Transitioning racialized spaces

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Abstract South Africa is often cited as being a society in transition. Travelling from apartheid to utopia, the metaphor implies, we are transforming in the in-between. For Winnicott, transitional spaces reside in between internal and external reality, offering an intermediate area in which to play. It could be said that, in contrast, apartheid structures impeded such transitional spaces; they defined where and where not to play, who could play with whom and what was serious and thereby not available for creativity. By analyzing narratives written by South Africans remembering apartheid as part of the Apartheid Archives Project (the narratives themselves potentially, but not always, representing a transitional space), I first explore how space is remembered and inscribed, including how physical spaces, such as beaches or restaurants, are carved out by the act of remembering. Second the narratives, written *now* about *then*, offer possibilities for exploring transitions between the past and the present and implications for playing in the present and the future. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society* (2011) 16, 49–70. doi:10.1057/pcs.2010.39

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Introduction

The oft-repeated trope that South Africa is a ‘society in transition’ implies the hope that the past can be repaired and moved beyond. The realities of South African life, however, as in other places that have experienced systematic racism in the past, belie the simplicity of this formulation. Racism remains present in South African society, and race as a construct is filled with sensitivity and anxiety. It has been partly in response to this conundrum that the Apartheid Archive Project (2009), aiming to collect narratives from ordinary South Africans about their experiences of apartheid, was conceived. The project rationale is described as follows:

It is 15 short years since the curtain was finally drawn on the system of institutionalised racism that the world knew as apartheid. Memorial

signifiers (such as monuments, museums, statues or street names) of its demise are writ large on South Africa's public landscape. Yet, its pernicious effects on our inner-worlds; on memory, identity and subjectivity continue to constrain the promises of a truly post-apartheid South Africa. Trapped by a national desire to look forward rather than to the past, the everyday personal accounts of the scourge of apartheid are rapidly fading into a forgotten past.

The project aims both to remember the past and to encourage thinking about the effects of the past on the present. In this paper, which draws on narratives collected through the Apartheid Archives Project, I begin with the question of what it means to be a society in transition – implying a hope for the future – whilst still trying to understand the relationship between the past and the present. The trope foregrounds the in-betweenness of South African society and its dual orientation towards the past and the future. Implicit in the metaphor is the troubling question of whether we are indeed transitioning or whether the call to the past is stronger than our hopes for the future. I apply Donald Winnicott's concept of transitionality, a term that implies a very particular kind of playful space and not necessarily one occupied by a society calling itself transitional, to analyse narratives written for the Apartheid Archives Project. I argue that our memories of the past are often lodged not in playfulness but in a collapse of transitional space. The act of telling our stories, however, has the potential to enter transitionality, paradox and play.

For Winnicott (1971), a transitional space is one that exists between internal and external reality. It is neither internal nor external but rather a potential space, or an intermediate area, in which to play. The most famous example of a transitional object, a child's blanket, is conceptualized as an object that can be turned into a source of comfort with special powers. Because it stands in neither for internal nor for external reality, it can hold the paradoxes of the spaces in between: it is not the mother and is the mother at the same time. For Winnicott, transitional phenomena thus offer us a space of play that allows recognition of both internal and external reality, thereby helping us to understand the dynamic interplay between the two, without insisting that we choose. Difference (me or you, separate or united, fantasy or reality) is held in a state of playful tension (Dimen, 1991; Leary, 1997a) and can thereby be understood relationally rather than as fixed or divided into immutable categories. In this way, fantasy, for Winnicott (1971), is the unconscious 'material that underlies playing' (p. 145). Indeed, the ability to playfully suspend difference is what allows the other to be appreciated as different, potentially opening 'a space of thirdness, enabling us to negotiate differences and to connect' (Benjamin, 2004, p. 11).

It is clear from Winnicott's work that this state of play is not trivial or frivolous. On the contrary, it is serious, sometimes unpleasant or even hateful or

aggressive. Transitionality and play are the mechanisms of creativity that belong to the serious business of being authentic, 'being alive' (Winnicott, 1971, p. 67) and of being part of cultural life. It is the space between the internal and the external where subjectivity resides (Fonagy and Target, 2007). Proclaiming a society as transitional, of course, does not necessarily mean that the transition is happening in the alive and in-between manner implied by Winnicott's concept of transitional space. The metaphor of a society in transition could be said to be one that hopes to be in the process of coming alive, of apprehending difference as paradoxical, and of creating an in-between space not wholly defined by internal experience or external reality.

Winnicott (1971) likened the transitional space to the area of illusion between mother and infant in which the baby creates a breast that is already there. 'I tried to draw attention to this aspect of transitional phenomena by claiming that in the rules of the game we all know that we will never challenge the baby to elicit an answer to the question: did you create that or did you find it' (p. 89). Transitional phenomena, then, are areas of creativity where distinct divisions between self and other, between playing and reality are suspended in what Winnicott called a potential space. Winnicott understood this potential space as the location of cultural experience. Cultural experience radiates out from the potential playful space between mother and infant: 'Cultural experience begins with the creative living first manifested in play' (p. 100). Winnicottian notions can potentially help us to understand the relationship between the individual and the social when we are exploring social questions. We thereby avoid either individualizing social aspects of experience (such as racism) or ignoring the individual experience (Long, 2009a,b). This does not mean, however, that all things social originate in the mother–infant relationship. Rather, they originate in the attainment of an in-between experience of being alive, an experience that has its model in the mother–infant relationship. Neither does it imply that all things social count as 'experience' or as 'creative living'. Aliveness implies spontaneity and authenticity, not compliance.

