

Afterword: Lines of Desire

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A 'desire line' is an informal path rather than an official route, an intersection that reveals notions of space, memory and identity in the post-apartheid city, contested spaces of power and privilege, identity and difference; palimpsests of historical experience; lived spaces in the everyday performance of urban life. Lines of desire cut across the formal grid, challenging the search for order, engaging in a tussle for recognition and difference, and risking disappointment and destruction as the stamp of authority is reasserted.

Cape Town began as a grid imposed on the troubling disorder of the colonised landscape. Its orthogonal grid grew to include houses and gardens, Castle, Church and Slave House, and a Garden of walkways and planted beds, 'rich in fruits and flowers', enclosed by 'a wall a rood high and a moat half a rood wide' and defined by rules for its use and maintenance. Visitors drew a comparison between this geometric regularity and the wild and untamed nature of Devil's Peak behind, 'a land that seems the most sterile and horrible in the world'.

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Martin Hall

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These early texts of the city included a long memoir by François Valentyn, first published in 1726. Valentyn was particularly drawn to the Garden, following his own line of desire that was both threatening and alluring: Table Mountain, 'barren and rocky', 'everything that is horrid and frightening', opposed to the 'very fine and delightful arbours roofed with foliage, where one can long sit hidden from everyone' and where 'Nature and Art seem to have brought together in unity all that can give pleasure' (Valentyn 1971: 107). To hide away in the public space of the grid and to wander off the walkways in search of delightful arbours invited contradictions, and Valentyn's pleasure was infused with anxiety. The 'womb of this African Mother-Garden' offered 'astonishingly large nurseries of melons' that gave 'exceptional relief' to 'the worn-out and scurvy-smitten seaman'. But such a man can never be 'sated' by the Garden because he 'continually experiences a new desire to be in it again' (Valentyn 1971: 105, 107).

Three centuries later, the Voortrekker Monument celebrated the expansion of the formal grid from city to nation, a network of roads and municipalities, farm boundaries, magisterial districts, group areas and homelands, 'a marker of systemic violence and a material signifier of events that sedimented the policies of institutionalised racism', creating 'the illusion of a collective identity through the political staging of vicarious spectacle' (Meskell, this volume). And again the ambiguity of desire, the symbol of the nation that is also a magnet for mainstream Afrikaans pornography, 'Dina at the Monument', Voortrekker descendant, bare-breasted child of the wilderness in the tall grass, with leopardskin shorts, khaki vest and wild hair: 'if you interfere with my symbols, you interfere with me' (Coombes 2003; Meskell, this volume).

Despite the assertions of official historiography, the Cape of 1652 was no empty land. Africa was replete with legends of cannibals and one-footed creatures, collated in the bestselling 'Mandeville's Travels', or the stories of the fabulous wealth of Prester John, always over the next range of mountains (Hall 2000). Valentyn's anxieties extended beneath his feet, as he sought to 'dredge up from the ground the things which have occurred here' (Valentyn 1973: 127). These included accounts of Portuguese shipwrecks a century earlier, Dona Leonor, ravished, who buried herself up to her waist in the sand and covered her upper body as best she could with her long hair, and her husband who

went back alone to the forest, refusing to take anyone with him, and since then no word nor sign of him was perceived, from which it was decided that he was eaten by some wild beast, unless from sorrow he helped himself to his end in some other manner.

(Valentyn 1973: 145)

And always present was the colonists' image of the Khoikhoi:

in the early records one finds a repertoire of remarkable facts about the Hottentots repeated again and again: their implosives ('turkey-gobbling'), their eating of unwashed intestines, their use of animal fat to smear their bodies, their habit of wrapping dried entrails around their necks, peculiarities of the pudenda of their women, their inability to conceive of God, their incorrigible indolence.

(Coetzee 1988: 22)

Today, as 300 years ago, the ground beneath the city is subject to 'sudden eruptions, surfacings, unexpected returns', whether through the exhumation of contested burials, or the 'institutionalised resurfacings' of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Shepherd and Ernssten, this volume). Graves are unstable markers in the landscape, 'entangled in the traffic between citizens and subjects' (Lalu, this volume). Thus the politics of Hintsa's lost head, the claims on his grave in the Eastern Cape, the complex discourse of reparation, colonial violence, development and tourism, and unresolved tensions of gender; the 'patriarchal dividend' that continues to assert the dominance of men and subordination of women by insisting that stories from the past are not resolved (Lalu, this volume).

