mercia too must ask" (Wicomb 16). The feelings of unease that are sparked by the prospect of returning home are thus in part a result of the memories that these spaces hold, and the feelings entangled with the fraught relationships that embody her sense of home - especially between her brother and recently deceased father. Thus, while the call to home has been a recurrent issue in her life, it is something that she has always avoided until

now, upon her own condition of precarity having recently ended a long-term relationship and being notified of her brother's poor condition along with the prospect of helping his son by taking the child 'home' with her to Glasgow (Wicomb 22). These compounding events that upend Mercia's sense of self and relationship between her identity in Glasgow and her identity in South Africa are what finally initiates her determination to return, with the hopes that her journey back home will allow her to contend with her personal turmoil as well as the legacy of trauma that her family home represents and what she had left behind. By trying to grapple with the sense of place she remembers and has tried to forget, Mercia's remembering entails a navigation of her 'new' self that has left and is forced to return. In terms of representing what this journey might entail for Mercia, Wicomb writes:

> Now, whilst there is still the business of adjusting to being alone, unloved, Jake's please-come-home letter has arrived…. Come home Mercy…Mercia knows Jake's letter to be historic nonsense… If there really were a problem, an emergency, he would have called. Nevertheless, she may have to heed his request and go home, or rather, visit. Maybe that is the place where she might stop crying - at home, a place where a heart could heal (Wicomb 22-23).

Although Mercia's remembering process is initiated by her own sense of physical displacement her return home is entangled with the prospect of returning to her familial past, which is the same past that, like Zara, they have in their own ways attempted to leave behind. Mercia and Zara's physical and emotional displacement from these spaces that represent their family - which for both narratives are embodied in post- apartheid South Africa, and more specifically the Cape - thus becomes the reason for their departure but also the requirement for their return. Zara is thrust into her familial memories by a letter that signals a relationship to the past, but in her case, it is one which suggests the imminent repercussions that her family history is about to have on her immediate present. The letter she receives from the South African government makes reference to her father Bart's apparent betrayal during apartheid and after being confronted with the reality of the flawed past her father lived along with the overwhelming sense of shame that overtakes Zara upon this discovery she initiates her own departure, like Mercia, from these pasts "fleeing a continent, a country and a place filled with life" (Davids 2013, 5) in an attempt to "shut out memories of home" (Davids 5). Each protagonist thus instigates their flight from their physical home but more importantly the pasts that these spaces represent in order to gain some sort of reprieve, through the separation from these legacies. However, what both narratives likewise find in these processes is the inability of the self to sever ties to the past when their own identities are intimately tied up in these spaces. Thus, it is required for the transnational displaced fractured

marginal subject to return to their pasts - either physically or psychologically, in order to begin to make sense of the ramifications these legacies will have on their present.

Each narrative is thus invested in the various precarious positions with which these displaced distended characters are obligated to find their bearings within and the tools they are given for these tasks emerge through the act of remembering. The significance of the role memory has in each narrative thus suggests that despite the positions of identity that each protagonist is or is not invested in, uncovering the truth of their history - of which aligns, or at the very least grapples with what a marginal Coloured experience might mean for the self - is only possible through an interrogation of the stories and memories which have withstood generations and from which it is possible to compile a narrative. Interestingly each protagonist sets about, either intentionally or subconsciously, trying to construct their family history that they are returning to, into some sort of record. For Zara this is an instinctive process wherein which she is determined to archive her family's history into a record that might accurately provide a sense of clarity for the events which transpire leading up to her father's betrayal and for Mercia this process involves a subconscious awareness of her family's own turmoil and her own fanciful ideas of memory writing and what this might entail when focused on a family as fractured as her own.

Returning to home for Mercia means a reacquaintance with the memories of her father, her mother and her brother as she is faced not only with how she left them behind but what they had become in her absence. This is compounded with the years of emotional and physical trauma that she but most significantly Jake had suffered at the hands of their father as well as the feelings of estrangement that have occurred between Mercia, Jake, his wife Sylvie and their son Nicky. These ties between Mercia and her home in South Africa are mediated by the memories of a past that she had attempted to leave behind but which she finds incapable of doing once they resurface. Through her engagement with these memories, she discovers how strained her past relationship are and the way these spaces continue to influence her ability to reconcile her present sense of identity with the sense of identity that is represented by the home she returns to. It is significant that in both Zara and Mercia's reacquaintance with their past they both return to the act of writing - of memoir or archive - as a way of making sense of their own puzzling sense of self in relation to their history. The act of writing their memories into record thus becomes a way for Zara and Mercia to make tangible the ephemeral sense of history that they are working with and invested in, with each character

conscious within these processes of the complications in doing so and yet similarly, the determination to continue, as Wicomb writes:

> Mercia's youthful idea of herself as a poet… has in fact been a false start at autobiography… But now… in the crazed hours of grief, she grows bold. If she thinks of such writing as private, not for publication, then really she is free to write…There is after all a screen, ready to receive an image of herself, but also to protect, to conceal…and so her fingers fly across the keyboard; words flow effortlessly, for rather than start with the self, there are her parents, Nicholas and Antoinette, both dead and representable. How little, really, she remembers or knows about them; how much there is to invent. She saves the file as Home (16-17).