In contrast to the transitional space Winnicott described, apartheid institutions can be understood to be the opposite of transitional spaces. Rather than opening up potential spaces to play, apartheid structured space created rigid rules about where and where not to play, who could play with whom and what was serious and thereby not available for creativity. Apartheid structures offered no creative tension between differences; rather, they proclaimed instead untranscendable divisions between me and you; black and white; my space and your space. Instead of mutual recognition working through differences (Benjamin, 1990, 2004), apartheid offered misrecognition through strict proclamation of differences. A shared space was against the rules. Winnicott (1971), relating the creativity of transitionality to the search for the self, argued that the area of playing allows us to 'postulate the existence of the self' (p. 64). When transitional space is closed down, circumscribed or impinged

upon, the self is obliged to retreat in response to the intrusion. The experience of impingements results in the development of compliance characteristic of a false self (Winnicott, 1960, 1962). Impingements involve the substitution of shared reality with the mother's reality, compelling the child to comply. Characterised by this hallmark of compliance, the false self protects the true self (the repository of spontaneity) by becoming what is wanted from it. In the process, potential space loses its potential and its playfulness. Apartheid structures, insisting on compliance, demanded of the subjects that the spontaneous gesture be disavowed in favour of a self defined in strict oppositional terms – no in-betweenness allowed.

Ogden (1985), exploring the psychopathology of potential space, asserts that a collapse of the dynamic tension between fantasy and reality, linked with cumulative impingements, results in a failure of transitionality. He suggests that this collapse can take four possible forms: reality can be subsumed by fantasy; reality can be used as a defence against fantasy; the poles of fantasy and reality can become dissociated from one another; or a foreclosure of both can result in a state of non-experience. Of the possibilities he explores, two diametrically opposed positions seem to apply to apartheid structures. On one hand, apartheid structures encouraged a collapse in the direction of fantasy – racialised fantasies of superiority and inferiority – ‘so that fantasy becomes a thing in itself as tangible, as powerful, as dangerous and as gratifying as external reality from which it cannot be differentiated’ (p. 133). On the other hand, a collapse in the direction of reality was also accomplished: the external reality of racial divisions replaced the aliveness and multiplicity of the internal world. ‘Under such circumstances, reality robs fantasy of its vitality. Imagination is foreclosed’ (p. 133). In other words, particular fantasies were made to stand in for individual experiences of reality, and external reality overwrote the richness of fantasy. The peculiarity of the coincidence of two such different relationships between fantasy and reality seems not to have cancelled one another out, as we might expect, but rather to reinforce mutually. In this madness, apartheid structures are claimed to have launched a double assault on transitional space.

I do not mean to imply that apartheid structures have turned us all into false selves. Such an assertion would be unnecessarily pathologizing and would miss the playfulness that was uncontainable by apartheid structures and served as a challenge to these structures. It does suggest, however, that our racialized selves may easily recall a collapse of the creative tension between fantasy and reality – a collapse that was often vividly described in the Apartheid Archive narratives. I also am not suggesting that such structures were capable, big brother like, of shutting down potential space completely or permanently. As Bozzolli (2004) notes, apartheid structuring of physical space, ideologically designed to segregate, dehumanize and differentially value, ironically also had ‘the unintended consequences of permitting many of the ingredients for revolt to

develop' (p. 14). Paradoxically, the dual assault on reality and fantasy ultimately resulted in the demise of apartheid. It is this tension between memories of the past and revolt into the future that offers the possibility of opening up racialised transitional spaces in the present.

The concept of a society in transition, then, perhaps also implies a society searching for a transitional space in which to form an identity. To explore what happens to playfulness within these narratives and how spaces come to mark the intermediate area, I analyse narratives written in the present about the past. The analysis is divided into two sections:

First, I analyse the kinds of stories that were told. The narratives themselves are rich and varied. One of the themes that arose concerns what happened to people when they were in playful spaces, such as beaches, restaurants or swimming pools. Many of the narratives referred to these kinds of settings or settings where a playful moment was disrupted by apartheid discourse. The physical spaces referred to are exemplars of places where play is expected, but also where apartheid segregation of physical terrain was visible. It has been noted that physical spaces are politically and affectively structured (Thrift, 2004a,b) and also become evocative objects in our internal worlds (Bollas, 2008). The beaches of these narratives hold something of the meaning of this physical space but also offer a symbolic terrain for the metaphoric exploration of transitional space. I use Winnicott's concept of transitional space to explore these moments.

Second, I delve into the ways in which the stories were told. The narratives themselves could be considered to be transitional spaces, areas of creativity where the past and the present can both enter transitional space to be experienced, reworked and reflected upon. How the narratives are used may also help us to understand the effects of racism in the past and at present. Where the first section of the analysis aims to examine the stories that were told and the presentations of the past, the second section focuses on reflection. I reflect on how the stories were told, including some of the ways that I have told my own particular story or entered playfully into the narratives. The two sections stand in tension to one another, not only in terms of the style employed but also in terms of the different 'fictions' (Ogden, 2005) that I, as an author inevitably telling my own story, present. I have chosen to retain this tension rather than aiming to cohere the style in the hope that doing so will not foreclose on the richness of the narrative terrain. I conclude with a consideration of the possibilities of opening up transitional spaces in the present and of some of the paradoxes that these possibilities may present.

