The People of Long Street

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DECLARATION

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Abstract

Bakhtin saw the street as a literary chronotope, a space-time fusion. In novels, the street is used to introduce the places where the story is set (a street in a village or a city). The street describes the social climate and historical period in which the story unfolds. The street is linked to the individual fate of the characters (the route taken to leave their native town or that taken towards the unknown). The street is, most importantly, the place of meeting where different lives converge with diverse ways of recounting the past and envisioning the future. I argue that in ethnographic research, we can observe a street (or any other urban place) and take it as a space-time fusion. Urban spaces take on a meaning when put into relationship with their inhabitants' memories. Likewise, memories can be understood through their projection on the urban spaces in which they take shape and evolve. For this project, I observed Long Street, a central street in Cape Town (South Africa). Taking the street as an intersection of the experiences and memories of its regulars, I was able to activate a multi-perspective viewpoint on the city. Starting from Long Street, I followed the lines of memory, desires, and imagination of its inhabitants, which started from the street and branched throughout Cape Town.
Premise

“The pub, like pubs all over the world, was a place for debate and discussion, for the exchange of views and opinions, for argument and for the working out of problems. It was a forum, a parliament, a fountain of wisdom and a cesspool of nonsense, it was a center for the lost and the despairing, where cowards absorbed Dutch courage out of small glasses and leaned against the shiny, scratched and polished mahogany counter for support against the crushing burdens of insignificant lives. Where the disillusioned gained temporary hope, where acts of kindness were considered and murders planned.”

Alex La Guma A Walk in the Night 1962.

In the novel A Walk in the Night (1962), South African writer Alex La Guma described the world of District Six during Apartheid through a particular narrative style in which the urban spaces of the working-class district seemed to be brought to life with the movement of the novel’s protagonists. La Guma never uses the third person narrative voice to comment on Apartheid’s political and social conditions. Instead, he lets them emerge through finely detailed description of the streets, private homes, and public places as they look to its inhabitants as they wander in the district’s streets like ghosts in the night. It has been said that A Walk in the Night’s narrative style can be understood as a form of re-signifying or re-territorialising the city’s urban spaces, in contrast to the process of de-territorialisation put in effect by urban planning enacted during Apartheid. Shannon M. Jackson wrote: "The city is not represented as a knowable totality by La Guma, on the level of, for example, the plan or map; instead, he allows its physical and symbolic structure to unfold contingently, phenomenologically.” (Jackson 2003:14) S.M. Jackson noted how La Guma reveals the identity of the novel’s main character (Michael) through his movement in the district’s places. In addition, the district itself is revealed in the life story of Michael and other characters, in their memories, thoughts, fears and emotions. “His movements are imbricated with the city, as if the city is itself a living, breathing extension of a body that meaningfully unfolds across time and space.” (Jackson 2003:14) La Guma returns meaning to the (dehumanised) places of the district. He reveals the profound relationship between the intimate, private temporality of his characters and the city’s spaces.
I argue that *A Walk in the Night* can be taken as a significant source of inspiration for representing South African cities in the post-Apartheid period, in which the voice of regular people is still "forgotten too easily", as the writer and art activist Mark Van Graan has noted. (Van Graan in Field 2007:7) Van Graan maintains that, though the post-Apartheid period was often seen as a historical antithesis to a past where “we were divided”, and “the majority of people were excluded from the centre of power”, and despite the calls to create a society “of the people, by the people, for the people” (Van Graan in Field 2007:7), the everyday experiences of regular people and their perception of the place continued to be anonymous. Van Graan's accusation could also be taken as an admonition to many social scientists who have often seen the landscape of South African cities through what De Certeau called the "urbanized viewpoint of power", a hierarchical viewpoint which pays close attention to the perspective of urban planners and political and economic elites and overlooks the production of meaning by regular people from the bottom up.

The post-Apartheid period was often defined as something of a historical limbo made up of a *double temporality* (Farred 2004) in which the elements of the past still defines current life, and the cumbersome presence of the past impedes living fully in the present. According to Noellen Murray (2007), many elements of the “landscape of Apartheid” created by Apartheid planners still define South African cities. One of the most emblematic cases is the dichotomy between the city spaces and township spaces, a dichotomy “that characterises lines of poverty, access to resources, forms of exclusion, crime and violence, and many other aspects of life” (Murray 2007:6). On the other hand, Murray also notes, South African cities as well as “townships, towns, farmlands and rural homeland spaces” (Murray 2007:9), are changing as a result of new globalising forces “which the tensions of wealth and poverty create an ever-increasing division between the rich and the poor, between migrants and citizens, between men and women, and between the spaces that one comes to occupy by virtue of one’s mobility or otherwise.” (Murray 2007:9) The past’s cumbersome nature and the elements of continuity connecting the post-Apartheid period with the present have spurred many scholars to evoke the years right before the transition to democracy with an almost nostalgic air, describing the era when the streets of South African cities raged with political struggle and portended a different future.
Grant Farred remembered how in the period between the late 1980s and early 1990s when Apartheid fell, with the start of negotiations and the first democratic elections in the country, powerful hopes and expectations were sparked in the people. Yet, Farred noted that after "the thrill is gone", the lack of economic and social change turned the initial enthusiasm into a state of frustration and helpless waiting. In *A Ordinary Country* (2002), Neville Alexander also noted a historic continuity between the Apartheid period and the post-Apartheid period. He emphasized how the political transition of 1994 did not at all change the disparity or exploitation of the Apartheid era. In fact, he saw the celebration of democracy’s arrival, the exalting of national unity, and even the end of Apartheid celebrated by many intellectuals with a triumphant air, as an attempt to shift attention from the continuance of an unresolved social conflict with roots in the colonial era. He wrote: "The truth... is that from a rigorously social analytical point of view, South Africa’s government of ‘national unity’ is a government dominated in terms of real power-by-the very same capitalistic class that profited from the system of overt and systematic racism which the world called apartheid and which is now allegedly a thing of the past.” (Alexander 2002:59) In this case too, the post-Apartheid period is seen as a phase of historical stasis (if not regression) in which the disappointment of the expectations that drove the years of revolution paralyzed the process of historical emancipation.

The tendency to understand post-Apartheid social phenomena by placing them in relationship to ideas and expectations that arose in the period of transition to a democratic society also influenced many studies on urban processes. On this point, we can consider the study by Tredoux on the relationship processes between groups of individuals of different races in the nightclubs on Long Street where the author noted that the process of *deracialisation* (Saff 1999) in the spaces hoped for after the collapse of Apartheid did not have the desired effects. New forms of social division persist even in the most mixed places in the city like Long Street. In this study, the observer's viewpoint oscillates between a point of reference based on the idea of a society without racial divisions, which informed the period of political transition in the early 1990s, and a disenchanted viewpoint of the social changes in the post-Apartheid period that do not live up to those promises. The author's interpretation is based on the distance between the urban landscape without racial divisions that was meant to replace the urban landscape of Apartheid, and the urban landscape of post-Apartheid Cape Town with its contradictions. In another study on Cape Town by Marks and Bezzoli (2000), the authors emphasised how the process of privatising urban spaces, which started in the aftermath of Apartheid had triggered a process of "memory erosion" which created a progressive "emptying of
meaning" for places that had once been the sites of political battles. From this interpretation, a nostalgic tendency emerges that takes the period of struggle for liberation as the only temporality recognised as being able to signify the city’s places.

This way of understanding the present through models inherited from the past evokes the kind of historic interpretation that Nietzsche termed "monumental history", which is an approach in which "man...uses history as a means against resignation and by observing the peaks of the past (monuments) argues that greatness was once possible and therefore it will be again". (Nietzsche 1873:16) In this way the urban spaces of the post-Apartheid period are observed in the light of a historical temporality that is all-embracing, permeates everything and signifies everything. Human temporality, however, does not belong only to history, or at least not only to the history of great events and the decisions made around tables by economic and political leaders, and momentous battles. In a way, it is surprising how one of Nietzsche’s ideas, given he is considered one of the more elitist thinkers, came out of a fundamental notion of recognising history from the bottom up in a temporality apart from monumental history, in the very moment that it remembers, forgets and creates. An early work by Nietzsche came to the original conclusion that an excess of history is an impediment to making history. According to Nietzsche historical action is viable only when it is not paralyzed by a "historical sense". For human beings to be capable of action, we have to free ourselves of the historical weight of history or suffer its paralysis. Nietzsche seems to suggest that history seen as an external and even cumbersome reality does not encompass the full temporality of people. There is an initial, non-historic "or even anti-historical" moment in which human beings determine and create their own temporality. Taking inspiration from this thought, we can see how in ethnographic observation of the relationship between human beings and urban spaces, different temporal dimensions can be considered as well. Alongside the historical temporality of major events there is the private, intimate temporality of individuals through which they construct a specific relationship with the city’s places.