Not only is Mercia's personal quest for 'rediscovery' tied to her family and linked to the memories which these spaces hold, it also suggests that her entire definition of home and her past is something she is constantly grasping at, trying to untangle and within these threads find her ever changing sense of self and relationship to these environments. Her own identity as well as her position to her family and the memories these relationships predetermine are thus ever changing and her return to Kliprand exists as a place which might allow her to rediscover the elements of her story that she is missing. Mercia's relationship to home relates to what Terkenli describes of the magnitude that areas can claim, noting that: "with distance from home a person is temporarily or permanently dissociated from it and becomes both more conscious of its role in life and increasingly appreciative of its inherent qualities as well as its contributions to personal sustenance and psychological well-being" (1995, 328).

Home can thus be read as an extension and invocation of remembering of the past and her familial history, whereas the tensions within Mercia and her understanding and relationship to home, as outlined by Wicomb, can more broadly be read as an exploration of an experience that can be shared and related among the marginal Coloured experience in South Africa - specifically from the perspective of someone who has 'escaped' the circumstances and "conditions given to them by history" (Erasmus 2001, 23) that so many Coloured people have had to constantly negotiate. Mercia soon realises that her inability to relate to the experiences of the past that her home represents, and who Sylvie is a symbol of, is thus in part due to what they suggest to Mercia, which is a symbol of the life she has left behind. Thus, in every moment that she occupies these familiar but unreachable spaces her behaviour and reaction to these environments represent a lifestyle, culture and way of being that Mercia has become a stranger too. Her memories thus allow these distinctions to be made clear, and simultaneously situate Mercia on the outskirts of the experiences that she remembers but can no longer relate to.

Zara, alternatively, is faced with the precarious task of unearthing her family's history, in order to present a narrative that might explain, or at the very least rationalise her father's betrayal. The history that confronts Zara suggests a lineage of betrayal, beginning with her grandfather Isaiah who had "thrown a shadow on three generations' worth of Blacks" (Davids 7) which is then inherited and reaffirmed by her father thus threatening to unravel her own life and sense of reality. As such her familial memories become a space that Zara is determined to intersect in the hopes of finding in the forgotten stories of the past, the influence and effect these resurfaced truths will have on her future, the future of her familial record and the legacy which her name will leave behind. Her personal process of memory work is intended to find out if her father was the traitor that the letter says he is, and if so, how these betrayals influence everything that Zara thought she knew and will thereafter have to live with. In order to contend with these questions Zara takes up the position of her family's historian and sets about unpacking the history of the Blacks, as she remembers it, for these purposes, as Davids writes:

> The letter had named her father… among the traitors, conspirators and betrayers of their time. Not in so many words, but the letter had said so, nonetheless… an account of Bart's life was catching up with her…Would the whole story be told leaving nothing, she wondered? But how could it? after all, it had begun with her grandfather, Isaiah Black. Perhaps she would commence writing her account there, stretching back into history, going beyond and before herself…. Gathering up memories like fragments of light, Zara began to write the story as only she could. A history - she knew this - in all its convoluted madness, shifting recklessly. But, what else could she do? It fell to her (Davids 6-7).

For the sake of presenting the 'whole story' that she feels accounts for her father's past and that might in another circumstance be ignored if recorded by a third-party, Zara undertakes the task of remembering in order to construct a past - out of the family history that she only has access to through her memories - that might shed light on the truth or reason for her father's betrayal. The rest of Davids' narrative follows Zara's attempts at re-memory and reconstructing these histories in the hopes of revealing the truth behind her memories or given the information she has and the memories she has access to provide the most honest version of what she believes to be true. In this way the narrative and Zara's story depends heavily on remembering as it not only becomes the means for Zara to access these past experiences, but memory is also used by Zara as a tool to "construct a sense of the past" (Confino 1997, 1386) in its entirety. Zara both depends on the stories she has heard of her grandfather and her father that have been passed down or which she herself was present for, in order to construct a timeline and narrative of her father's life leading up to his betrayal or a

version of stories that might provide the most sensible justification for his actions. Both Mercia and Zara are thus involved in a process of history recovery for various purposes; Mercia is concerned with trying to reconcile with her brother, form a relationship with his son and perhaps through these intentions rediscover the sense of self that she finds is missing whereas Zara is intent on accounting, through narrative, for the repercussions that her father's legacy has left behind. However, what each character equally uncovers through their remembering processes is the complications involved in doing so, which leads not only to feelings of separation from the self they remember with the self they are trying to reconcile, but also histories of their family that have been left buried and are returning to the surface.