Garden and landscape, then, embody metaphors for the tensions between order and disorder, between the geometry of the grid and random pathways of curiosity, between memories of that which has been experienced and desire for that which has yet to be attained, between what is still concealed beneath the ground and the surface, and its possibilities. Space and time intersect as social constructions, 'the space between the planned and the providential, the engineered and the "lived"', and between official projects of capture and containment and the popular energies which subvert, bypass, supersede and evade them' (Shepherd and Murray, this volume).

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The social construction of 'official' space has invariably been a figuration of the grid, whether in the layout of the formal garden, the colonial city, modernist planning, cadastral systems of mapping or the very boundaries of the African nation state, with lines of demarcation cutting through mountain ranges, deserts and forests without regard to the nature of the land and the rights and histories of those who have lived there long before. Desire lines violate the order of the grid, and are invariably forms of resistance, whether the transcripts of everyday misbehaviour (Scott 1990), or milestones marked and monumentalised as history, such as the Soweto marches of 1976 (Meskell, this volume). Violation of the grid invariably evokes discipline and punishment – Foucault's key analysis of the tension between order and disorder (Foucault 1979). Violence is inherent in the social construction of space. Recall the fate of Estienne Barbier, who led a minor rebellion by a group of colonists who were discontented with the company's restrictions on their own violent exploitation of the Khoikhoi. After being pronounced guilty, Barbier was

bound upon a double wooden cross that was used for those condemned to be broken on the wheel; first his right hand and then his head were struck off with a hatchet; he was then quartered and his entrails buried under the gallows, while the head and hand were nailed to a stake which was set up in Heer Straat, a road that leads from the Castle to the interior. The four quarters were sent into the interior and fastened to stakes which were set up in the districts.

(Mentzel 1919: 117)

Social space is institutionalised at different scales. Azeem Badroodien shows how the Ottery School of Industries sought both to formalise and contain 'colouredness' within the racial typology of apartheid, creating a 'metropolitan vocabulary' that is still evident in contemporary discussions about the nature of the city in South Africa. Such institutions were

formative in the lives of so many of those institutionalised in the web of social institutions spread across the city, both in shaping how they understood and engaged with their subsequent lives, and in moulding the pasts, foibles and needs of individuals in ways that was supposed to make them 'more decent' and 'respectable' future citizens and 'urban dwellers'.

(Badroodien, this volume)

At the next scale up – the level of the suburb – Steven Robins tracks the agency and resistance of those who have been – and are – the subjects of state and municipal social engineering and town planning. Through looking in detail at Manenberg, created from the forced removals of the group areas legislation and taken as an exemplar of social dysfunctionality, Robins highlights the challenge to governmentality in the contemporary city. On one side, the gated communities, surveillance and ‘Californianisation’ of Cape Town. On the other side, the disorderly, criminalised world beyond the limits of control:

Manenberg regularly features in the media as a space of ‘social pathology’ and dysfunctionality, a representation that is reproduced through almost daily violence and gang killings. It is also associated with the highly militaristic and hierarchical prison gangs such as the ‘28s’ and ‘26s’ that have in recent years transformed themselves into sophisticated corporate structures connected to multinational drug cartels and crime syndicates such as ‘The Firm’, the ‘Hard Livings’ and the ‘Americans’. Drug trafficking, alcohol sales and distribution, gunrunning, taxis and sex work are the major sources of revenue of this multibillion-dollar industry. With its extremely high levels of unemployment and poverty, Manenberg has become a ripe recruiting ground for the foot soldiers of the drug kingpins, the merchants and hitmen.

(Robins, this volume)

Ottery and Manenberg were shaped by the grid of apartheid modernism – the geography of locations and relocations, class, race, segregated services and Group Area boundaries that structured the apartheid city and which will continue to shape the future city. Within these boundaries are the pleasure gardens of the present and future, such as the gated utopia of Century City and the GrandWest entertainment destination. Such places are ‘amalgams of nostalgia and desire – shaped, and shaping, aspects of city living’. As such, they invariably invoke memory in the form of heritage – material remnants of the past that can be re-imbued and saturated with associations and interpretations. Contemporary South Africa is particularly susceptible to this combination of nostalgia, desire and consumerism, which provides new senses of home in a burgeoning, but markedly unequal, economy. Retail outlets, food and drink, movies and, in some cases, gambling, combined with secure parking, perimeter controls and internal surveillance and security, are new forms of public places, albeit with a ‘public’ that is defined in practice by those who are excluded (Hall and Bombardella, this volume). By evoking desire, entertainment destinations seek to legitimate the new grids of control and authority, the linear successors of the Dutch East India Company’s Garden and the ‘very fine and delightful harbours’ encased within the protective walls of the perimeter.