It is noteworthy how, among many scholars of post-Apartheid phenomenon, the need has recently arisen to abandon the broad generalizations that framed the relationship between the public and urban places within a "developmentary vision" and adopt more complex approaches that can observe processes of signifying urban places, keeping aware of their discontinuous and contradictory character. In Imagining the City (2007) Sean Field, Renate Meyer and Felicity Swanson represented post-Apartheid Cape Town through a plurivocal viewpoint made up of the intertwining of the different viewpoints and voices of its
inhabitants. The book is organised in eleven chapters in which the authors describe Cape Town taking different vantage points on it. Field explains how through this project the authors sought to give voice to the city’s regular people whose perspective has been neglected amidst the broad generalisations of those looking at the post-Apartheid period. Cape Town is recounted through the eyes of township inhabitants, former residents of District Six, survivors of the terrorist attacks in 1998 and 2000, and through the eyes of immigrants, musicians, hip hop music lyricists and rugby players. In some passages, the voices of the city’s residents join those of the authors who intervene in the text with their interpretations. In other cases the authors leave the stories and images ‘to speak for themselves’. Cape Town is represented in this work as a complex organism, made up of a discontinuous collection of viewpoints and voices overlapping and interweaving into a single narrative structure. The work presents theoretical and methodological aspects that invert the broad, uniformising generalisations of many works that came before it. However, it should be noted how Field and the other authors are still attached to interpreting Cape Town in a way that the memory of individuals has to arise within a particular social group. The interviewees, even when taken individually, seem to be considered as spokespeople for a “collective memory” that has to arise within a particular type of social grouping.

I argue that we can move beyond this kind of approach to envision an ethnographic reading of a city in which the historical temporality and "collective memory " of social groups also consider the individual memory taken in its singularity. We might ask how we can theoretically reconcile the concept of collective memory, as the heritage of shared memories of a group, with individual memory, as the ability of individuals to investigate and reconstruct their pasts and intimate, individual experiences with those connected to others. For one approach, we can look to the ideas of Gérard Namer in Memoire et Société (2000), in which he explored the relationship between the social memory of an entire society and the collective memory of a group. Namer noted that social memory encompasses a large number of collective interpretations. Though social memory is not the same as collective memories, it contains within it all collective memories and can be considered their virtual intersection. Taking inspiration from this interpretation, we can extend the thinking to the relationship between collective and individual memories. We can consider the collective memory of a group as a virtual intersection of individual memories. This makes it so that the individual’s personal memory, even if considered representative of the memory of a group and an entire society, is not the same as it and does not coincide with it. The post-Apartheid period, as a social memory of the entire
country, can be considered the virtual intersection of different types of collective and individual memory. The city can be considered a complex organism in which different forms of temporality intersect without coinciding.

In this project I decided to observe Cape Town in its dual space-time dimension. I sought to represent it, attempting to understand how its inhabitants' memories intersect with the city’s urban spaces. To achieve this goal I was inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin's study of novels (1973) and in particular by the form of the literary form of the landscape that he connects to ancient Rome with “the shaping of life into biography (best represented by Cicero’s letter to Attico) passed over to the private and personal plane, having lost its previous public significance”. (Bakthin 1973:62) He explains that, in this work, nature is represented differently than in previous styles (such as the pastoral idyll or epic or tragic styles) where it was considered in its unified, powerful and autonomous totality. In the landscape, nature takes on a meaning in relationship to the intimate experience of private individuals and takes on different forms at different times of day. "In the hours of walks and rests, in the moments in which a casual glance falls on a view." (Bakthin 1973:62) Bakhtin distinguished the concepts of the landscape and the horizon (what people see) from that of the environment (background setting) to describe “a completely private, singular individual who does not interact with it”. (Bakthin 1973:62) The landscape arises from the disintegration of natural unity, as an all-encompassing temporality that shapes and orders everything: “When the immanent unity of time disintegrated, when individual life-sequences were separated out....when collective labour and the struggle with nature had ceased to be the only arena for man's encounter with nature and the world – the nature itself ceased to be a living participant in the events of life.” (Bakthin 1973:64)

In Bakhtin's conception of landscape, the fragmentation of nature coincides with the disintegration of public space, which loses its monumental plasticity and its total exteriorisation to shift to the intimate, private spaces of single individuality. The chronotopic form of landscape takes on a particular meaning as the places described in the novel take on a meaning that is no longer in their fusion with the general, absolute temporality (historical and/or natural) but through the relationship with the individual, idiosyncratic temporalities of individuals. “It [nature] is fragmented into metaphors and comparison serving to sublimate and private affairs and adventures not connected in any real or intrinsic way with nature itself”. (Bakthin 1973:63) I argue that by transferring Bakhtin's concept of landscape to the city’s ethnographic observation, we can consider the urban landscape a chronotopic body made up of the countless intersections of space and
time that arise by projecting the different temporalities of single individuals on the city’s spaces. I also suggest that by observing the city in relationship to the memories of individuals we can consider the city to be a polyphonic organism made up of countless voices and observe it through a multiplicity of viewpoints borrowed from its inhabitants. Taking inspiration from this thought, we can see how in ethnographic observation of the relationship between human beings and urban spaces, different temporal dimensions can be considered as well. Alongside the historical temporality of major events there is the private, intimate temporality of individuals through which they construct a specific relationship with the city’s places. Nietzsche’s criticism of history can be compared here to Bakhtin's conception of landscape. They can be converged in a particular type of ethnographic observation of cities in which urban places are observed based on individuals’ ability to shape, recreate and invent their personal history, drawing inspiration from their own memories, hopes and desires. Adopting this type of observation for post-Apartheid Cape Town, its historical temporality no longer appears as an external reality experienced passively by individuals, but as a living temporality created by individuals through reconstructions of memory and imagination.

In this project I sought to represent post-Apartheid Cape Town by observing the relationship between the individual memories of its people and the city’s urban spaces. Choosing my interviewees from the regulars of Long Street, one of Cape Town’s oldest, best known streets, I sought to observe the city by exploring the way that my interviewees projected their memories, hopes and imaginations onto the city’s spaces. Inspired by La Guma’s novel, the wanderings of the French surrealists, from Guy Debord’s Psychogeographical Map (1955) and especially by research conducted by Andrew Irving in London, Kampala, New York, (2010-2011.2013) I decided to create urban pathways in the city made up of different stops in which the interviewees identified mnemonic and emotional areas on which they projected their memories, hopes and desires. Moving through the city’s places with my interviewees, I recorded the conversations that arose out of the interviewees and took pictures of the city’s places.

I intended to use photography as a tool to help me get oriented in the field. John Collier (1986) sees photography as a tool to “accelerate this orientation experience”. He wrote...” It is difficult, sometimes impossible, to understand accurately phenomena we do not understand, and a camera provides a solution to this problem”(Coolier 1986:16). In this first phase of the research, photography is intended as “a tool of mapping” that can facilitate the process of familiarisation with the object of study: “There is necessarily a time
lag in developing familiarity with a strange culture. A first view of strangers taken with a camera can allow the newcomer to an alien culture to make accurate records of an environment of which he has little knowledge. (…) In this way photographs used can teach the newcomer the visual language of a new cultural ecology” (Coolier 1986:18) This particular way of seeing photography in ethnographic investigation implies the belief that progressive familiarity with the object of study (whether it be a rural village, a social group or a city) can help in understanding it. Collier sees photography as a tool that can be a "cultural broker", breaking the barriers that separate the observing subject from the observed subject or at least speed up the process. It is like an initiation phase through which ethnographers can go to access knowledge of the "other”.

In my project I considered the use of photography as a tool to let me orient myself among my interviewees' mnemonic pathways. Taking pictures of the city's places I came to possess an image that tied to a particular memory or meaningful event for my interviewees. For example, by taking a picture of an establishment on Long Street (Long Street Cafe) after having been there with an interviewee (Anne), who had had one of the most important meetings of her life there years earlier, I connected this image to the event that had triggered a metamorphosis in her. "Thinking back on the face of Daisy sitting at those tables, I realised that that day changed my life. After meeting her I was no longer an innocent and naive girl. I became a cynical person.” Walking down Long Street as evening fell at the intersection that separates its upper part from its lower part, Louis, an Afrikaans man who was homeless, re-evoked the period when he came to the streets to go out to the clubs on Friday nights. Taking a picture of this section of the street I placed this image in relationship to Louis' memory about his previous condition as a middle class white man. In this way I started to build a map of the city made up of different space-time locations that could be a framework for my study of the city.