Play

Operating in-between internal and external reality, between the past and the future, the narratives submitted for the Apartheid Archives Project present

memories, intensely individual experiences speaking to a social backdrop of a shared understanding of the effects of apartheid. Within these narratives, memories were often presented of playful moments in which the narrator entered into a space and found that it turned into something malign, destructively different from the promise it had initially offered. Narratives are resonant with the shock, disappointment, shame and anger of having the transitional space rudely interrupted by the everyday cruelties of apartheid life. The analysis begins with an exploration of some of these narratives and the oppositions they present between playing and reality.

A narrative submitted by a white woman, in which she presents a childhood memory, illustrates this opposition. She recalls a day when ‘something large was being delivered at our house’. The ‘nanny’ is not around and the narrator’s mother is ill, so she prepares drinks for the delivery men.

I had watched my mother and our nanny setting out trays with drinks or tea countless times before. So I put on the kettle, found the tray, a tray cloth, the cups and saucers, the silver teaspoons and sugar bowl, the teapot and milk jug covered in a pattern of delicate roses.

She presents a picture of herself as a child, playfully, albeit anxiously, preparing tea as if she were an adult, immersed in the aesthetic details of her task. In this moment she is ‘both a little girl and a mother and the question of which she is, never arises’ (Ogden, 1985, p. 135). When her actual mother enters the kitchen, however, the playful moment is broken:

At this point, my mother came into the kitchen. I could see her becoming inexplicably angry as she looked at the tea tray, laden with the ‘best’ china. ‘Don’t be ridiculous!’ she may have said – or words to this effect. It took a short while for me to realize what I had done wrong. The men outside were not family, or friends. They were not ‘like us’. Of the five men, three were black. Black men did not ever come into our house as visitors; nor were they offered tea out of special rose-covered cups.

Her play is interrupted by her mother’s disapproval, which at first seems inexplicable but then starts to make sense without the need for an explanation. These men were not ‘like us’; they did not belong to the same category as the special rose-covered cups. What has impinged on her illusion is a set of oppositions, which proliferate as the narrative continues. First she is faced with a choice of naming. The white men are different to her family, but ‘I could call them *meneer* [mister]’.

The black men looked like all black men, to me. ... I did not know how to speak to them – I did not know their names. I could not call them *meneer*, certainly not *oom* [uncle] – what then? Best to pretend they were not there.

The black men challenge her with what she does not know. She knows the category of 'black men', but her dilemma is a relational one, not a categorical one: how is she to interact with them? How is a space to be shared? Her immediate solution is to deny their existence, but this possibility leads her to another dilemma: if not the china cups, what does she give them? The oppositions she has encountered are mirrored in her choices. She decides to serve *Oros* (orange squash drink) instead of tea. Initially she chooses glasses but she is faced with racialised spaces yet again: glasses for the white men and red tin cups for the black men. Her narrative refers to a common practice of keeping tin mugs for black people to use so as not to sully the crockery used by white people. The relational space has been categorized and the dilemma resolved.

Unexpectedly, suddenly, I was flooded with a sense of acute shame. I did not want to set out two glasses (for the white men) and tin mugs for the blacks. I couldn't face the moment when I would have to set down the tray, on a stone table in the garden – and would see their faces looking at the tray, so clearly mapped out and divided – tin mugs one side; glasses the other.

Having re-ordered her task to accommodate the impingement of categories of race, she finds herself confronted not with something playful and illusory, but with something fixed and divided. The transitional space can no longer be used as external reality; it collapses upon internal reality, marking her as the person who has set out divisions in space. In a moment of defiance of this collapse, she decides to disrupt the divisions by playfully refusing to comply with the fixed categories with which she is presented:

I imagine I bit my nails (a habit in those days). Then I made my decision. I took out five tin mugs. I poured and mixed the *Oros*. I picked up the tray (minus tray cloth) and walked out, feet like lead, gingerly balancing everything – eyes down. I felt deeply self-conscious. I was no longer ignorant – I felt implicated ... at this moment I felt, at a visceral level, my whiteness and what that might mean.

That narrative vividly evokes the anxieties involved in disrupting the racial divisions of apartheid. The choice to use the tin mugs, rather than, for example, returning to the china cups, underscores the limits of defiance: the playful space has been shattered. She, having been invited into the racialised domain, can no longer plead ignorance. She risks defiance in an attempt to subvert this racialised domain. When she presents her tray, the white men laugh at her while the black men silently drink, and her small act of defiance is rendered meaningless. 'I can still feel the way in which my childhood self burned with shame, humiliation and guilt'.

That narrative, written in the present about the past, illustrates how race is remembered as disruptive and destructive of play. Race spoils the playful space. Dimen (1991) argues that playing with the polarities of 'man' and 'woman' can disrupt gendered divisions by escaping the fixedness of essences. Leary (1997a) similarly argues that race can be played with if the dualism that race is both reality and fantasy (in the sense of being both part of the social world and part of the imagination) can be entertained. Instead of a transitional space able to hold 'a creative and pleasurable tension within dualisms' (Dimen, 1991, p. 346), what emerges in this narrative is a series of oppositions that restructure space, both internally and externally, shutting down a transitional arena rather than opening it up. Instead of a mutual recognition – 'a relation in which each person experiences the other as a "like subject," another mind who can be "felt with," yet has a distinct, separate center of feeling and perception' (Benjamin, 2004, p. 5), the oppositions offer misrecognition. The narrative also illustrates how the self of the past is experienced in the present as a site of bewilderment and humiliation, thereby linking race with shame (Altman, 2000; Gump, 2000). As oppositions replace illusion, painful and confusing emotions come to the fore.