The problems of memory

Mercia's complicated relationship with her memories is alluded to throughout the text as she often finds herself at odds with the familiar ways of living she recalls and had previously participated in but can now no longer relate to in any meaningful ways, such as her aversion to meat (Wicomb 86-87) or the practice of slaughtering a sheep which is a custom that for Sylvie represents a time-honoured tradition of home that Mercia can no longer understand (Wicomb 87). Furthermore, her relationship to much of the practices that Sylvie takes pride in reflect Mercia's alienation from the past experiences that she remembers with her present displaced self that can only empathise with these experiences through her memories. The simple act of having and making *roosterbrood* (sourdough) for example reflects the contrasting versions of self that Mercia is at odds with – which also becomes a representation of her subconscious removal from her cultural practices and experiences as Wicomb writes:

> I thought you'd like roosterbrood for breakfast. It's quick to cook on the coals, [Sylvie] explains. I kneaded last night… It's sourdough, isn't it. She had forgotten about the sourdough of her childhood, had believed it to be the invention of metropolitan masterchefs. Yes, Sylvie says, if you like you could take back some of my culture in a Tupperware, just add flour and warm water and leave in a warm place. Her voice gathers volume as the emphatic Namaqua speech takes courage from her sister-in-law's ignorance. I've never made sourdough, Mercia confesses. She knows that this would please the girl. I've no idea how to make it, but you can buy a sourdough loaf… in Scotland. Which surprises Sylvie. She wouldn't have thought that country bread would be available overseas (67).

When Sylvie begins to explain to Mercia the easy process of making the bread herself suggesting that Mercia could do so in Glasgow Mercia stops her and, in this conversation, Wicomb highlights the fundamental differences between Mercia and Sylvie and what they represent as well as the shift that has occurred in Mercia's worldview, writing:

> Oh no, what a palaver, that's way too much trouble. The bread from my local bakery is very good. Even in the olden days my mother only made sourdough when she ran out of fresh yeast…. No need to go through all that trouble nowadays. Sylvie looks at her askance. What a strange thing to say after she stayed up the previous night to knead, and rose early to make a fire... Well, so much for the blarry woman's grandness, for all that education. If she does not think that warm roosterbrood is a treat, why does she not at least pretend that it is? That's what she, Sylvie, would have done. That's how AntieMa had raised her (Wicomb 67-68).

Here Wicomb alludes to the consistent problem that plagues Mercia's entire remembering process which is that the return to her familial home represents a return to the practices, experiences and ways of being of her past self, and in moments when these remembered experiences compound with her present they highlight her upended sense of self. The process of returning to a memory distresses Mercia and these feelings persists throughout the narrative as she engages with the memories of her past and how it influences her present experiences, the least of which emerges in these interactions around cooking practices between herself and Sylvie. For Sylvie traditional and cultural dishes are a recurrent and meaningful sentiment whereas for Mercia who has distanced herself from these kinds of traditions only sees the triviality and unnecessary tasks which these methods dictate. That these tensions emerge within the context of food allude recall what Gabeba Baderoon (2014) speaks to of the intimacy these practices suggest (Baderoon 2014, 50) and how "separate practice and meanings"(52) ascribed to food can highlight and alert to "references [of the] foreign" in relation to "the dominant culture"(52) - in this case the 'dominant' culture being the practices of Coloured people in Namaqualand that Sylvie emulates and which the now 'foreign' Mercia can no longer access. The disagreement the two women continue to have over these dishes can be read as being emblematic of Mercia's current predicament; she wants to remember the past and these histories but is constantly faced with the tensions which occur at her every step to do so precisely because her time in Glasgow has made her accustomed to a certain way of life, which does not align with her remembered experiences. The tensions around food might be a trivial one but it speaks to Mercia's continued struggle to grapple with the past she remembers - the traditions of her family and the community, of which Sylvie perpetuates- and Mercia's presence within these spaces. Wicomb thus uses these forms of alternative practices to describe both the tensions that exist between Mercia and her sense of home and her distance from it and most importantly how intimately these relationships are linked to her memories of her family, or at least the ones she can recall - which is a further obstacle in her remembering task. Mercia's own uncertainty and unease that she feels when she remembers instances from her past that she can't quite recall, or is not

sure of such as the “false memories”(Wicomb 24-26) she has of her mother highlights how in cases where these discomforting feelings arise she unconsciously remakes certain memories - which links back to the complications that cloud Mercia’s attempt to reconstruct her familial history through memory as these memories have been influenced by her own implicit retreat from these places and have grown fraught over the years. Her memories thus only reflect these realities that she has attempted to or been unwilling to acknowledge. Yet despite these contradictions, Mercia’s memories are still able to invoke or recall a familiar sense of place and home that these spaces at one point held and represented, regardless of the falsity they have been subject to and thus they are still capable of allowing Mercia to engage in these feelings that she had forgotten.