Later I asked my interviewees to observe the pictures I had taken during the interviews to try to discover if this could incite new memories or impressions in terms of their relationship with the city. This let me discover how the pathways I had traced could give rise to new kinds of space-time intersections. Douglas Harper (2002) noted that the difference between interviews using images and text, and interviews using words alone lies in the ways we respond to these two forms of symbolic representation. The origin of these differences has a physical basis. The parts of the brain that receive visual information are older than those for verbal information: “Thus images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness that do words; exchanges based on words alone utilise less of the
brain’s capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words.” (Harper 2002:5) Celia Lury considered recovered memory “an unstable amalgamation of the voluntary memory of representation, characterised by abstract time and the operations of consciousness, and the involuntary memory of invention or generation, characterised by discontinuity and the operation of the unconscious” (Lury 1997:136) Through the process of photo eliciting this type of memory can be fostered in which primary and secondary thought, imaginary and “real” reconstructions intertwine and mingle with each other. In my project I discovered how using this particular technique made my interviewees able recontextualise their point of view, taking on different space-time positions. Showing Louis the picture of Long Street taken a short time earlier, he recalled during out interview the day he went into the street after losing his apartment and finding himself homeless. He explained how he connected this situation to having lost his mother in an accident. "When I saw the street and I understood it would be my home, I thought of my mother and how after she was gone, things went downhill." He also explained that he compared the street to his surrogate mother "who could give him a place to stay and procure what he needed to live." Barthes (1980) compared the search of the essence of his mother in pictures to a dream in which, as soon as you have the feeling of being able to capture an image, it vanishes. "Looking at the picture, like in a dream, it is the same effort, the same Sisyphean task: to go back up towards the essence and descend without having seen it, and then to start over again." (Barthes 1980:34) Like in a dream, Louis stopped considering Long Street as only a habitual place, trying to evoke the day in which he had crossed into his new situation as a homeless person, he overlapped the figures of his mother and that of the street in a way that was difficult to separate reality from imagination.

Once the interviews were complete I had to decide how to represent the material that my project had generated. In seeking a way to represent the city in its complexity, I found a major source of inspiration in a map on the first floor of the District Six Museum. The District Six Museum was founded in 1994. It is dedicated to the working-class neighbourhood of Cape Town, which was almost entirely destroyed during Apartheid, and between 1966 and 1981, between 55,000 and 65,000 people were forcefully evicted. The museum aims to promote social justice “as a space for reflection and contemplation, and as an institution for challenging the distortions and half-truths, which propped up the history of Cape Town and South Africa.” The plaque at the entrance of the District Six Museum says: “In remembering we do not want to recreate District Six but to work with its memory: of hurts inflicted and received, of loss, achievements and of shames. We wish
to remember so that we can all, together and by ourselves rebuild a city which belongs to all of us, in which all of us can live, not as a race but as people.” These words suggest one of the unique traits of the museum. It is not just a centre a memory; it is also a reference point for the neighbourhood’s former residents, where activities are pursued that seek to promote “the reconstitution of the community of District Six and Cape Town by drawing on the area’s pre-apartheid heritage of nonracialism, nonsexism, anti-class discrimination movements, and by the encouragement of open debate about the past, present, and future” (Layne 2008:56).

Sandra Prosalendis, the director and founder of the museum, remembered when she was trying to gather the material for the first exhibitions. She tells how she was surprised to find that the person who she had been told could find the street signs used in the district was a government collaborator who had given information that helped demolish the district. “He told us that he had kept the collection of street signs for over twenty years in his cellar. He had lived daily with the fear of exposure both from the State and the people of District Six, as he had been ordered to dump the rubble in the sea.” (Layne 2008:60) Prosalendis said that when the man decided to give her the street signs, she started to lay the groundwork for creating the museum. Prosalendis continued, remembering that one idea about how to arrange the street signs was to put them back in their original places. This idea was soon abandoned: The landscape as it exists, as a space of absence, has its own message; it is a huge scar in the centre of the city, and it speaks volumes. The museum decided to organise an exhibition (Streets) in which District Six’s urban area, as it was before the demolitions, could be represented through a map created by several artists, including many ex-residents of the district. “From the minute the museum opened its door to the public, the ex-residents came and began to sign the map themselves, to write themselves back into the centre of the city, to claim their history, and to claim the space. People marked bus stops, places where somebody sold peanuts, their old schools, and their homes.” (Layne 2008:61) She continues, “I remember vividly the day I brought my recently widowed mother to the museum to see the portraits, the map, and the photos from my childhood in Bloemhof flats. I took her to the spot on the map where Virginia Street was marked, where the Layne family had stayed decades before I was born.” (Layne 2008:61)

When I came to visit the museum in 2011, I too saw a scene like that. I was amazed to see a person, “Walley”, who identified the places of his childhood on the drawings on the map, which spurred to me to ask what the difference was between map and territory (Chapter
Yet, I remember that the first time I saw this installation (2004), I couldn’t yet understand how going through the city’s spaces (or their representations) could spur the reawakening of individuals’ temporality. I remember that I started to walk up and down it, looking at its marks and the attempt to interpret the map caused a sense of “emptiness” in me. As I looked at these drawings and read the street names, they seemed anonymous and without meaning to me. I perceived the representation like a mute object with which I couldn’t communicate. I didn’t know that the map had been drawn by ex residents, and, most importantly, I hadn’t noticed the other installations that surrounded it in which the thoughts, memories and reflections of the ex residents were written. As I continued to explore the room, I noticed the writings with the thoughts, memories and reflections of District Six residents on different media, such as a long bolt of unbleached calico that hangs in one of the room’s corners. When I stopped to read the words I realised that I should have related the two installations and read them based on each other. I spent the day imagining the lives of the ex residents of the district that took form in the places drawn on the map. Only after a long time did I understand that the relief that had followed my initial upset could be seen as a filling in the gap of the city’s spaces through the temporalities represented through the writings of the district’s residents. Putting the map in relationship to the writings I discovered how the interdependence between the temporal and spatial realms could emerge through their disconnection. Coombs wrote, “The acts of inscription in the museum actually reconstruct rather than deconstruct the physical and the psychic spaces of the old District Six.” (Coombs 2003:56) In this instance, it was the deconstruction of the graphic representation of the district with the memories of its residents that created the possible chronotopic reconstruction. Taking inspiration from this experience, I created a map of post-Apartheid Cape Town in which I represented the process of signifying the city through a process of deconstruction and reconstruction of its space-time dimensions. I decided to create an ethnographic map of Cape Town through which I could observe its chronotopic dimension. At first I planned to use the photographs and written texts as fundamental elements of my project; later I joined them with a third element (territorial stages) to guide observers in looking at the map and following the major stages of urban pathways taken with my interviewees. The territorial stages are graphic representations that I drew and are intended as emotional, mnemonic areas of the city. Like the District Six Museum map, I sought to represent the areas of the city through drawings that, rather than try to faithfully reproduce the urban territory, sought to evoke a resemblance. Taking a detailed map of the city as reference I traced a new map through drawings that followed the city districts’ borders without showing their content. I sought to express the incompleteness of the dimension of space when it is without temporal
space. Like the photographs, the territorial stages can also only be interpreted in relationship to the interview texts. They revealed themselves this way in their chronotopic dimension and only through this dual dimension can they acquire a meaning.
Introduction

“Like a magician, the hermeneut, Hermes himself, he clarifies the opaque, renders the foreign familiar, and gives meaning to the meaningless. He decodes the message. He interprets”.

(Vincent Crapanzano *The Hermes Dilemma* 1986)

Be Free

The first time I went to Cape Town in 2004 coincided with the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the first democratic election in the country. When I arrived at the airport my attention was caught by a billboard sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism on which a sentence was repeated eleven times in eleven different languages: “Eleven official languages and not one word meaning foreigner”. In the background there was the national flag of the country which had been adopted on 27th April 1994 during the celebration for the first free election. The inventor and designer of the flag (Steat Herald Frederick Brownell) had intended it to represent the various social groups of South African society through the superimposition of their associated colours which converge into one unified Y.

What surprised me was the intrinsic contradiction of the message: at the same moment that it claims there are no words to define a foreigner, it uses the word “foreigner”. But the writing cannot be understood without considering its relation to the underlying image. Even the South African flag contains a paradox: the co-presence of the idea of national unity with the idea of respect for historical, cultural and linguistic differences. The flag could be considered the symbol of the “Rainbow Nation”, the idea which had animated the electoral campaign of the African National Congress. This idea (of the Rainbow Nation) represented the intent to create a convivial society aiming to become a “home for all” regardless of the colour of skin, political convictions or socio-economic background of people who live in it. Reading the sentence in relation to the visual, it assumed another
meaning: in a country where at the same time, you can be considered a foreigner and a citizen, you too can feel at home.