Heritage is as much an evocation of the past as a relationship with the present, requiring not only the recall and representation of previous lives and circumstances, but also the motivation of today’s participants, with their own desires and purposes. Consequently, the heritage of Cape Town’s most widely known site of racial cleansing – District Six, from which more than 60,000 people were forcibly removed in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s – can either be recalled

for the purposes of fleeting consumerism at GrandWest (where it provides the theme for a food court and shopping mall) or for the reconstruction of community through memory and reconciliation (Rassool, this volume).

The potential contradictions inherent in heritage come together in Leslie Witz's account of township tours, a particular characteristic of the post-apartheid city. The township tour reasserts the grid of order and control. 'Trustworthy escorts' are offered to places of crime and potential danger. The township is presented as outside the orderly world:

through the very routes they traverse, the sites they point out, and the destinations they call upon, these tours, almost inadvertently, confirm the spatial arrangements of apartheid. Explicitly, they are not offered as tours of Cape Town, but rather as separate, distinct, township tours. It is almost as if the tourist is being offered a journey to an exotic destination outside the boundaries of the city, where the attractions are beer-makers, traditional healers, dancing, taverns and shanty towns.

Instead of presenting museums to the touring public, the townships in the Western Cape have become living museums on a grand scale. The primary sites and destinations are not classified by scenic or historical interest but through their ability to provide an opportunity to identify and to see 'the people' in carefully curated settings: at home, at school, on the streets, at work (but not in an industrial context) and at leisure. There is the mandatory visit to a few carefully selected people in their homes, ranging from a small tin and wood house to a room in a hostel or a new Reconstruction and Development Programme home. A daycare centre is chosen to put on a daily performance for the tourists. The 'short walk' through a series of designated streets, under the watchful eye of the guide, is intended to impart a 'feel' of the townships. At a craft centre, tourists are able to satisfy their expectation of encountering work and development. Simultaneously they can also 'feel good' by purchasing what appears to be a handmade memory of Africa. Finally, there is the social experience, set up in a 'safe' shebeen, where the tourists will be able to partake of township life but where they won't be harassed by drunken and disorderly clientele.

(Witz, this volume)

At the same time, though, the itinerary of the township tour intersects with museums built from within the community as sites of reconciliation and reconstruction, and particularly with the District Six Museum, which Witz notes is inevitably a part of every route. As Rassool has also shown in this volume, the District Six Museum is both a memory project of a specific community and a recollection and interrogation of forced removals in general – and therefore of the violence and dislocation that is the essence of the national history of apartheid. In this, the District Six Museum looks to the future:

one of the most important missions of the District Six Museum is to question race at every turn and to assert a politics of non-racialism and anti-racism in every facet of its work. The museum holds on to and propounds the possibility of a non-racial community, as it emerges out of and is reflected in the history of District Six.

(Rassool, this volume)

At this site, then, the 'tourist gaze' confronts the reconstruction of community through memory, an intersection of the 'projects of capture and containment', and 'the popular energies which subvert, bypass, supersede and evade them'.

Potent, unstable spaces such as the District Six Museum are the creative nodes where new configurations of social space may emerge. Abdulkader Tayob's case study of negotiated heritage is one such instance. Here, the modernist tradition of rational planning deadlocked with the assertion of post-apartheid identity in the contestation of Muslim burial sites on the margins of the grid of the city. The rules and procedures of law, regulation, government agency and research required argument and evidence. But from the perspective of the Muslim Judicial Council, the scales of governmentality were weighted against the community. The MJC's currency was rather community solidarity, public opinion and the long history of repression and the denial of heritage:

the identification of heritage sites furnished the occasion to evoke powerful narratives waiting to be told. Principally, heritage sites determined by archival records risk telling only one kind of story: the story of the victors. Even though the oral respondents in this case did not locate their narratives at the site in question, they were instrumental in giving concrete life to new perceptions of the mountain previously ignored on the margins of Cape society.

The way forward lay in a different conceptualisation, one of 'sacred space', a 'new space over the old' (Tayob, this volume).