Remembering histories, especially those of the family which have been influenced by personal interferences is an inevitable consequence that plagues the hybrid (Coloured) subject of which Mercia is a representation. This in effect is an act of re-memory coined by Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987) - and which Wicomb was attuned to[14]- that describes the process and “demonstration of recollecting a memory. This memory is the point at which a memory is returned to, regardless of whether truly or intellectually” (Thursha 2020, 28). Wicomb thus engages with questions of home through both the complications that this word has and how Mercia’s return re-establishes what it means as a “source of identification” (Tolia-Kelly 2004, 9) for the displaced subject which thus transforms during Mercia’s return. Mercia’s journey is thus organised around the interest in a retrieval of something which she is unsure of but which she hopes to find or gain access to through the space of her family home and by extension the familial history and memory which these spaces mediate. In this regard home and the memories which it holds for Mercia becomes a means through which she can “construct [her] geographies…at the interface between [her] self and [her] world… [which becomes] fundamental to shaping [her] personal place in the world” (Terkenli 325-326). In this way Mercia’s experiences with her multiple conflicting identities that she is made aware of once she returns home can be read as being reminiscent of the relationship the Coloured community has to their identity and sense of self, particularly in post-apartheid South Africa. Mercia’s constant attempts to reconcile the past she remembers and was an active agent within alongside her present inability to relate to her surroundings and the people who represent these pasts, depict one of the problems that inform the history of Coloured people and present subjective experience. That is, the tensions involved with negotiating an identity

[14] See Driver (2010)

that is constantly in motion, transforming and being altered depending on one's own subjective position and engagement with the memories (and the past) that defines these existences and furthermore, how to translate these experiences into one's everyday realities in meaningful ways that ensure a preservation of identity for the future. Mercia's re-memory thus mediates these senses of her "double-consciousness[15]" that is particularly evident in racialised groups, and which is a lived reality of post-colonial people - as it suggests a "consciousness that is fractured, shifting between identification with a perceived utopian pre-colonial identity, and one that is shaped by an imposed colonial regime of race-definition, and the lived experience of being post-colonial" (Tolia-Kelly 2004, 22). These ideas, within the context of the text, can then be expanded beyond the racial delineation in order to include forms of social and cultural definitions of being, of which Mercia is constantly in conflict with.

Zara's memory work on the other hand highlights the limitations involved when attempting to accurately contend with the past in a meaningful way, especially for the purposes of creating a record of forgotten or unvoiced experiences. As such, much of her remembering at times shifts, or is influenced by her own biases towards people, places or her own opinion of what 'might' have occurred - that is, the conclusion she draws based on her personal experience and understanding of the events as they influenced the present. As a result, there are instances throughout Zara's remembering process where, through the narrative, she inserts her own voice into the memories she recalls in order to assert what she believes to be true into her record of history, as she writes it. This happens often with the memories she did not experience herself but is reconstructing out of versions of stories she has heard in the past - especially concerning her grandfather Isiah and his story, which she reads as heavily influencing her father's life. In order to make up for what she does not or cannot know from her own memories she constructs what she believes to be the most sensible version of history, often making up facts or situations that might explain her grandfather's life and subsequently the influence that his actions would have for the generations to come, this involves an intentional writing that alerts us to Zara's influence in her history as Davids writes:

> There stands Martha: Isaiah's mother and Zara's great grandmother (who must always be remembered with a sense of solemnity) cooking before an open flame and eyeing the blackening clouds gathering overhead like trouble..., But then, what did Zara know of this strange, sad woman in home-sewn skirts for whom there was no evidence? No gravestone, no pictures, or letters, or bits of clothing or any sort of trinket to prove that she stood in the

[15] Du Bois (1903) as referenced in Tolia-Kelly (2004, 22)

> centre of these recollections? All Zara had were memories of memories. Still, Zara worked with what she had (Davids 8).

Not only does this passage outline the kind of idiosyncratic memory work that Zara engages in, but it also highlights the narratives' own awareness of these tensions invoked in Zara's re-memory, and by extension David's general awareness of the limitations of memory, the problems it invokes (in terms of reliability and access) and at the same time its importance for recuperating history, especially for the purposes of writing and memorialisation. Zara (and by extension Davids' as well) is aware of the kind of writing project she is engaged in and is attuned to the difficulties that arise when attempting to record a history of people and place such as the story of her family with any degree of accuracy or truth. In the absence of the certainties which come with information or tangible records what will be required of Zara for these projects is the allowances that her remembering will enable and thus Zara resolves to construct what she believes to be the most sensible version of her family history that might explain the sequence of that events as they lead up to what unfolds in the present. In this way Zara's historical record highlights the complications that occur when memory is the only form of knowledge available in cases where these histories were not written down or 'properly' archived. Zara, through the remembering of her past, engages in a recuperative and investigative process in order to create a tangible past that she can make sense of, but which in its construction resists neat and definitive conclusions - which is the reason why Zara often finds herself having to deduce 'facts' about her family which both she and the audience cannot entirely assert the validity of. However, Zara's exploits in assumed truths and deduced fiction is necessary not only for the progression of her personal narrative and aim in the text but also for her family history that she is determined to archive. The moments in the narrative where Zara, "imagines" (Davids 25) or "maintains" (25) certain truths or histories that she writes in her family memoir work to establish the duality of memory writing that is unfolding in the text, and which aligns with both Davids' and Zara's intention of uncovering overlooked or underrepresented histories.