I interpreted the message as a call to abandon myself to this marvellous disorder, to the uncertainty between belonging and alienation that animated the South Africa of the post-Apartheid period. My entire stay in Cape Town would be characterised by discovering the communalities and differences encompassed by the city. I would experience the poverty in the townships, the luxuriousness of the villas in Constantia, the hectic nightlife in Long Street and the spiritual meditation of the religious in Bok Kaap.

Seven years later I had the opportunity to return to Cape Town, this time to conduct research for my PhD. The day I returned to the city it was dark and a little misty, so I could not see well and the road was not well lit. The fact that my view was partially impeded separated me from an object which I was anxious to re-appropriate for myself. I had been to the townships many times; I had even slept there; I had met exceptional people, who, despite the fact that they lived in extreme poverty, had an extraordinary dignity. I had got to know people who had been involved in the struggle for the country’s liberation, whose courage and also, whose disappointment in the post-Apartheid period, had changed my view on life. The few metres separating the taxi window from the edge of the road where the shacks loomed gave me the impression that they were still within reach, but my impeded view made me think that a distance had come into being between me and them, a shroud which had been interposed between me and the person I once was.

We arrived at the City Bowl and I saw the light show from the buildings that soared at the foot of Table Mountain. Looking at the City Bowl I realised that I had retained its image within me. Memories of my experiences and my desire to experience the city once more were intersecting inside me.
I got to the hotel and went up to my room on the last floor of the building. When I moved the curtain aside and opened the window to take in the view I saw in front of me an advertising sign on the top of a building which said: “E Be Free”. I paused to look at what was written and started to reflect on what “Be Free” meant. But, rather than reflecting on the abstract notion of freedom, I started to think of what it had meant in the past; how I had changed the way I understood freedom through what I had read; the people I had met and where I had travelled.

I remembered my meeting in Cape Town with Shirley Gunn, a white woman who had abandoned her family for the notion of freedom, and left her work in order to take part in the armed conflict. I remembered this tiny woman whose hands shook when she recalled certain events in her life. I thought of a summer evening in Italy
when, reading the life of Julius Caesar I was struck by what Brutus said after he had killed the emperor. Disillusioned by the outcome of his gesture he exclaimed: “Freedom, freedom, I thought you were a goddess and you were only a word”. I thought of my trips to Cuba and how the police were always checking the local population’s documents.

Reconstructing past events, losing myself in my memories, led me to re-examine what and who I had been, but also what or who I wanted to be; or, rather, what my desires and aspirations had been, and in particular those linked to my experience in the field. The imaginary creation of my freedom followed a spatial-temporal order; I wanted to see specific places I had visited in the past again, such as Cape Aghullas where the Indian Ocean meets the Atlantic. I wanted to experience certain feelings; such as meeting friends I hadn’t seen for years; and The Snap came back to my mind, a nightclub where I first met Kay, one Wednesday evening in 2005. I wanted to walk along the promenade at Sea Point on a stormy day. I stayed at the window of the Tulip Inn for a long time and started to reflect on how my memories and my personal life experience could enable me to enter into a dialogue with Long Street and with post-Apartheid Cape Town.

Drawing his inspiration from Céline’s Journey to the End of the Night (Céline, 1932), Andrew Irving notes that “the initial impression” and the “provisional misunderstandings” of chance encounters can be the source of an awareness of the environment we intend to explore, in a way which is every bit as significant as a
lengthy stay. For both the writer, who is a ‘narrator of the city’ engaged in representing his subject through the emotions and feelings it triggers in him, and the anthropologist engaged in understanding people’s behaviour through the methodology of the social sciences, the process of understanding is always framed by the situation in which it takes place (Irving, 2008).

In my case, I would discover how the ‘defamiliarisation’ could allow me to assume a particular viewpoint over the city, but also how it could let me use a poetic language when describing it. In Russian Formalist thought, defamiliarisation (Ostranenie) is considered an agent that can awaken what has been lifeless. In the "Resurrection of the World" (1914), Viktor Shklovsky defends the Futurists’ poetic experimentation and introduces the theory of defamiliarisation through the interplay of the opposites: life to death, vital to fossilised, and aesthetic perception to habitual recognition. Shklovsky’s theory is also called an “economics of perception” where the cost of perception is in the difficulty of defamiliarisatıon, creating a textual plane for readers bound by the space of meaning and the time needed to recognise the “deformed/defamiliarised object in its poetic description” (Crawford 2008: 4).

In the essay Art as Technique (1917), Shklovsky defines defamiliarisation as the true origin of experience, the only one which can break up the indifferent recognition of habit-bound perception: “Automatisation consumes things, clothing, furniture, one’s wife, and fear of war…Art exists in order to recover a sensation of life, to feel things, in order to make the stone stony. The goal of art is to give the sensation of things as seen, not known” (Shklovsky 1917:13).

The evaluation of the Russian formalist concept of defamiliarisation has interesting parallels with Vincent Crapanzano’s methodological reflection on distance and familiarity. Crapanzano has defined The Hermes Dilemma (Crapanzano 1986) as the art of revealing what is masked through ethnographic interpretation. “The ethnographer is a little like Hermes: a messenger who, given methodologies for uncovering the masked, the latent, the unconscious, may even obtain his message through stealth. He presents languages, cultures, and society in all their opacity, their foreignness, their meaninglessness” (Crapanzano 1986:51). This analogy between anthropological description and the messenger of the gods is based on the methodological reversal which renders the foreign familiar and the
familiar foreign. It is in this effect of distancing the near that the art of interpretation or “hermeneutics” lies. Observing an advertising message, “E be free”, within an urban landscape is a perfectly normal experience for a European used to living in a city. Yet, within the context of the field for ethnographic research, the same experience may turn out to be the moment where new types of urban communication are revealed.

It was only after I had spent a considerable amount of time in the field that I discovered that “E” was a local television station and that the meaning of the visual was probably to promote the freedom of information or the fact that only through gaining access to information would it be possible to win freedom. The “strangeness” of the city had prevented me from grasping the meaning which the sender of the message had probably intended to transmit to the recipient. But it was precisely through this misunderstanding that the start of a particular dialogue with the city became possible.

The fact that I did not know who was responsible for sending the advertising message, and that I was unaware of what its intentions might be in communication terms, had triggered an inner dialogue in me. Its ‘strangeness’ had turned it into a subject capable of dialogue which was able to provoke specific memories, emotions and hopes in me. In other words, my ‘strangeness’ had not impeded communication with the city, but had in fact triggered a new form of communication which was ardent and involving. My memories, what I had read, the trips I had taken in the past came into play and ‘entered into a dialogue’ with the urban spaces.

Lost

My interests in South Africa started following the end of Apartheid (1990) and increased during the first democratic elections (1994). After that I travelled to Cape Town (2005) to visit the places where Nelson Mandela and the other political activists conducted the revolution and to find the answers to several questions that I had. I’ve visited Robben Island where Mandela was imprisoned for a long time and from where he conducted his political struggle. I’ve visited the ruins of District Six, the district that was almost demolished by the National Party Government. I have met the freedom fighters who spent their lives for the
liberation of the country and who live in poverty and marginality and I met some leaders of the African National Congress who were experiencing the privileges of power.

All these experiences drove me to have a representation of post-Apartheid Cape Town, or to use Gregory Bateson’s expression, to have “a map” of it. Nevertheless the fact of having a map of Cape Town does not mean that I knew its territory. Gregory Bateson wrote “The map is not the territory” to emphasise that no representation ever coincides with the represented object. The same argument was employed by Jorge Luis Borges who, like Bateson, used the metaphor of the map. In On Exactitude in Science (1935), Borges imagines a cartographer, delirious with omnipotence, who creates a map which becomes more and more specialised and becomes larger (presumably) in order to add more precise details, thus making the map more accurate. As the map becomes ever more detailed and precise, he realises how totally useless it is. Trying to assimilate the object which it is intended to represent in a total way conceals the intention of negating its alterity; it is a delirium of omnipotence. Any description, and particularly any ethnographic description, will always be partial. It will never be able to fully grasp the represented object. My previous knowledge of Cape Town contained a risk: the confusion between my representation of Cape Town with the city itself, the confusion between map and territory. Any representation of an object of study, even if accurate, is always limited. Confusing the map with the territory, the representation of the object with the object, means negating its alterity.