The social construction of such new senses of space is work in progress, a set of tentative explorations that may result in a different order, but which may also fall back into the old, contested, regime that has been a defining feature of the city from its earliest days through to post-apartheid planning and regulation. The conundrums of this exploration are captured by a contemporary garden of remembrance – the Apartheid Museum. As Lindsay Bremner shows, the Apartheid Museum is representative of a new genre, an 'evolving cartography of sites' dedicated to apartheid memory and narrative: the Robben Island and District Six Museums in Cape Town and the Hector Pieterse Museum in Soweto (studies in various chapters in this volume), the Museum of the Peoples' Struggle in Port Elizabeth, the Fort Museum in Johannesburg, the Cato Manor Museum in Durban. Such cultural institutions evoke new kinds of public consciousness and new kinds of public encounters, 'excavating the apartheid consciousness, and subjecting it to an exhibitionary gaze'. Archival displays are of texts, film footage and photographs:

where people tell their stories, bear witness to their apartheds, they tend to be its icons – Hendrik Verwoerd, Winnie Mandela, Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Other more ordinary unknown people acquire iconic status, as their hyper-scaled presences tell their stories in the documentaries that are shown in the museum's viewing rooms. This effectively objectifies apartheid, thereby making it more easily consumable.

(Bremner, this volume)

The experience of the museum is structured and enhanced by a visceral re-creation of the containment and oppression of the 'apartheid condition':

Its enveloping windowless wall (stone packed in steel cages) and south west corner lift shaft resembling a prison watchtower, make obvious connections to incarceration.... On entry, one's ticket classifies one as black or white, re-enacting the discrimination practised in every social space and on entry into every public building under apartheid. ... After ascending the entrance ramp and descending into the museum again, one feels 'claustrophobic panic'. The gratuitous ascent and descent this involves invoke a sense of manipulation and control, of being distanced from the world around one and entering a secret, restricted realm where everything is unknown and unpredictable. The frosted glass and aluminium reception desk and electronic news flash that face one on entry add to this feeling of alienation. They do not welcome. They are harsh, cold, mechanical and impersonal. The building's interior utilises unrefined, hard, neutral materials – red brick, steel, raw concrete, and intentionally crude detailing. It is institutional, industrial, and un-domestic. Its spaces are dungeon-like – dull, gray, sombre, devoid of natural light. The only spaces that are painted are the recreated solitary confinement cells, themselves bleak and sanitised. Natural lighting is kept to a minimum, often through openings located in positions that make it impossible to see out. The passage of time is obscured. Its acoustics are similarly deadened. Audio material is transmitted through overhead speakers that one has to stand directly beneath to hear. Outside of this space, sound is muted and multivalent – a dull, disturbing buzzing and bleeping permeates everywhere. The museum's exhibits are, for the most part, fixed to walls on purposefully crude steel brackets or contained within steel cages. These cages construct a maze of exhibits one moves around and through, claustrophobically en-caged in the exhibition oneself. ... They make one feel that there are unknown, hidden, impending knowledges within them; one enters with anxiety. Senses of alienation, dehumanisation, restriction and control prevail.

(Bremner, this volume)

But all of this – instances of what Noëleen Murray (this volume) terms a 'moment of architectural design' – is also part of an entertainment destination, the improbable creation of the Krok brothers, impresarios and owners of the adjacent Gold Reef City Casino. Here, just across the road, the theme is Johannesburg some 20 years after its founding – a time when the first substantial buildings had been constructed, but it was still enjoying the excitement and adventure of the gold rush. The entrance is through an ornate lobby based on the 1906 Carlton Hotel. Beyond is a large, circular area with the hub based on the Joubert Park kiosk, also dating to 1906. The surrounding space is given over to the gambling tables and slot machines which form a busy public space reminiscent of a market square. The main heritage focus is around the perimeter, where there are three-dimensional replicas of 11 major historic buildings, each marked with a bronze plaque (based on those used by the South African heritage authority), an archival photograph of the original building, and a brief historical summary. This is a sanitised past – a city without exploitation, racism or

violence – Johannesburg as a Wild West-frontier illusion of fun, camaraderie and equal opportunity for the bold-hearted. And this, of course, is the message of the casino itself – whoever you are, be bold enough to risk everything for the chance of a fortune and all that will come with it (Hall and Bombardella 2005).