While the narrative clearly is coloured by an experience of whiteness, which marks both the relational interchange and the internal experience in a particular manner, a sudden sense of realization of the impingement of race on play was narrated by both black and white participants. A number of stories were told of entering into playful spaces, such as restaurants, beaches, swimming pools or hotels, with the expectation of play only to be followed by the confrontation of the racial segregation of spaces. An Indian woman, for example, tells a childhood memory of collecting shells on the beach and wandering off and being startled by two white men who were fishing.

[T]hey called me a 'coolie bitch' and swore at me for contaminating their fishing spot with my black skin. I recall my mother rushing to my aid, but apologising to these racists instead of confronting them. I felt hurt and humiliated when my mother explained that I had broken the rules.

A black woman describes the humiliation of going to a clothing store and, instead of being allowed access to the changing rooms used by white patrons, was shown to 'a toilet/kitchen/storage area, clearly used by cleaning staff, to try on a dress I was interested in buying'. A white woman describes going to a Milky Lane (ice cream parlour) with her domestic worker and being refused service because black people were not allowed entry. 'This was the first day in my life that I realized people weren't all the same and equal in the eyes of the world'.

In each case, the narrator conveys a sense of surprise at expecting to enter into a space of enjoyment but being confronted instead with racialized demarcations

of self and environment. Eng and Han (2000, 2006) suggest that everyday experience is racialized such that good and bad *racialized* objects are introjected into the raced subject, positioning the subject in relation to these affectively coloured objects. As with the Kleinian understanding of introjection of objects, similarly raced objects and differently raced objects may be introjected in idealized or denigrated form. Shells become a reminder of skin colour, an invitation to cruelty; shopping for clothes becomes a signifier for exclusion; milkshakes suddenly exist in the realm of the forbidden. Following the impingement, the narrator views herself differently. What she thought to be the way her world was populated is subverted. The shell collector feels hurt and humiliated by her mother's suggestion that she is at fault. The clothing shopper recalls the incident with difficulty when writing her narrative years later. The woman writing about the Milky Lane describes a formative moment when the world looked different to her and looked differently upon her. Narrators draw on memories to call up moments that capture the imposed feeling of these internalized object relations, the sense that something foreign and destructive has intruded. Through stories about the past told in the present, the surprise and intrusion narrated reflects something about the uneasy space that past memories occupy in relation to the oppositions of apartheid.

In some narratives where the narrator's knowledge of apartheid structures was directly reported, when the racist encounter was no longer a surprise, this uneasy relationship between self and environment as well as between play and imposition was expressed. One woman writes a narrative of going to an international hotel, a place where all are admitted regardless of the colour of their skin, and unexpectedly finding an obstacle. Although the hotel was international, she was asked to leave the dance club because she was black.

Apparently, the space where people let their hair down through dance and song was local – local rules applied and whites were not supposed to mingle with blacks when they were having fun. They might do something illegal, such as foolishly desire the black woman on the dancing floor.

The story tells of a process of finding a space in which to be and coming up against prohibition, of a process in which play comes up against the limits of desire. One can play, but only so far.

In one story, a black woman went with her lighter skinned cousins to a new swimming pool:

Although I didn't know so at the time, these pools were 'for whites only'. Only after being in the water for a little while, mania subsided and having taken a little time to look around me did I notice that I was the only dark-skinned person in that pool (my brother and young cousins all being fair-skinned and light-haired). No one else seemed to notice this rather

surprising little piece of trivia. In hazy retrospect, part of me must have sensed that what we were doing was ‘risky’ behaviour because I got out of the water and went to my cousins who were sitting and picnicking on the lawn next to the pool and asked them if it was OK to swim in the ‘whites pool’.

The transitional space is maintained until ‘mania subsides’, and then racialized awareness surfaces. The narrator highlights the triviality of the information she has noticed and remembers a sense of risk in retrospect. The narrative continues to recount how a policeman with a *sjambok* (whip) in his hand then told her to get out of the water ‘because this pool wasn’t for blacks’. When she realised that the policeman saw only her, and not her brother and cousins, in that category, she was left ‘in bewilderment’ to wait for her peers to finish playing. She ends her narrative by writing, ‘I have since held government responsible for spoiling any kind of fun!’

That story offers a different perspective on an internal sense of surprise and confusion. Although the rules were known, in the story they were also not known because they distorted, rather than mirrored, lived experience. Such misrecognitions can constitute microtraumas. In being misrecognized by the other, our racialized selves are rendered unrecognized (Leary, 2000). The story painfully highlights the arbitrariness of racial allocations and the gap between experience of self and inscription of self through apartheid structures. Another narrative, which also highlights the arbitrariness of racial categories, expresses the anger that the experience of misidentification of self, and not simply misidentification of racial categories, evokes:

Neither of us coloured children could swim, so we’d pay our entrance fee [to the whites-only swimming pool], walk around, proudly defiant and leave soon thereafter. On other occasions we would go to the ‘whites only’ beaches in Sea Point and laugh at the police whom we believed couldn’t tell the difference between the Jewish beachgoers and ourselves. Again none of us went to the beach to swim, nor did we stay very long but would end our ‘acts of defiance’ by destroying the mail in the mailboxes of the white people living in the flats along Sea Point beach road.