Emmanuel Levinas (1996) discovered how the notion of otherness allows us to think of a relationship with the other which shuns the need for totality. If, instead, the other is conceived as an irreducible otherness, as “totally other”, we can then think of a relationship that does not suppress its otherness. The concept of alterity “is new to anthropology” (Rapport 2000:9). Rapport emphasised how this concept, which has become popular in the last twenty years, shook up the presumed objectivity of social sciences “along with all its claims of scientific authority and objectivity” (Rapport 2000:9). The concept of alterity implies criticism of the different ”isms” that have defined part of the anthropological tradition (evolutionism, functionalism, structuralism, and so forth). For urban studies, the Chicago School's holistic approach is the example of an attempt to assimilate the city in an all-encompassing theory that encapsulated every aspect and element
within an absolutist perspective. The Chicago School *Urban Ecology* saw everything and explained everything (even dysfunctional elements like crime and deviant behaviour) within a consequential perspective that sought to confirm everything as part of a final telos: its progress. The eagerness of the holistic approach to find the operation of the whole lost sight of the alterity of its parts.

Kathleen Stewart says that it is precisely in the recognition of alterity that all cultural production is possible: “Culture is not an end point or a blueprint for thinking and acting but an order of effects glimpsed in gaps or pauses in the signs where epistemological certainty is arrested by the hard-to-grasp sense of something more and other” (Stewart in Feld 1996:139). Her description of Western Virginia’s landscape is based on renouncing the descriptive assimilation and the recognition of this distance:

“My claim is that it is only in holding open the gaps and tensions in cultural representation itself that we can glimpse another mode of cultural critique that speaks from a place of contingency, vulnerability and felt impact. This, it seems to me, is the significance for us of the sense of place and the point of holding open an interpretative space in which to consider it” (Stewart in Feld 1996:139).

I argue that in renouncing an all-encompassing view of the city we discover its alterity. I consider this renunciation to be the deeper sense of Bateson’s admonition to not confuse the map and the territory. If we give up the temptation to assimilate our object of study (through an absolutist representation) we can discover it through its differences.

My previous experiences of Cape Town would help in the orientation of its territory. I could retrace my steps to the same places and meet the people who I had already met, but this would mean confirming the representation of the city that I already had. Indeed, I needed to get lost in the territory of the city, to explore it for the first time, assuming a new way of looking at it, taking new routes, meeting new people. In my previous journey I had focused my attention on the townships of the city, in particular Bonteheuwel and Khayelitsha. Sometimes I went to Long Street but I did not have a deep knowledge of it. Thus
by starting my observation in Long Street I could discover another Cape Town, changing my previous representation of it and getting lost in its territory.

I decided therefore to walk up and down Long Street with no particular aim in mind. My scant familiarity with the street caused me to feel disorientated, making me feel I lacked points of reference and leading me to move around guided exclusively by what attracted and repelled me. I was observing Cape Town, but at the same time it was observing me; it was speaking to my recollections and to my emotions. I was passing through the territory of Cape Town, allowing it to guide me. An object, a bar, a sound would provoke a recollection, a desire or a dream in me.

I started to walk around, ‘living’ the street in all its numerous coincidences and contradictions. I started my journey on the lower part of the street, which runs from the junction with Hans Strijdom Avenue until it reaches Strand Street. This area is considered the business and financial heart of the city and is characterised by modern architecture, while the upper part of the street still retains its colonial-style houses.

The tall buildings on Lower Long Street were constructed in the 1960s, a period of strong economic growth and development for the city. These structures, with their gleaming marble and granite walls, house the headquarters of major national and international companies, banks and offices. Doormen stand guard over the grand
entrances to these buildings and check everyone who goes in or out, succeeding in making the chance passer-by feel like an outsider.

I recall the feeling of solitude that I felt when I used to pass through this part of the street as I was not on Lower Long Street for work reasons, apart of course from being there to ‘observe it’. On the mornings I spent on Lower Long Street I would witness everyday life run its course: the labourers with their yellow helmets who formed an orderly queue to collect their wages; the managers and white-collar workers, the Cape Times under their arms and briefcases in hand, already engaged in discussions as they headed for their offices; the liveried hotel porters who bowed their heads mechanically to acknowledge a guest’s arrival. The glass doors on the ground floors of the offices, which opened at the swipe of a card, seemed to me harmonious cogs in some vast output-driven machine.

Later I would find some consolation in learning that Desmond Martin, a writer who decided, as I had, to describe the street, experienced the same feeling of isolation and impotence as he passed along the same part of the street. Martin (2007: 14) writes “you could feel a sense of insignificance” - a reference to the fact that everything on this part of the street seems oriented towards production and output; to such an extent that it makes the passer-by feel extraneous to its mechanisms. “The buildings rise up as stark unassailable ramparts, they hem you
in and the virtual absence of doors on street level, sends an intimidating message that, if you have no business to do in the central business district you are not too welcome there” (Martin 2007:14).

When Lower Long Street is empty it is a scene of desolation; the voices that brought it to life during the day have been replaced by a silence which is interrupted only by the mechanical sound of the traffic lights telling pedestrians they may cross or should stop, and by the occasional shouts of the tramps and vagrants who live in this area. This scene and these sounds made me think of the ‘death’ of a giant who breathed his last every day at sunset only to re-awaken the next morning. The workers who spent their days on Lower Long Street had left the street and were on their way home. In those hours, Upper Long Street started to fill with people who would spend their evenings there. Similar to a cinematic dissolve, when the lower part of the street dies, the upper part starts to come to life. From Strand Street it is already possible to see the twinkling of the lighted signs of the restaurants and bars and to hear in the distance the music mixed with the voices of the people who are starting to crowd the street.

Passing along Upper Long Street, the immediate sensation one has is of being welcomed. Unlike Lower Long Street, everything on Upper Long Street seems to be designed to attract the passer-by and the visitor. Many bars have tables on the sidewalk and sitting there, observing and interacting with the people on the street, you feel you are an integral part of it. This part of the street has a powerful security system. The area is equipped with a video surveillance system of closed circuit cameras that allow the police to act immediately if there are attacks or kidnappings (very common in other parts of the city). There is also a striking number of police officers and private guards employed by the city. Passers by unaccustomed to such a situation might think it were a semi-militarised zone. The atmosphere is, nonetheless, cordial. Private guards are often available to give directions, chat or help visitors at the entrances of clubs or restaurants.
Every evening, but particularly at the weekend, this part of the street becomes invaded by people who come from the different areas of the city and from other parts of the world. There are students who come from Rondebosch and Observatory and arrive by taxi or private car. I got to know Mike, a young German, who had lived in South Africa for several years, having done his PhD, and then his Post-doc there. He had married a black girl from Zimbabwe and explained to me that she preferred frequenting areas like Observatory and Long Street, “where mixed couples are not the exception”.

There are young people from the townships who have come to Long Street by minibus and will not return home before the next morning, when the first public transport leaves for Langa, Khayelitsha or Nyanga. Some wear pins and symbols which extol the A.N.C. and give a clear indication of their ideological stance. Many of them are poor, often unemployed, and others have menial jobs; Shumbuko, a young Zulu who lives in Khayelitsha, explained to me that being in Long Street for the evening and not in a township bar or shebeen is already a real privilege: “I come here often because I work here, but there are guys who, even though they live in Cape Town, have never been to Long Street”.

Shumbuko’s dream is to “make loads of money”, his role-models are the so-called ‘black diamonds’, the prototypes of the new upwardly-mobile black middle class. They, explains Shumbuko, are “the idols and forbidden dream of the boys and girls from the townships and the nightmare of the new white working class”. In this area of the city
it is not unusual to see them hurtling past in high-powered Mercedes and Audis, dressed in pure silk shirts and often with ostentatious jewellery.

The tourists who stay in Long Street’s bed & breakfasts usually move around in groups, discussing how to spend the evening under its porticos. One of them has a T-shirt on which is written “Googoletu“, ironically combining the name of the most-visited search engine in the world with that of the city’s poorest and most marginal township: Guguletu. This wordplay humorises, defuses and distances the destitution and violence of Cape Town’s urban slums.

Upper Long Street is also somewhere you can find a job; many taxi drivers have found work on Long Street. Often, they come from other African countries. Lying in wait outside the busiest bars and clubs, Long Street’s taxi drivers study their customers and, over time, can develop into ‘spontaneous anthropologists’, adept at spotting potential regular customers at first sight. Desmond, a refugee from Zimbabwe who has become a Cape Town taxi driver explained to me how being able to spot a customer immediately can “enable you to have a wage for several months”; just as not spotting one can mean “putting your life on the line“. The singular character of Upper Long Street has its origin in the heterogeneous nature of the voices which pass along it. Different needs, desires, and possibilities, different economic and social backgrounds all meet up and intersect here.

I often ended up heading for The Stones: a large billiard hall, which becomes a disco at weekends. Customers can have a break on one of The Stone’s balconies.
while they smoke a cigarette or have a drink and watch the people going by down on the street. I would stay there for hours, observing the people who passed on the street. Some were dancing, others drunk; sometimes I saw tourists walking by very quickly because they were afraid, while some drug dealers were trying to sell drugs to the passers-by.