Zara's memory work and history writing is thus not concerned with "profound truth…[that] historiography is searching for when it attempts to reconstitute the past but about facts of our history" (Fassian 2008, 316) - 'our', being the marginal Coloured experience- "which are forgotten, repressed, minimised, distorted [and] reinvented" (Fassian 316). Zara's representation is but one account of one form of experience and her writing allows a glimpse into the way in which Coloured representation is able to emerge through memory which in a

country like South Africa where the problem of making sense of "a history that is inscribed in memory" (Fassian 2008, 316) is a pertinent political issue "there is no sense in opposing history to memory as truth to error, or even as objectification to subjectivity. Memory of the past belongs to the history of the present" (Fassian 316). The absence of historical record of her family is thus left to the task of remembering, and through these process Zara' finds her grandfather, her mother and her father's forgotten histories. A large part of Zara's intention is thus interested in invoking a sense of permanence to these memories as well as in finding the missing pieces of family history, finally and inevitably "reclaim[e]" (Davids 85) these pasts which had previously existed only in "stories that passed to her, so that by the time she sat down to write them as a woman, far from home, the stories had taken on a sort of permanence - portraits of another era" (Davids 30-31).

When Zara ultimately uncovers the history of her father's betrayal, she finds that it is a history that is dependent on the testimony of past comrades and relationships that were fractured within the apartheid era, subject to tensions founded within these environments and the emotional and physical trauma that affected people like Zara's father who were intimately involved in the project of freedom. Her father's betrayal, while founded on a personal "illicit relationship" (Davids 108) between himself and his college while he was still married, is representative of a larger betrayal of a country (Davids 108, 131, 161,) and while Zara has by the end of the narrative in theory found the answers to the questions she has tried to uncover through her remembering the narrative does not assert that these 'answers' are conclusive in any way. This is because the conclusions that are reached in the narrative are in part influenced by the bias and slipperiness of memory and were reshaped and transformed by the people who retold these histories, such as James Ndlovu, Bart's former colleague who provides Zara with the details of his 'betrayal' (Davids 107-109) and yet at the same time is on the same 'list' of traitors that Zara's father is said to be on (162). Understanding the tensions imbedded in the apparent 'truth' that Zara has uncovered serves as a way for Davids to alert us once again to the inherent problem in history and lineages of the past that are based within memory and are often remembered by removed subjects that have inherited these histories. Thus, any attempt to assert a definitive judgement or conclusion on these histories as Zara does after feeling betrayed "by her family. By her country [and] by history itself" (Davids 48) is to ignore the reality of the various implications and complexities within these histories that Zara herself is not able to fully account for without leaving way for the intricacies and fallacies of memory and history itself.

Zara's memory work is testament to what has occurred in much of the history of Coloured people which reflects how certain experiences were often disregarded or underrepresented[16] unless initiative was taken by members of these communities, such as Zara, to record these personal experiences and allow them to exist within history. Beyond truth Zara's recuperative memory work acts in contrast to what Duncan et al note of "the tendency that has come to characterise the post-1994 period of silencing people and their claims about, and versions of, their past" (Duncan, Stevens and Sonn 2010, 14). Her family history and her past, although a biased and fallible version is necessary for acting as a record of experience that would have otherwise, if not for Zara's memory work, been disregarded or neglected within history

Along with Zara's re-memory a lot of what she is recounting is dependent on narrative, which is specifically used as a tool through which "the past is ordered within processes of collective memory, shaped and reshaped within the construction and reconstruction of identities over time" (Moody 2020,38). As such Zara's story is a complex set of memories over time interwoven, transformed and adapted in order to suit the narrative she is writing. "Family lore" (Davids 7), stories of stories and years' worth of memories is what Zara is struggling to sew together and these explorations are not without difficulty due to the fact that, as previously mentioned, much of what she 'remembers' she did not experience herself, and is instead "from sources outside the perimeter of [her] own first-hand experience" (Freeman 2010, 265). However instead of allowing this to disregard the validity of her narrative it serves to emphasise the importance these practices have as a form of knowledge that was otherwise inaccessible. This is not only highlighted through the inserts of Zara's own voice into the narrative she is writing about her family, but also in her own personal narrative that Davids' writes as she attempts to remember bits of family history but in certain moments struggles to do so the reason being that all her memories are ephemeral and have weathered over time. Davids writes of this problem Zara experiences:

> How pale she was, Zara noticed running a hand across her skin. The dark circles, yes, those she recognised. The impression beneath her eyes were those of her four aunts on her father's side…And of her mother? Of her beautiful, long-departed mother nothing remained, only memories, and those so rehearsed she could no longer tell fiction from truth. Zara's mother: the lovely Lena… had died of cancer when Zara was twenty years old. Had her mother's hair been black or dark brown? Some days she could almost hear her mother's voice, the precise tone, and yet, such a clear detail as hair colour she had simply, stupidly forgotten (12).