The anger expressed in that extract speaks to a wish to challenge apartheid versions of ownership of space and belonging. The swimming pool and the beach become spaces to play in a different way: not for swimming but for challenging authority, subverting identity and rebelling against the racial lines that are designed to keep white ‘safe’ and keep black out. The imposition of rules about where, how and with whom to play are acknowledged and then subverted, albeit at a cost: the story is embedded in a more painful narrative in which everyday life – for example, going to school, playing with the white

neighbours or observing her parents' 'mixed' marriage – was made considerably more difficult by apartheid structures. The story offers a site of rebellion in the context of many other rebellions impossible to accomplish.

It also highlights the centrality of aggression to the meeting of transitional space and apartheid structures. In that story, the existence of the rules is consciously acknowledged and the response is one of anger and defiance. Another narrative describes a fight with a peer. Fighting can sometimes be understood as a form of play, but in this case the transitional feeling of the fight was transformed by the intrusion of racism:

As on other occasions that I'd had no control over, my prepubescent anger threatened to overwhelm me and soon we were furiously raining fists on each other. And then somewhere in the midst of the litany of swearing in Xhosa and beating, I uttered the words I most regret, 'you kaffir!' The energy of the fight prematurely waned and we both stood there heaving and defeated. I, with a hand to my black and steadily swelling eye, and he with a strange look on his physically unscathed face. I immediately wished that I could erase those words from my mind. I wished my opponent would get up in the morning having forgotten what I'd said.

Although Winnicott's (1971) concept of playing is often understood as a creative one, he understood it as satisfying but not necessarily innocent or devoid of aggression. Transitional objects can be smelly and can be bitten. One of the features of true transitional phenomena is that the object 'must survive instinctual loving, and also hating and, if it be a feature, pure aggression' (p. 5). Racialized aggression, however, cannot be transitional. It calls up a system of meanings that channel aggression and thereby 'impinge upon rather than being'. The divisions of racialized aggression, based as they are on clear lines between self and other, are too stark to allow for a potential space between internal and external reality. In contrast, they fix polarities (Dimen, 1991) rather than maintaining a creative tension. Furthermore, as Hinshelwood (2007) maintains, racism is about intolerance, which relates to one's own internal feeling of the intolerable. The result is not creative tension, but 'a brutalized internal world that often feels dead and at the mercy of the alien internal object that demands the devaluation of external objects and relations, and of all human values, which might be represented by good internal objects' (p. 5).

It may be possible for racism to be playful in the Winnicottian sense, much as the infant pretends to be mommy and berates her mother for being a bad, bad baby. But this would be possible only with pretence; the fixity of internal and external reality would have to be suspended. The fight at first offers an intermediate area for the narrator's prepubescent anger, but this is annulled by the racial slur. The energy changes as something else enters the intermediate area between the two boys, an assault of a different order. The narrator vividly

expresses the damage done to the boy by the slur rather than by the fists, leaving 'a strange look on his physically unscathed face'. The sense of damage done to the self through the discovery that racism has permeated within is also vividly portrayed. Hinshelwood (2007) suggests that an intolerable internal object offers fertile soil for the intolerance of racism: racism is called to us from within. This moment seems to typify not only the intolerable as intolerant racism, but also how the intrusion of racism is felt to be intolerable. The intrusion of race into the space reflects the intrusion of race into the self.

The mess made by racism and apartheid structures is vividly captured by a subject in Machingawuta's (2009) study of participants interviewed about their written narratives. In her interview, a black woman describes the 'communal life' of the area where she grew up and the toilets that were shared by the community:

[I]t was a tap whereby you had to have something, a wooden thing [demonstrating] if you don't have the wooden thing you had to press hard, that was the type of [pause] in such a way that up to date when I dream when I want to go to the toilet, it's just a messy toilet. I always dream of a messy toilet. I never go, never, not in my dreams [pause] that's the impact.

The participant then says, 'Ja but some I've written them in the narrative' (which makes no reference to this experience), and the matter is not returned to in the interview. The messy toilet of her dreams remains encapsulated in her unconscious, unchanged by the present, as a symbol of the manner in which apartheid structures and messes have embedded themselves in her internal world. The dream reminds us of the everyday violence of apartheid; the dream remains enclosed in the narrative as a difficult-to-process emblem of the past in the present.

Stories located within transitional spaces, then, tell of a process in which race intrudes upon and inscribes the self. Race enters the playful space and nullifies it, often leading to bewilderment and paralysis through the growing realisation that the space has been transformed into something unexpected, something other. It is a discovery that the familiar can turn strange, that the comforting can turn bad. Reversals are felt to be accomplished with violence and with a misidentification, or spoiling, of parts of the self. Instead of a creative tension between internal and external reality, where illusion can be explored, the space is foreclosed and the oppositions of apartheid solidified. Fantasy offers the 'ability to dream new dreams' (Person, 2006, p. 672). These dreams may be exciting or calming or frightening or angering, but they are new and therefore available for creativity. The content of many of the stories presented rehearses old dreams, symbols frozen in time. In contrast, the process – the ways in which the stories are told – are less static and, as explored in the following

section, suggest that the act of telling at least potentially offers a transitional space, albeit an uneasy one.