The juxtaposition of these two cities – the devastation of apartheid and the mirage of casino heritage – recall the contradictions inherent in the social construction of space from the city's earliest days: François Valentyn's sense of forbidden fruits in the order of the Garden's grid, the vast social engineering project of apartheid, the tensions in post-apartheid town planning, the paradox of the township tour. Such contradictions, perhaps, propel the utopian tendency to want to start again, to draw a line over past spatial forms. The 1998 book and exhibition, *blank_Architecture, apartheid and after* sought such a new beginning through a set of themes – 'Invasions', 'Violence', 'International Tendency', 'Fortification', 'Promised Land' – and the striking 'visual conceit' of over 1,000 fluorescent tubes suspended from the ceiling, which 'sought to invert the associations of light, from the colonial trope of light in a dark continent, to light which is cruel, implacable, unforgiving' (Shepherd and Murray, this volume). In Njabulo Ndebele's words, this was 'perhaps the most important South African dialogue since the national dialogue that led to the writing of the constitution. This is the dialogue about writing the land. It is a project which affects all of us intimately' (Ndebele, this volume).

And yet, as Nick Shepherd and Noëleen Murray note in their introduction to this volume, *blank_* has had a limited effect on architecture in South Africa since 1998. Perhaps, as they write, this is because the 'disciplinary narrative' of 'just doing good architecture' tends to override a sense of context and response. But perhaps this is also because utopian visions – space without time – are always doomed to be hypothetical rather than realised. Perhaps it is because time always intrudes on space, and because the past, however unpalatable, is always with us.

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The Dutch East India Company garrison that arrived in Table Bay in 1652 had a definite idea of how a civilised settlement should be laid out. When the company's surveyor was instructed 'to be kept conscientiously at his work of making maps', his reference points were the cities of northern Europe and their heritage of streets and canals, orderly housefronts and social order. Streets at the dusty Cape were named for the new colony (Olifantstraat), but also for the high culture of Amsterdam and Den Hague: Heerenstraat and Heerengracht. When it came to laying out the foundations for a new, stone-built Castle in 1666, the plans recalled longstanding fortifications, emblematic of military power and prestige. This early example of heritage-on-demand was celebrated in the oration that marked the event: 'Augustus' dominion nor conquering Alexander/ Nor Caesar's mighty genius has ever had the glory/ To lay a cornerstone at earth's extremest end!' Thus was the history of the Roman Empire expropriated to give historic depth to this fragile toehold on the continent of Africa (Hall 2006).

Time has been socially constructed ever since. As Shepherd and Murray show, the historical representations of the city can be understood as a series of tropes: 'Cape Dutch' architecture, with its historical allusions to an earlier European baroque, neo-classicism and the architecture of Empire, the tropes of nationalism and apartheid, rediscovering signifiers of European cultural origins and superiority, and the allusions and pretensions of contemporary style, 'a bizarre and ever-increasing array of luxury townhouse complexes built in the ersatz style of Tuscan villages' (Matshikiza, this volume).

Not surprisingly, social constructions of time continue to be contested. Rassool (this volume) explores these cultural workings of heritage, public history and identity formation under conditions of political transition:

packaged as the recovery of a multicultural South Africa, culture and history were brought together into a timeless zone, a kaleidoscope of frozen ethnic stereotypes. A past-present relationship was established through the gaze on human culture scripted as traditional. But visits to the primitive in the diversity of South Africa were no longer cast as isolated encounters with 'natives in tribal setting'. In the 1990s, they were being framed as encounters with living cultures arranged in ethnically based cultural villages, township tours and village craft projects, all jostling with each other to take their place as the authentic past of the nation's visual splendour. It was expected by emerging cultural and tourism policy frameworks that this living spectacle would take place on an extensive scale, and that each 'community' would participate in a grand national celebration by finding cultural expressions.

Shepherd and Ernsten (this volume) focus in on one contested area, an exhumed burial ground on what was once the shoreline of Table Bay, a liminal zone where slaves and the colony's underclass were buried away from the gridded enclosures of the formal cemeteries. As they show, the conflict around the burial ground – as has so often been the case in similar situations around the world – comprised a thick rope of intertwined discourses, a conflict between the forces of memory and the forces of modernisation, development and urban renewal; a conflict between the forces of civil society and various state agencies and institutions of governance; a dispute over the role of the sciences in post-apartheid society; issues of race and identity, and of local, regional and national concerns and interests. As Shepherd and Ernsten write:

the surfacing of the buried dead is always experienced as a traumatic moment, as an eruption into the fabric of the present of the past in its most literal and inescapable aspect. But it is also a moment that takes us to our deepest selves and, socially speaking, confronts us with profound energies.