[16] (Adhikari, Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial Identity in the South African Coloured Community 2005)

Zara's personal narrative as well as the history of her family that she is writing represents, like Wicomb, the inherent complications involved in memory work especially when attempting to construct a history which is influenced by forms of instability, ephemerality and incoherence. However, by remaining insistent on the possibilities afforded by memory each author, Rive included, is engaged in "recovering and affirming ways of being and doing that have been silenced, distorted, and/or eroded because of domination and colonization" (Duncan, Stevens and Sonn 2010, 21-22). The texts thus use forms of remembering "to create a history… [that serves as] a response - a manner of affirming the existence of the (group) on a terrain other than that reserved for it up to that point by the dominant group[17]"- the former being understood as the history of Coloured people and the latter, the history of South Africa. Davids uses ephemeral memory in particular in such a way that acknowledges its fleeting nature while also recognising its ability to "connect past and present events and represent new forms of remembering through which young people find familiar and effective ways to be part of the public sphere" (Rajevic 2019, 730-731). Through her narrative Davids' simultaneously engages with forms of remembering that "seek to last through concrete and material actions or institutions such as…archives[18]" (Rajevic 2019, 733) and these dual forms of remembering reflect the contradictions of memory in the narrative while simultaneously depicting the forms of self-identity and recovery that memory can enable.

The revelations of memory

Zara's insistence to write a story detailing her family's history aligns fundamentally with the main reason behind the value that writing has for voicing marginal experiences and the ability of recording and making tangible these subjectivities. Memory in these instances of uncertain or unstable identity and subjectivity thus becomes particularly important to orient the subject (Loza 2016) because the "real or imagined past" (Loza 2016, 32) that memory accesses become "crucial for the subject, even constitutive of it[19]". In order to account for her sense of identity that has been ruptured by the letter of her father's betrayal Zara turns to memory in order to attempt to find, through these processes, the answers she's looking for that might provide clarity for how her future following these revelations will look like, and how she as the sole inheritor of these historical burdens can make sense of her present and future

[17] Apfelbaum 1999, 272 as referenced in Duncan, Stevens and Sonn 2010, 21-22
[18] Assmann 2008 as referenced in Rajevic 2019, 733
[19] Megill (2007) referenced in Loza (2016, 32)

simultaneously through the engagements with the past. The task she undertakes is outlined by Davids, who writes:

> It was scant comfort, this writing of a history. And it took its toll, because the excavating of a story that Zara knew only through others did not come easily. But then, also a scholar of history, Zara boldly located her family within its annals. This was how Zara occupied her days…she began where she last left off [or] she backtracked and changed everything, the recollection altering again as she did so. She had a life to construct. Her own possibly. But that would still come (18).

By taking Zara's insistence on recording her history as symptomatic of a legacy of unwritten experiences I argue that Davids is able to suggest that beyond the concerns of memory and its ability to be influenced by external factors, active and intentional forms of remembering and by extension archiving personal experiences are nevertheless necessary in order to allow disenfranchised voices exist within records of history, such as literature, in meaningful ways. Thus, the nature of memory affords the writer the ability to engage in these acts of memorialisation precisely because memory itself as outlined by Wendy Chun (2008), "is an act of commemoration - a process of recollection or remembering" (Chun 165).

For Mercia the revelation of her father's misdeeds regarding Sylvie and Jake and her own anger upon these discoveries (Wicomb 201-209) alerts her to the deeply entrenched influence that the legacy of trauma, informed by her familial memories and resurfaced truths, continue to have on her life. Her return to these pasts that is initiated by her remembering and her attempts to make sense of these realities in her present and through her writing only confirms her complicated relationship to her past. Like Zara the secrets and burdens of the past are not Mercia's own but rather a history – of her father and her brother - that she has inherited and is forced to contend with through her own remembering. Thus, in her initial wilful attempts to rediscover herself at 'home' what she instead finds, through her memory, is a tangled legacy that has continued to influence not only her brother's life but hers as well. The return to her past allows these revelations to occur and although unpleasant there is the sense that these processes were necessary in order to allow Mercia clarity on her sense of displacement from her past self and her present subjectivity that she was initially searching for before she returned to her home, as Wicomb writes:

> Home. Might it not help, as the therapists say, to write up the grim story?... might a plain telling, a brief account…not do the trick? With one thing leading to another as is the case with writing…one story generating another, she may well find the distance, and thus clarity and the much-needed compassion… She stops. She does not have the courage to bare her bosom to the screen…if memoir prides itself on fidelity - for why else would one want to rake up the

> past? - has Mercia not also seen how an indulged memory grows fat, and multiplies, spawning brand new offspring…This is a father-son story into which she has stumbled, nothing to do with her, and thus not fit for memoir. She cannot find the words; she would have to skirt around their story, around the father, and how then would she avoid the fiction that telling begets. Mercia wants nothing to do with artfulness; besides, having snaked its way into their lives, the thing must be laid to rest. It must not be given the chance to take another shape (241-242).