After a few months I had learnt to recognise different characters who seemed like extras in a play to me. Mumford compared the city to a theatre “in which dwellers are actors rather than merely spectators in the drama of urban life” (Mumford cited in Critchley 2004:2). Long Street struck me as a stage of a theatre whose habitués could play particular roles on it. In the Pretoria, a bar frequented by a predominantly black clientele, I got to know Jane, a prostitute from Mali, who would pick up her clients there. One day when I met her she was wearing a T-shirt with the slogan “No money: No honey”. As if on a stage, Jane played the role of herself, taking on a particular role and giving different personalities to the other characters who were "acting" on her stage. She knew the street’s every nook and cranny and would study the behaviour of her potential clients who she had even subdivided into twelve categories. “There are clients who want to be with you for a night; these ones just want sex. There are those who want to stay with you for a few days; these ones want company. There are those who want a relationship; you can stay with those for months, even years”.

Sometimes I would go out onto the street. I would walk around listening to the overlapping of different types of music, the sounds and voices emanating from the bars. For me this overlapping and interweaving of sounds brought to mind another of the city’s polyphonies: those of the submerged voices, of the personal histories from the deepest levels, familiar to no-one, but which became superimposed on each other in the street through the meanings, triggered by their life experiences. ‘To capture the hidden meanings’; ‘to reveal the invisible’: this is how I saw the role of anthropology. I would have liked to capture all the meanings of Long Street, but the street was incommensurable and my view only partial. I decided to surrender myself to its polyphony.

After many months spent in the field I had given up on the idea of finding an explicative synthesis and had started to accept the contradictions of the street. In order to capture the multiplicity of the voices of Long Street I had had to lose
myself within it. By listening to the life stories of my interviewees and going through the places of the city with them, I attempted to observe it from different points of view, becoming like one with the viewpoint of the taxi driver, with that of the young middle class man out for a good time, with that of the tourist or the prostitute.

From urban disorientation to the discovery of differences.

By observing Long Street, I discovered that my fieldwork consists of the multiplicity of the viewpoints of people whose lives follow different paths, who have different aspirations, dreams, desires and fears. Every time I attempted to find a ‘synthesis’ for Long Street, to find a stable and definitive viewpoint to which a single meaning could be anchored, it crumbled before the multiplicity of the street’s voices.

Long Street could not be considered as a single subject; there were an infinite number of Long Streets, as many as the points of view of the people on it, and these changed continually depending on how it was regarded, the time of the day, everyday events, meetings and fleeting thoughts which constantly transformed the lives of my interviewees. The street could be observed only by accepting its heterogeneous nature. Long Street is marked by the continuous flow of different viewpoints, voices, behaviours, different ways of perceiving its urban spaces that do not converge into a single homogenising perspective, branching instead into a polyphonic view. Bauman compares the identity of modern society to a prism through which different aspects of contemporary life are codified and understood (Bauman 2001:471). We can use the same metaphor to observe the identity of urban spaces, Long Street, in this instance. The street was ensnared in the paradox of being unique and multiple at the same time. Like a prism, though it was defined by a single organism; it could reflect the various identities that crossed through it.

I started my observation of the city through urban disorientation and it led me to the discovery and appreciation of its differences. Gregory Bateson’s ideas can suggest a theoretical link between the experience of urban disorientation and the recognition of the city’s differences. Bateson’s entire epistemology is founded on
methodological anxiety that leads him to adopt multiple viewpoints on the objects of his study.

His first work *Naven* (1936) adopts a multiple, differentiated viewpoint on one object of study. *Naven* is a transcription of a ritual of sexual inversion among the Iatmul of New Guinea. This research had one specific aim: to criticise every philosophy and method which had synthesis as its organising system in order to shift the discussion to a higher level in terms of unity, homogeneity and identity. The concept of difference remained the central core of Bateson’s thinking and was with him through the writing of his last work *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972), which was a collection of his writings. This work itself was formed of different spurs to thought on a single topic: the connecting pattern. Unlike classical structuralists who see a uniforming agent in the structure between the parts, Bateson sees it in the ecology of a fluid pattern that connects the different elements to a system, whilst maintaining their differences. He could never give a final definition of his object of study. Ironically, giving a definition of the *Ecology of mind* would undermine his theoretical premise. As he noted himself, representation is not the represented object of study. Therefore, the ecology of the mind does not coincide with its definition. So what separates the object from its representation? What separates the map from the territory? According to Bateson, it is difference.

“We know the territory does not get onto the map. That is the central point about which we here are all agreed. Now, if the territory were uniform, nothing would get onto the map except its boundaries, which are the points at which it ceases to be uniform against some larger matrix. What gets onto the map, in fact, is difference, be it a difference in altitude, a difference in vegetation, a difference in population structure, difference in surface, or whatever. Differences are the things that get onto a map” (Bateson 1976: 465).

We should emphasise that in Bateson the appreciation of differences is connected to recognising the subjectivity of the object of study. The last stage of Bateson's thinking, which has been called neo-animist (Canevacci 2000:136), is primarily defined by the recognition of the subjectivity of every object of study in scientific research: "There is no ethnographic object - just as there is no objectivity
in research - because, for Bateson, every apparent object is actually animate, has a spirit within it that moves it and turns it into a subject” (Canevacci 2000:137).

The *Ecology of the Mind* means both extending outside of the boundaries of the self (the skin as the apparent boundary of the self) and "also recognising the self of things". Canevacci writes:

"That's to say that there is no substantial difference between the skin of a human being, the scales of a lizard, the smooth, absolute layer of a rock, or the rough bark of a tree, and the boundary of the self. They are all boundaries of different subjectivities that communicative ecology crosses and interconnects" (Canevacci 2000:137).

*Naven* has been considered an anticipatory example of post-modern ethnography. George Marcus (1986) cites it as an example of a text for the new alternative forms of ethnographic representation:

“Bateson’s experimental ethnography, which worries over several alternative analyses of a single ritual of a New Guinea tribe, is remarkable precisely because it was exceptional and unassimilated in the anthropological literature for such a long time, but now is an inspirational text in the current trend of experimentation” (Marcus, Fischer 1986:40-41).

According to Marcus, what ties Bateson's anthropology with post-modern experimental trends is precisely its multi-perspective and multi-narrative approach. “One common idea of text construction is to string together a set of separate essays dealing with different themes of interpretation of the same subject” (Marcus, Fischer 1986:192).

James Clifford also considers *Naven's* methodological collage as a major forebear of the poetics and politics of cultural inventions. It can be considered an example of what he calls ethnographic surrealism:
“The ethnography as a collage would leave manifest the constructivist procedures of ethnography knowledge: it would be an assemblage containing voices other than the ethnographer’s, as well as an example of ‘found’ evidence data not fully integrated within the work’s governing interpretation” (Clifford 1988:147).

Applying Bateson’s epistemology of difference to the study of city, we discover that avoiding a linear, uniform representation of the city leads us to observe it with a multiple perspective viewpoint. In other words, we can think of an epistemology of difference that can highlight the multiplicity of the voices of the city without suffocating them in a uniform, cohesive perspective. Every element of the city (whether an inhabitant, a building, or a lighted sign) can be considered a different voice of the city. Every element is considered alive and as having its own subjectivity. The city is taken as a pattern that can connect different voices while belonging to a whole and keeping its autonomy.

An example of this approach to the city can be found in the work conducted in Sao Paulo in 1996 by the Italian anthropologist Massimo Canevacci. He discovered that being lost in the city led him to use a research methodology aimed at revealing the polyphony of the Brazilian city. Finding himself with no cash and no contacts in the city, Canevacci let himself go in the territory of Sao Paulo. He wrote ‘...it was the getting lost, more than a decision I made, my giving in to the point of sticking to the flow of emotions’ (Canevacci 1996:14). Getting lost in a city, which happened by chance, proved the essential premise of building his methodology. “The first experience came out of the desire to interpret Sao Paulo. Often the uprooted viewpoint of foreigners can grasp differences that the habituated viewpoint does not see because it is too internal and too habituated by an excess of familiarity” (Canevacci 1996:16). Urban uprooting led Canevacci to observe the city through its differences: “Its very differences formed an extraordinary instrument for information which, when selected, articulated and perceived according to specific criteria, could help draw a new type of map through which to describe and understand the metropolis” (Canevacci 1996:72).

Canevacci came to compare the city to a polyphonic choir “in which the different musical itineraries or sound materials intersect, impact and blend with each other, creating higher harmonies or dissonances through their respective melodic lines”
Like a polyphonic choir the city manifested and expressed itself through the superimposition of its independent voices.

Recently, among scholars of post-Apartheid urban phenomena, the need has arisen to create paradigms that can observe the city through new theoretical and methodological lenses. Many previous studies on post-Apartheid cities seem to fall into a single development paradigm (Murray 2007:8) and are more concerned “with whether the city is changing along vectors of institutional governance, deracialisation of service provision and local politics than with citiness as such” (Murray 2007:9).