Understanding how time is implicated in space, and how the material world of things is given meaning in these discourses of heritage constitutes a rich field of enquiry, benefiting from different theoretical approaches. Thus Murray (this volume) approaches the city through the eyes of the architect, evoking architectural 'moments', buildings standing as monuments. Meskell, from the

standpoint of anthropology, explores how such monumentality works, how the past becomes present and how the past is crucial in forging a viable, potentially healing, future. Meskell's interest is in 'negative heritage', conflictual sites that are mobilised for didactic purposes (District Six, the Apartheid Museum). Such negative heritage, though, may in itself deny the valency of the past, diluting 'the social obligation to engage in more active remembrance.... The monument's inherent exteriority affects the internal experience of individuals' (Meskell, this volume). And Garuba calls up the literary device of *memesis* in his close study of the Robben Island Museum, the separation between an object and its representation, creating a relationship of disjuncture. Garuba sees this space of disjuncture as the space occupied by the social codes, conventions and interpretive devices that work to create the imaginative correspondence between things. This is the key 'space of narrative, the space where a discourse is constructed to provide the ground of intelligibility' (Garuba, this volume).

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These explorations of the social construction of space and time show that what might seem at first settled and stable is, on closer examination, unstable and contested. Memory and desire are intertwined in a complex vortex. Sometimes the past is claimed to be closed and desire is the pure yearning of consumerism – the alluring shopfronts in the heritage mall. Elsewhere, the construction of the past is open and challenged, and the yearning is for the recovery of memory. This instability goes to the heart of the concept of the city – an issue taken up by Vanessa Watson, who challenges the fundamentals of the orderly grid and the rules of planning:

a vast gap exists between the notion of 'proper' communities held by most planners and administrators (grounded in the rationality of Western modernity and development), and the rationality which informs the strategies and tactics of those who are attempting to survive, materially and culturally, in the harsh environment of Africa's cities.

(Watson, this volume)

This is reflected in Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas's quixotic expedition to Lagos, city of 'exuberant existence':

our first engagement with the city was from a mobile position. Partly out of fear, we stayed in the car. This meant, in essence, that we were preoccupied with the foreground.... Lagos seemed to be a city of burning edges. Hills, entire roads, were paralleled with burning embankments. At first sight, the city had an aura of apocalyptic violence: entire sections of it seemed to be smouldering, as if it were one entire rubbish dump.

But on his third visit, Koolhaas was able to hire the President's helicopter:

from the air, the apparently burning garbage heap turned out to be, in fact, a village, an urban phenomenon with a highly organised community living on its crust ... what

seemed, at ground level, an accumulation of dysfunctional movements, seemed from above an impressive performance, evidence of how well Lagos might perform if it were the third largest city in the world.

(‘Fragments of a lecture on Lagos’ 2003; cited by Gandy 2005: 40)

Who, then, should be the emblematic pedestrian, walking the desire lines of the colony and postcolony? Here is one story, still to be inscribed in Cape Town’s public spaces of names and monuments. One who watched as the Dutch dug out the ditches of their first fortification in 1652 was Krotoa, a Khoi woman of substance. As the garrison sought to trade with the Khoikhoi, Krotoa came to play a pivotal, and complex, role. Inside the garrison, she became ‘Eva’ – maid to the commander’s wife and interpreter. Back on the other side of the frontier, Krotoa was the daughter of a chief. Later, Krotoa married a minor Dutch official, was widowed, and in 1674 died destitute, reviled as a drunkard and prostitute. Nevertheless, Krotoa was a Christian and so was the first to be buried in the new Castle. The company’s journalist at the Cape used the opportunity of her death to offer a philosophy. Noting that she had been ‘transformed from a female Hottentoo almost into a Netherland woman’, the diarist observed that her subsequent debauchery proved that ‘nature, however closely and firmly muzzled by imprinted principles, nevertheless at its own time triumphing over all precepts, again rushes back to its inborn qualities’ (quoted by Malherbe 1990: 51). A more fitting epitaph is an extract from Karen Press’s evocative narrative poem:

no word came for me from Oedaso, ever
and so I stayed among those people
became a dutch wife, learned
to speak in long dutch sentences,
became a widow, standing like a wild buck
in the yard of the foreigners

they would not take me in, hottentot woman
nor would they let me run away, they broke my legs

mine are the crippled footprints
worn into the rocks along the harbour wall

the beginning was an exploding sun
I ran dancing into the fire
the end unravelled like an old root,
dry with sorrow, lasting forever

(Press 1990: 66)

Krotoa – the ‘woman between’ – dared to challenge the authority of the grid. She paid for her audacity in derision and rejection, and her ‘crippled footprints’ trace a desire line in the landscape. But the promise remains in the fire, in the

'exploding sun', in reaching for something that, by its very nature, can never be grasped and possessed.

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