Narratives as Transitional Spaces

It is important to understand these stories not as transparent accounts of the processes of learning about the racialized social world, but as stories told in the present about the past. From a psychoanalytic perspective, memory serves as a vehicle into the past but one laced with imagination (Person, 2006) and subject to re-elaboration through the lens of the internal world in the present. Memory has indeed been a difficult concept for psychoanalysis to grapple with, from its beginnings when Freud (1905), questioning the accuracy of memory, revised his theory of early seduction into a theory of unconscious phantasy, presupposing the expressiveness of memory but not its reliability. The act of remembering race in the present context of post-apartheid South Africa raises complex issues of the difference between the taboos of the present and those of the past. Reconstructing the past is therefore an activity fraught with anxieties about how to represent the sins of the past and how to understand the fantasies of the present without invalidating the trauma of the past.

Bohleber (2007) offers a useful way of understanding remembrance in the context of trauma. While memories may be 'subject to transformation by the present when they are retrieved' (p. 329), Bohleber argues that *traumatic* memories should not be removed from their links with the past. Rather, they should be understood as remodelled versions of the past, but ones that are intimately linked to the traumatic event. Trauma, he avers, is remembered as if it were an internal 'foreign body' existing in an 'encapsulated realm' (p. 329). Exploring collective memories of the Holocaust, he argues that understanding traumatic memory as also real prevents us from repressing the past. If the reality of the past is not understood, 'the variety, complexity and intractability of a real history evaporates into a relational thinking in which history is forgotten' (p. 347). I suggest that the act of remembering in the present also, perhaps, evokes the shame of the past and the fear that the past will invade the present. The tone of many of the narratives submitted to the Apartheid Archive Project foregrounds a quality of trauma that perhaps says something of the trauma of the past as well as the trauma of remembering in the present.

Understanding the act of writing a narrative about the past as a different kind of transitional space raises the question of how this space is experienced in the present. Questions of how the narratives reflected on the process of telling the story and how the past was linked with the present offer a different perspective on transitionality and its limits and raise important possibilities for playing with the past in the present.

The process of reflecting on how the narratives were told needs to be situated within the larger context of the Apartheid Archives Project and, indeed, of the act of writing this paper. When the project began, it was suggested that the researchers involved (of whom there were around 20 at that point) should submit their own narratives. Their doing so helped to build the archive but was also experienced, at least by me, as a rite of passage, a way of connecting ourselves to our own stories. This decision may have functioned as a way of avoiding the encapsulation of our own experiences as separate, of preventing us from forgetting ourselves, which Bohleber (2007) and Gerson (2009) suggest is easy to do. The process of writing a narrative potentially offers a transitional space in which one's own experiences can be played with – a creative act of occupying an intermediate area between the past and the present. I found the process of writing my own narrative to be anxiety provoking, an anxiety that was expressed by other members of the team as well.

Writing about the narratives raised different kinds of challenges. At the project's first conference (Facing the Archive, 2009) I was acutely aware that I might be presenting my interpretation of narratives belonging to people sitting in the audience. Indeed, this issue arose for discussion towards the end of the conference, with feelings of discomfort, shame and anger being voiced. Furthermore, I hoped that nobody would use my narrative in their papers and did not use it in my own. An awareness of the implications of writing about other people's words should always be present in ethical research, but it makes a difference when the people are fellow researchers sitting in the same room.

That the topic of the conference concerned issues of race and racism, which remain sensitive issues in post-apartheid South Africa, further complicated questions of what could or could not be said and of how it would be heard. As a white woman, I also felt that there were areas not mine to explore since my own experience of race and racism is determined by my own categorisation. The complex feminist literature addressing the implications of writing from a position of otherness suggests no simple answers. I have found that writing about gender in the context of race has been easier for me. I can access my female voice, and this helps me to think through both similarity and difference. The two can exist in creative tension for me. Writing about race as a white person, however, seems more fraught to me, an issue that has formed the focus of whiteness studies (Steyn, 2001, 2009; Straker, 2009).

The relevance of this statement of my own position has to do not only with my approach in this paper, but also with the anxieties evoked through writing about race, either in an academic paper or in an autobiographical narrative. These anxieties were sometimes directly reflected on in the narratives. For example, one person wrote:

It has taken me many weeks to actually sit down and write something that approximates the nature of my early experience of apartheid. I believe that

many people like me would rather not think about this too carefully never mind write anything down.

Amnesia relieves anxiety; remembering induces it. The quality of anxiety expressed here reminds me of writing my own narrative and also of presenting this paper. It is easier to 'rather not think', to prevent the past from impinging on the present and from colouring it, closing down the transitional space. Telling stories about the past brings the anxieties of the past into internal experience. Another narrative begins:

This is a really difficulty exercise. I am not sure what to put down. It seems easier to theorise about racism than connect it to my own experiences. Given the brutality of Apartheid and my own strong reactions against racism somehow my experiences seem minor or insignificant.

The narrator reflects on the difficulty of bringing together external and internal experience and on the anxiety of knowing what to say. In particular, the planned narrative is judged for its significance and found wanting. Similar comments referring to a sense of the insignificance of the stories people chose to tell emerged in other narratives. Another narrative, written by a black male, begins in a similar manner:

It has been a bit of a struggle to bring myself to write a narrative about my experiences with racism and apartheid. For some reason, I regard my story as very insignificant and less important considering other people's experiences under apartheid.