Scholars like Sean Field, Felicity Watson and Jo Beall have underscored the need to adopt new approaches based a multiple perspective observation of the city. Beall writes, “We are anticipating a city and an approach to urban social development which values difference and works with diversity in the certain knowledge that power relations are superimposed on both (Beall 1997: 18).

Having abandoned the vertical, elite view in which the only viewpoint on a city coincides with that of its planners (De Certeau 1984), these new approaches consider the possibility of observing the city from different vantage points.

“Views, whether they are of urban landscapes, politics or conceptual paradigms, can be misleading. What do you see from where you are positioned? How does this shape your outlook on life? How does this shape your memories of spaces and places of this city? The crucial significance of vantage points is that they are shaped by who you are, where you are, and when you are experiencing and constructing this view” (Field 2007:7).

It is true that our viewpoint is closely connected to the object of study. No representation of the city can be considered absolute. An attempt to provide an all-encompassing representation of the city will be in vain. If every vantage point is limited to a single perspective, if every viewpoint on the city is to be considered partial and relative, what viewpoint should be adopted? In this research, I decided to avoid choosing a single viewpoint on the city and took multiple viewpoints on it instead.
On method

Starting from these theoretical premises, in order to observe Cape Town, I sought a method that could take a multiperspective viewpoint on the city. I had two primary objectives:

a) To observe the city through
b) Its differences.
c) To represent the city, leaving room for different subjectivities to express themselves, without suffocating them in a single, authorial perspective.

For this purpose, significant inspiration came by the method that Andrew Irving used to explore the perception of urban places by subjects who had become infected with the HIV virus. Reading Irving’s work I saw how he did not describe the city through a single viewpoint, but revealed through the inner lives of his interviewees. The description of the city was defined by the observation of the dialogue between the life worlds of his inhabitants and the urban spaces. In this way, no place took on an absolute, uniform meaning. Instead, it was defined by the particular attribution of meaning given by its inhabitants to different places of the city. A central street in Kampala might be, in the eyes of a woman who had found out she was HIV positive, the place where she had decided to kill herself. An abandoned apartment on the outskirts of town was the place where the virus was probably contracted and where her life had taken a new direction. Adapting Irving’s methodology to my work I could achieve two main objectives:

a) Observing the city through the inner worlds of its people showed how each place in it took on a particular meaning connected with the life experience of my individual interviewees and their ability to read the city through their personal experiences. Taking on the differentiated viewpoint of the people of Cape Town, my observation could become mobile and spread out. The city could be observed from the wealthy residential districts, as well as from its townships, from the perspective of a former soldier of Afrikaans origin, and from a homeless man, and an immigrant. I could discover different Cape Towns as they were remembered, imagined, and experienced by its residents. In other words, Cape Town could be represented through its
b) Every place, no matter how anonymous, could be understood as a subject with meaning if placed in relationship to human experience. As in Irving’s work, in my research, each place in the city could be observed and represented in relationship to the people’s lives. This way, I could show the temporality contained in urban spaces. The city could be understood as an urban chronotope in which the temporality of its residents merges with the city’s space. This would make each element of the city observed as a subject animated by the memories, emotions, and hopes of my interviewees.

To become multi-perspective, the exploration of the city had to consider the inner lives of its inhabitants. Through the inner worlds of my interviewees I could discover the city through its differences. However, anthropology and social sciences in general, have rarely ventured into observing inner worlds, leaving this realm of exploration to other disciplines, like art, psychology, psychoanalysis, and literature. Yet it was precisely by taking inspiration from other disciplines like art, photography, literature, and film that I built my methodology. The most essential influences included: Michel Leiris, the avant-garde surrealists, Bakhtin’s literary criticism of the novel, and literary works by Winfried George Sebald and Italo Calvino, the Russian formalists, and the polyphonic novels of Dostoyevsky.

Michel Leiris’s work *L’Afrique Fantome* (1933) represented a point of convergence between the world of literature and that of ethnography. The Surrealist writer-ethnographer considered his subjectivity and his presence in the field as a fundamental part of the observation process. Leiris’ way of experiencing the field is in open conflict with the anthropological dictates of the times. Although his training was in literature Leiris was all too aware that he was subverting the dictates of institutional anthropology as he had attended the Institute of Anthropology in Paris. In line with the terms laid down by Mauss contained in the *Manuel d’Ethnographie* (1967) fieldwork should involve a simple exercise in subordinated writing: “The primary method of work should consist of keeping a log of the route, where every evening, the work conducted during the day should be noted (Mauss 1967:9).
Leiris cast aside these recommendations completely and in the full knowledge of what he was doing, decided to superimpose the impressions, anxieties and feelings which the field provoked in him on to his ethnographic description. According to Leiris, *presumed objectivity* was no guarantee of the veracity of a scientific report. On the contrary, his mere presence in the field, with all the strength of feeling which this triggered, could be sufficient *proof of authenticity*: “happy to be sprawled, absorbed in reality. I am grey with dust. I lie on my back. Same pleasure in wallowing in the mud, in making love on a dunghill. I no longer go around without a body, without a soul” (Leiris 1933:243). In Africa Leiris wrote notes about himself. He did not conceal his subjectivity “his presence in the field”, but instead extolled and triggered it. The descriptions of the places and people he meets are superimposed on his impressions and on his inner worlds: “I have chosen to publish these notes made in the margins of my research and journeys; which constitute if not a private diary, then an intimate diary” (Leiris 1933:34).

Leiris’ ethnographic observation was clearly influenced by the wanderings of the surrealists of the Breton School, who considered the territory as a *living organism* with a character that can be encountered and with which it is possible to have a reciprocal exchange. This empathic territory penetrates the deepest recesses of the mind; it evokes images of other worlds where reality and nightmare exist side by side. In 1929, Aragon, Breton, Morise, and Vitrac organised wanderings in the open countryside in central France. The group decided to leave from Paris to go by train to Blois, a small city *chosen randomly* on the map. Breton recalls this wandering in a group of four, talking and walking for several days in a row as an "exploration at the bounds between conscious life and dreaming" (Breton 1988:234). Returning from the trip, he wrote the introduction to *Poisson Soluble* (1924), the manifesto of surrealism in which the first definition of surrealism is given as "pure psychic automatism by which an attempt is made to express, either verbally, in writing, or in any other matter, the true functioning of thought" (Breton 1988:236).

A journey, undertaken without a purpose and without a destination, turned into the experimentation of an automatic form in real space, a literary/country rambling, set directly on the map of a mental territory. In the surrealist trajectory, the space is an active, living subject, an autonomous creator of affections and relationships. It is a living organism with its own character, a conversation partner
who has shifts in mood and can be visited regularly to establish a mutual exchange. This empathic territory can penetrate the mind to its deeper layers, evoking images of other worlds in which reality and nightmare live side by side. Wandering is reaching a state of hypnosis by walking, and a disorienting loss of control. It’s a medium through which one can come into contact with the unconscious part of the territory. The surrealists crossed the territory without a destination and without a purpose. Their wandering was guided by psychic automatism and spontaneous disorientation.

Like for the French surrealists, the first part of my research was defined by urban movement, guided exclusively by the attractions and repulsions that the city’s territory aroused in me. As I had done on Long Street, I continued to move through the rest of the city without taking an exact direction. My only reference was my journal in which I took notes about what was happening, the places that I went through, and the people I met. I went to museums about historic memory like Robben Island and District Six Museum. I took notes about the experiences of its inhabitants who told of a city directed towards the past, still wounded by Apartheid’s violence and segregation. In large shopping malls like Water Front and Century City, I came into contact with people, images, and music of different places of the world. I saw taking shape before me the interplanetary *scapes* that Appadurai referenced (1996). In Camps Bay, Hout Bay, and Constantia, I discovered the luxurious city with fine restaurants, private parties, and conspicuous consumption. I went to Mitchells Plain with an armed taxi driver and discovered one of the places with the highest number of gangsters in the world, where crushing poverty and constant fear reigned. I walked through the informal markets of Khayelitsha where whites rarely went, a place that was a closed world for most of its inhabitants. I spent my evenings in the bars and clubs of the Observatory with artists, students, and musicians. Amidst glasses of wine and a concert, they talked of a trip taken, a book read, or a dream to realise. Urban movement let me come into a relationship with the city and discover its differences. Every place that I came across seemed to represent an autonomous voice of the city with its own distinctive character.

Bourdieu noted that constant motion “is the essential characteristic of the way an individual mind perceives and so constructs an environment, whether natural or cultural” (Bourdieu in Rapport 1997:65). Indeed, walking is a practical way of
world making (De Certeau 1984). I created my Cape Town by walking. Every place I went through and every person I met added a piece to the world of my fieldwork.