Her remembering unlocks part of her history that Mercia would rather forget, or not contend with and thus unlike Zara, while she resolves to finish what her remembering process had started - return home and reconcile with Sylvie after Jakes death, she also decides to leave her past behind, unfinished but still existent and in her mind, unforgotten. Re-memory for Mercia is thus deeply associated with the "sentiments of loss [and] absence [and is thus] critical in the politics of identification… [and of] immigration, race and heritage" (Tolia-Kelly 2004, 23) which Mercia was constantly negotiating and in this way her story reflects one example of the complications surrounding the work of the marginalised subject tasked with uncovering their identity through their past. These forms of re-memory specifically related to people and places and the way these relationships changes and transforms, recalls what Pumla Gqola (2010) notes of the work of memory, which is that these engagements often only make sense, regardless of the inherent complications, "when read as [an] activity in conversation with, responding to and processing events of the past as a crucial part of imagining and inventing the present" (Gqola 2010, 25). The relationship between Mercia and her memories are constantly urging her to re-evaluate her own position and experiences and how the past ideas that she had of her brother, her father and even of Sylvie influenced the way she related to her present circumstances. Mercia ultimately discovers that despite herself, these histories and experiences of the past that she remembers dictated the way she behaved in her own life - her distance from her family, the life she attempted to make for herself in Glasgow, and her belief that she could somehow, without experience or just cause take Nicky away from his home and into hers, reveals the inherent remnants of her past self that no longer makes sense in her present. Wicomb's narrative thus reflects, through Mercia, the intricate relationship between self-identity and the past, especially when the ties binding the self to their history is compounded with contradictions and unspoken truths that once uncovered, drastically affect the individual's perception of themselves. The inability of Mercia to recover any sense of home or familiarity within these spaces that she remembers thus highlights the trouble of the marginal subject that is attempting to recuperate a sense of

identity out of a splintered past, especially when the present itself is in state of turmoil and uprootedness.

Mercia's project can thus be read in one sense as being unsuccessful as she was not able to reconcile with Jake in a meaningful way, nor did she end up taking care of his son by the end of the text whereas her relationship with Sylvie, though altered after Jake's death and revelation of her father's 'sin', remains equally as fraught (Wicomb 270). These personal relationships that she is unable to maintain, can thus be read as her inherent inability to reconnect with her past, and the memories which her home in Kliprand becomes a symbol of. However, instead of reading the text as a pessimistic narrative about the failures of home and the grievances of the past my argument is that Mercia's process of remembering, though leading to her continued estrangement from South Africa, was nonetheless required for these revelations to take place. Her return to her home and the memories of the people and places which she used to be able to relate to but now only feels distant towards were necessary interactions that needed to take place in order to allow her own personal discovery. Her remembering allowed her to separate her past sentimentalities with her present subjective experience and in this way by the end of the text she has the clarity of no longer feeling a distant longing or burden to these spaces. Thus, while she initially regretted her displacement her time in Cape Town has illuminated the fundamental change that she undergone, from a person who could previously assimilate to these past environments into someone for whom this is no longer possible. These burdens attached to her feelings of home had to be alleviated in order to begin remaking her life in Glasgow, away from her past beliefs and without the guilt which was tied to her family. This is confirmed by Sylvie's insistence at the end of the novel that she can care for her child without Jake and Mercia's help (Wicomb 270) which signifies the final tie of Mercia's past that has been severed.

Mercia's story, like Zara, is another reflection of the marginal subject tasked with recuperating the past as the only means by which to begin grappling with the future. In a broad sense Mercia and Zara's stories can thus be read as a representation of the ongoing task of contemporary Coloured South Africans and their attempts to make legible, especially through their own various forms of displacement, the impact that their histories can and have had on their lives and what it means to translate these experiences into their ways of living for the future. These are part of the allowances memory makes for these explorations, which ensure that "in the narratives of ordinary people's lives we begin to see some of the major

forces of history at work…that are arguably the real key to understanding the past[20]" (Minkley and Rassool 91).

Similarly for Zara the past is in part a foundational form of information that influences her reality and in this way her narrative and the legacy that she recovers are dependent on her engagement with these histories in order to dictate the rest of her subjective experience. Zara thus not only attempts to grapple with and account for these past histories, but she does so in a way that is aimed at reconciling her past, present and future self-identity and the influences these histories have on these aspects of her life (Davids 191-192). Both Wicomb and Davids' text thus constantly reaffirm the dependence and importance of memory in the task of marginal subjects and those who are left with the burdens of the past and the necessary task of grappling with these burdens in order to begin any sort of self-explorative processes. Each text, through the engagement with memory that their respective protagonists undertake thus authenticates, in particular ways, the experience of contemporary Coloured South Africans and is symptomatic, in a lot of ways, of the formation and recuperation of these identities, as outlined by Pumla Gqola (2010) who notes:

> Contemporary negotiations of Coloured identities demonstrate the importance of creativity in political memory processes. To the extent that memory is an imaginative process and not simply a recuperative one, the dynamic articulations of [C]olouredness, along with the rejection of the identity 'coloured', bear witness to the collective reinvention of identities which is at the heart of memory (Gqola 23).