The story earlier about the tea cups and the tin mugs similarly reflects, 'No big drama, then. Only an ordinary, invisible moment'. Indeed, many of the narratives focused not on the starker atrocities committed in the apartheid era but on everyday, 'ordinary' occurrences that were nonetheless remembered as extraordinary and traumatic. It is the everyday that captures in memory the trauma of the past, and it is in the ordinary, where transitional space has potentiality, that the rude interruption of the extraordinary seeps into the internal world.

The trauma of the ordinary, however, is not simply represented in memory as it was then. It is also imagined in the present as insignificant. Implicit here is a comparison between the experience that is 'me' and the experience that is 'not-me'. What is imagined is that the 'me' experience is less traumatic than the 'not-me' experience and therefore holds less legitimacy. Instead of a transitional space between self and other, there is a separation, a split, an inaccessibility of understanding and sharing. This split not only dissociates from the traumatic potential of memory, but also seems to dissociate experience into

insignificance. Internal reality is weighed against what is known of external reality and is felt to be trivial in comparison. This comparison may sharpen the divide between the past and the present; visiting the past involves visiting a place where the oppositions of apartheid are echoed in internal oppositions between 'me' and 'not-me', legitimate and illegitimate, ordinary and extraordinary. The black-and-whiteness of apartheid intrudes into the present and into the self.

Although the stories of the past were often encapsulated and brought into the present with difficulty or with a sense of immutability and lack of resolution, there were also points where the narratives were actively reflected upon and the immutability of the past challenged. A black woman begins her narrative by reflecting that

[t]hroughout my years of growing up in Cape Town, I never *saw* Table Mountain. Although Table Mountain was and is clearly visible from [my home], I just never saw it. Table Mountain, and the rest of the scenic beauty for which Cape Town is most famous, was not my world, not my home. Cape Town's beauty was owned by white people, at least that is what I thought then; it was part of their world about which they were proud, and part of their identity which they took for granted. I, as a black person, had no claim to Cape Town's beauty. I was denied the privilege of 'owning' it, being part of it, and so could not dare to enjoy its beauty.

She then relates her experience of buying a dress:

Thinking about this experience now, it is interesting that I had no real memory from the past of Cape Town the city until I started reflecting on my past to consider what aspects of my life I would write about for the Narrative Archives Study. This particular memory of my shopping experience stands out now because I made an effort to confront the parts of my memory that are still somehow accessible, but with possible block.

She is reflecting on something of the importance of confronting her memory, perhaps of owning the Table Mountain that was not hers and now is. Her reflection leads her to owning her memories of the past in the present. The woman who wrote about the tin mugs and tea cups ends her narrative with a link between the past and the present:

In my case, perhaps this [story] marked the beginning of many other (often misguided; often doomed) little rebellions and transgressions against the things that divide us. Was the apartheid born in kitchen cupboards, in safe domestic spaces, in safe white suburbs, as important as the 'grand Apartheid' of the history books? The tin mugs were thrown out or lost long ago. A pity, perhaps – they are so trendy, now.

Something of the past – the tin mugs – has been forgotten, lost or deleted, but her comment that the mugs are now trendy implies the possibility of reclaiming or appropriating the past and putting it to different use in the present, of returning it to a transitional space where play is possible and memory can be thought about. The tin mugs represent race as neither a reality nor purely metaphoric; instead of a collapse of internal and external (see Leary, 1997a), the mugs stand in for the past and the present. Survival of the encounter with the other can thereby lead to mutual recognition whereby self and other can retain separateness as well as symbolic value (Benjamin, 1990). The tin mugs in the narrative enable the recognition of the experiences of the past and the playful recognition of self and other in the present.

Transitioning Racialized Spaces: A Conclusion of Paradoxes

The problem, of course, is that the past continues to intrude into the present, in both internal and external reality. Leary (1997b) comments that Americans ‘have moved from the notion of a melting pot to the recognition that the pot is boiling over’ (p. 165). South Africa’s analogous metaphor as the rainbow nation is similarly losing its shine. Racism is not a phenomenon of the past and does not remain within the boundaries of memory. White (2002) understands racism as a particular kind of hatred that takes the forms of being hated, hating the self or hating the other.

I take it to be a basic truth that everyone has experienced hating and being hated. Hatred is an ordinary human experience that has extraordinary results. Maybe it is because of those extraordinary outcomes that we accord hatred the status of taboo. We seem to feel, in the common culture, that if we speak hate’s name or invoke its memory we will suffer a grim consequence. On the other hand, we fantasize that if we don’t speak it, it doesn’t exist. The collusion of silence makes hatred unbearably dangerous. I think that all of us have our hate-stories to tell, if we dare. We all have our hate-scars, some of which are better healed than others, and some of us are better healed, as persons who have hated and been hated, than others. (p. 401)

White implies two defensive responses to the racialized hatred we have felt and experienced. The first is to deny the hatred: ‘Those hateful things are in the past. Things are different now’ (p. 401). The second accomplishes the opposite: ‘My experiences of being hated are more interesting, damaging, pernicious, catastrophic, and worthy of comment than yours’ (p. 402). Perhaps feeling that one’s own experiences of hating and being hated are insignificant is another variation. In either response suggested by White, racism remains encapsulated in

experience as a foreign object (Bohleber, 2007), either as disowned and denied or as reified as untouchable. Both sentiments are common in present-day South Africa on an individual as well as a social level – that talking about race is talking about a taboo that belongs to the past and has no current relevance and that apartheid atrocities are unique, have no comparison and, by implication, cannot be moved beyond. Neither option leaves room for creativity or for change. Both collapse reality and fantasy. Opening up the transitional space, or opening up conversations, can easily flounder against the encapsulated and immutable sequelae of hatred. How, then, is it possible to transition from the past into the future?