While Gqola, in these descriptions is specifically interested in the lineage of a "slave past" (Gqola 23) that continues to influence the construction of Coloured identity and the need to be mindful of these legacies (especially in the recuperation of history) Gqola's engagements are also important for her argument of the ability of creativity to influence and be invoked within memory in order to aid identity exploration and the performance of self. These ideas likewise premise the importance of the bearer of these histories in their remembering and recuperative processes of the past. Zara and Mercia's constant shifting reality that is influenced by their pasts can be likened to and read as representative of the lived experiences of Coloured people and the way in which these negotiations are constantly ongoing. The irony of course is that the consequences of the ties between memory and history persist within the reality of the lived experience of many marginal Coloured people who do not have a vast, specific or written history to refer back to and instead have had to be dependent on stories and memories to construct their sense of self and identity. This is the consequence of

[20] Keegan (1988, 168) referenced in Minkley and Rassool (1998, 91)

identities that are, as Erasmus notes, “produced and re-produced in the place of the margins” (2001, 22) and in this regard the “conditions given to [Coloured people] by history”(2001, 22) that grounds their quest for identity and subjective experience within the realm of memory instead of tangible records is “part of the pain of being Coloured”(22-24) that each author, in their own way, subsequently outlines.

For these reasons it is particularly important for representations of these experiences to exist in literature as Davids and Wicomb’s text highlight how without the inheritors of these histories who decided to re-enter their pasts, the stories that they uncover, and which unfold in their narratives would not exist if not for their writing. Likewise in representations of Coloured experience preserving and highlighting these underrepresented marginal voices within literature in the way that Wicomb, Davids and Rive are invested in is important because these mediums become the only place where these questions can be grappled with, memorialised and thus further explored.

Conclusion

Coloured literature has thus far been an underdeveloped and under-analysed aspect of South African literature, for reasons which are for the most part a result of history and general dismissal toward the interest of Coloured experiences. However what Adhikari and Erasmus' work outlines is the progress that has been made regarding the perception of Coloured identity and the shift that has occurred in terms of the renewed understandings of the Coloured subjective experience. In this sense the shift from Rives' communal narrative set within the context of apartheid to the more contemporary narratives of Wicomb and Davids' which reflect engagements of marginal identities within positions of displacement, subsequently highlight the ways in which the relationship to Coloured identity and the possibility that these experiences dictate have transformed, particularly within the South African literary field. Through their narratives each author not only highlights various aspects of the Coloured experience but in so doing brings to the surface the questions, tensions and constant inquiries that plague the Coloured subject at various moments in the experience of being Coloured in South Africa pre-, during and post-apartheid. Each author initiates an interrogation into the making of Coloured identity in the face of constant complications that arise when confronted with, or in conversation, with the history which at every moment influences these processes. In order to do so each text highlights how the various processes of re-memory can work for the project of recovering histories and legacies of the past, especially for those that do not exist outside of these ephemeral records. In this way, through the recuperation of memory that each narrative is engaged in, and the tensions and complications that arise from the return to the past each author highlights the consequences which plague marginal histories like that of Coloured people in the task of making sense of their self-identity through the instability of memory work. Beyond these investments each text also makes clear the necessity of memory for the marginalised subject and particularly for those, like Mercia and Zara, who are recovering generations of history that have gone untouched or unvoiced, or for Rive is reflecting on a sense of belonging that is intimately attached to sense of self that was and continues to be attached to memories of place and people.

The tensions between the slipperiness and unreliability of memory with its inescapability for recuperating certain histories and experiences becomes one of the predominant themes

throughout each text and enables the alternative forms of remembering that each author is engaged in which highlights the tensions and complications that exist in these projects. As such these texts, influenced by the experiences of Coloured people in South Africa - the tensions of race, identity, displacement, isolation and shame that comes with these ways of living - negotiate the tensions of memory with an equally contentious history of Colouredness in an attempt to make visible personal experiences and histories that have otherwise been left out of archival records of South African history and thereby reflect the way in which marginal identities can be structured. Rive, Wicomb and Davids highlight the importance that intangible, ephemeral memories or histories - such as stories passed down between families, letters, or memories of memories that counter written records, can have for groups of people or individuals whose entire histories exists solely in these forms and are only accessible through personal retrieval processes. It is thus significant that each text shares an investment in the past and the possibilities that a return to these spaces might allow for the marginal subject that is interested in developing and interrogating their own sense of self and identity. This seems to suggest that a continued interest in the realm of Coloured literature within South Africa and particularly the forms of being, living and performance of Colouredness that exist, will inevitably require a need to recall the legacies of the past that in most cases are buried within the spaces of memory. Each text can thus be read as pre-empting these questions around the problem of recuperating history in the face of intangibility but also the insistence and determination to do so. In this sense the scope for the possibilities of examining Coloured experience when applied to the lens of memory becomes far broader than suggested by the previous literary analysis that this thesis has outlined. If this is the case it stands to reason that further analysis into these fields are necessary, beyond the engagements which this thesis has prompted, as it would in turn initiate a gateway into a more inclusive and expansive narration of Coloured experience and subjectivity within literary studies in South Africa.

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