The question of how to transition racialized spaces offers no easy answers. While the structures of apartheid and memories of experience are in the past, race and racism remain salient categories in the present. I have suggested that memories of the past in the present tell a story of disrupting transitional space, of collapsing the playful space between internal and external reality in a way that divides the internal and external world into black and white. This division is accomplished with violence as an assault is launched on what is known, what is felt and who one is, leading to a distortion of self and environment. Ordinary hatred is transformed into racialized hatred.

Telling one's story about this process is an experience that evokes racialized anxieties and feelings of uncertainty and insignificance, but also holds the potential to open up space for thought and for reappropriation. Apartheid memories have a quality of foreignness, of destruction of spaces in which to play; and in this sense they easily repeat the oppositions of the past in the present and in the internal world. Racism thrives on projection and is designed to split (Clarke, 1999; Dalal, 2006). This split is potentially repeated rather than avoided in conversations that either deny the importance of the past or reify it as untouchable, unique and incomparable.

These conversations tend to invalidate experience, leaving the lens on understanding set to the narrowest aperture, promoting disconnection, alienation, and of course, hatred. The question is: what kind of conversation would promote mutual learning? I think it would be a *joining conversation* in our various communities, a conversation in which we speak differing experiences of hating and being hated, and work at discovering, through reflection, the links between experiences and among ourselves. (White, 2002, pp. 401–402)

Such joining conversations open up the possibility of healing the splits of the past and integrating, rather than separating, the past and the present. In many ways, telling stories in the context of the Apartheid Archives Project offers possibilities for entering into such joining conversations. Telling stories about the racialized violence of collecting shells on the beach, or the resistance

launched by destroying mail in mailboxes, for example, offers possibilities for speaking our experiences to one another. A joining conversation implies that people are speaking to one another and listening to one another. Telling such stories to one another is fraught but also offers opportunities for mutual recognition. Conversations not only share information; they also offer possibilities for 'a relationship that accommodates hatred and provides for reparative action' (Altman, 2000, p. 604). They open up spaces of thirdness where we are not trapped in difference but can appreciate, even find pleasure in, our tension (Benjamin, 1990). They offer us empathy and the opportunity to reclaim our projections (Gump, 2000) and to dream new dreams (Person, 2006). Joining conversations enter into a transitional space where 'me' and 'you' are both separate and united. Such conversations may be playful but are not necessarily easy or pleasant. As Rosenblum (2009) cautions, sometimes the dangers of telling about the traumas of the past outweigh the benefits in the present. As the Apartheid Archives Project demonstrates, such conversations are painful. The great care with which narratives were written indicates, however, that they hold the promise of creating rather than destroying meaning.

What stories about the past tell about the perversion of transitional space, and of how racism potentially forecloses play, suggests that racism not only splits the world into categories of good and bad but also disrupts a sense of continuity of being (Winnicott, 1971). The dynamic tension between inside and outside, and potentially between similarity and difference (Dimen, 1991), is collapsed and rewritten in absolutes. Dimen, writing about problems of gender, highlights the importance of re-entering transitional space to disrupt gendered binaries: 'Recapturing split-off parts of the self therefore requires inhabiting its transitional spaces, including that in which gender is not a given but is in question' (p. 335). Leary (1997b) suggests that we inhabit transitional spaces of race, not racism, where racial meanings are multiple and varied, rather than racist meanings, which are unitary and constrained. What would it mean to inhabit transitional spaces where race was in question rather than a given? One way of thinking about this is to return to Winnicott's (1971) understanding of paradox as a key feature of transitional space. A paradox takes the form of both/and rather than either/or; its contradictions are what keep it alive and spontaneous.

In view of some of the contradictions and tensions evident in considering the narratives, a number of paradoxes arise. To consider race as in question rather than as given requires reordering experience, opening up what has been historically foreclosed (including foreclosed in experience), and both playing with experiences of the past and allowing experiences of the past to enter the playful space of the present. It requires a recognition not only that the atrocities of the past lie in the everyday and in the grand, the significant and the insignificant, but also that the everyday and the grand are unique as well as ordinary. Apartheid was specific in its cruelty and hatred but also not unique.

The encapsulation of traumatic experience risks isolating it from ordinary forms of human hatred, of which it is both typical and atypical.

We need to strive towards the paradox that our fantasies of ourselves and others are both creative and destructive and, in the face of the destructiveness of history, that our hopeful and hateful fantasies do not necessarily equate to reality and may not collapse reality and fantasy. Paradox extends also to the relationship between the past and the present. The past is indeed different from the present; we are not there but here. At the same time, however, we are always also not here but there. In this sense, memories of the past are both real and reconstructed by our experiences in the present, and our experiences of the present are both real and fantasy, reconstructed by our memories of the past. This makes living in the present and visiting the past both traumatic and potentially playful, offering us an opportunity to rework creatively the oppositions of the past, to accept and reject the misidentifications of self we have experienced and enacted, to hate and be hated as well as to love and be loved, and to survive.

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