I came to discover that urban movement let me explore the city and also let me explore aspects of myself. Like the deambulations of the surrealists, wandering without a destination led to introspection. I also experienced urban movement as a time of inner exploration. According to Gregory Bateson, the process of knowledge should be thought of through the relationship between the perceiving subject and the perceived subject: “All knowledge of external events is derived from the relation between them” (Bateson 1951:173). From this epistemological perspective all processes of knowing (including ethnographic ones) should be seen as a relationship between two interdependent entities. The “perceiver and perceived” are not autonomous, separate agents, but are “intrinsically connected” (Rapport 1997:5). I understood that the act of discovering the city entailed being discovered. I was observing Cape Town, but at the same time it was observing me; it was speaking to my identity, to my recollections, and to my emotions.

To clarify this part of my research, I will give some examples of events that took place in the field. In June 2011, I went to Grahamstown (a city in Eastern Cape) to attend a festival. The idea of going to Grahamstown was put to me by one of my interviewees, who not having enough time to talk to me during the week, suggested I take advantage of the festival being on to arrange an initial meeting. It was my first time in the Eastern Cape, and I was curious to discover this area, which I had only heard about from books. What I was most keen to do was to see for the first time the land where Nelson Mandela and many other heroes of the revolution such as Oliver Tambo, Chris Hani and Steven Biko, were born. In reality, almost all the leaders of the revolution came from the Transkei, which was further east than Grahamstown; but the mere fact of coming close to that place made me very curious to discover more.

I had spent a week in Grahamstown where I met my interviewee and saw several shows, but the most important event for me was to take place on my way back to Cape Town. For my return journey I had booked a bus belonging to one of the best South African companies which is often used by tourists, given that the locals prefer to travel using cheaper alternatives. At the bus station I was told that the
bus was running very late because of an accident, so I decided to use a different method of transport, that used by the locals. As I got on board the vehicle I realised that I was the only white passenger and felt my fellow travellers looking at me with great curiosity. During my return trip to Cape Town something happened which made me understand that the fact that my involvement was “indirect” should not be confused with being “invisible”. I got involved in an argument with the passenger who was sitting behind me who was insisting that I shouldn’t have reclined my seat because it was taking up his space. An argument which, in other circumstances, would have been trivial, became transformed into a conflict with racial undertones.

When I refused to put the seat back upright again the passenger sitting behind me called me a “stupid, egotistical white” who couldn’t care less about “us”. What struck me most was the term “us”. I became aware of a division between the white “me” and the black “them” which I had never wanted to take into consideration before. All the other passengers remained silent, and for the first time in my life I felt discriminated against on account of the racial group to which I belonged. When I got back to Cape Town I was no longer the same person; I realised that a strange feeling of anxiety had developed within me.

Thinking the matter over, I understood that this anxiety was not related only to that one single episode, but had its origins in the fact of being “seen” and “observed” in the city. I would no longer be able to hide behind my illusory invisibility. I found I was an outsider in the townships and residential neighbourhoods like Rondebosch where only locals lived and spent time, and at Mr Pickwicks, a club frequented by gay patrons. I was considered very wealthy in Philippi, one of the area’s poorest areas, and a penniless wanderer in clubs like the Zar in Green Point, frequented by a local elite. I was in the field with subjectivity, with my skin colour; my race; my age; my nationality, my political orientation. The relationship between myself and Cape Town could be considered “dialogical”: from the moment I started to investigate the city my view was transformed into a view which was investigating me. I was able to observe Cape Town on condition that I allowed myself to be observed by it.

Urban movement allowed me to discover a multiple city that sent a plurality of messages. In this proliferation of differences, writing was the only line of
continuity that could give meaning to my experience. Nigel Rapport defined writing as “the composition, in symbolic form of a sequence of thoughts and ideas and senses such that a set of meanings is created and retained from passing experience for further possible retrieval, amendment and elaboration. Writing is the practice of symbolically reflecting on and making sense of experience” (Rapport 1997:45). Through writing we can attribute meaning to the events, ideas, and thoughts that shape our experience. Writing also lets us transcend the contingent situation, to detach from it, and produce new meanings. It is this capacity for producing meaning that Rapport sees as the point of junction between literary and ethnographic writing. He writes, “What convinces me (...) is a viewing of a text as a site of a production and the proliferation of meaning within the consciousness of the individual writer and reader” (Rapport 1994:22).

The choice of immersing myself completely in my object of study led to me lose my orientation and be unable to take on a stable vantage point. Writing let me transcend this disorientation and meta-observe it. Rapport wrote, “By writing, (...) I would have us understand a meta-experience” (Rapport 1997:45). In this way, urban movement and writing can be understood as complementary experiences in which a single interpretative dynamic involves the progressive nearing to the object of study and distancing from it. Like a novelist, through writing, I could direct my gaze in different directions, lingering on a detail of the city or in myself, exploring an emotion. Through writing, I took on the viewpoint of the people I met. I looked at Cape Town from a hut in a township or from a villa in Constantia. This viewpoint oscillates between faraway and close up, between inner reality and the external reality of the city and had a literary model in the description of the city by Sebald in his novel The Emigrants (2002).

In this novel, Sebald alternates moments of observing the urban territory and the spaces of reflection of its protagonist Max Ferber. Ferber’s wandering is both an exploration of the city and an inner exploration. Wandering through Manchester, Ferber questions himself, explores his emotions, past and memories. He also lingers over the traits of the city which is not exclusively seen as an ”interior space”, but has its autonomy. Ferber recognised Manchester as a subject with a historic and cultural identity that is not completely absorbed by his protagonist’s personal experience: “Manchester, the city from which industrialisation had
spread across the entire world, displayed the clearly chronic process of its impoverishment and degradation to anyone who cared to see” (Sebald 2002:156).

Sebald’s viewpoint seems to switch between two tracks. On one hand, his attention is focused on his protagonist’s inner world, and on the other, he considers a meticulous description of the city. In part, Ferber’s introspective view was sometimes closer to that of Leiris’s. In *The Emigrants*, wandering is presented as a moment of connection between inner worlds and the urban place:

“... those Sundays in the utterly deserted hotel I would be regularly overcome by such a sense of aimlessness and futility that I would go out, purely in order to preserve an illusion of purpose, and walk about amidst the city’s immense and time blackened nineteenth century buildings, with no particular destination in mind” (Sebald 2002:156)

While the first part of my observation of the city was marked by solitary exploration, I later started to see the need for a dual viewpoint that could be both nearby and faraway from my object of study. Immersing myself completely in the city’s life, I became able to grasp certain aspects of the city, such as noting what memories and emotions it sparked in me. On the other hand, I felt the need to take on a distant viewpoint that could grasp the city as a whole. I sought a detached viewpoint that could give me a perspective with a broader scope.

For this, an important contribution came from the literary work of the Italian writer, Italo Calvino, *Le Città Invisibili* (1972) (*The invisible city*). The novel is divided into two parts: in the first, the author speaks in a detached voice describing in minute detail the layout and structure of the city. In the second part, he speaks through a character: the camel driver. The two voices represent two different styles of writing: the external narrative voice and the internal voice of the involved subject. The way Calvino’s text is composed is the result of the overlapping of different views: the first point of view seeks to be objective by measuring spaces, but does not succeed in capturing the meaning which these have for the inhabitants of the city, while the second point of view interprets the spaces, participating in the temporalities of the city’s inhabitants.
Massimo Canevacci noted that there is a close analogy between Calvino’s two points of view and structuralism and interpretative anthropology. In the first, everything has to be carefully listed and described in minute detail: the entire metropolitan territory is presented in the form of a list, as a positive, “within which the elementary principles of kinship evolve, along with the clans and exogamy, overall social issues and the structure of aid and giving” (Canevacci 1996:42). However, there is typically only one subject who fulfils the role of narrator, the anthropologist, whose individuality is concealed behind a single rational system which presents itself as objective. In the second, the narrative text lies within the subject’s experience: “the word is given to the point of view of what is observed, the choice of indicators appears random, “but it is possible that it is more representative than that which is alleged to be objective when presented in the third person” (Canevacci 1996:42).

Likewise, in my description of the city I recorded the emotions, memories, and thoughts that the city sparked in me while I also recognised the city as an autonomous subject. Taking a dual viewpoint, one directed inwards and the other on the city, I wrote my diary. My observation of the city was not limited to an inner description of the emotional states it created in me, but included the meticulous description of Long Street and the city through a distant viewpoint.

To these ends other studies conducted in Cape Town proved a source of valuable material. There was Colin Tredoux’s research (2009) where the author noted how Long Street was not only the place in which the racial barriers inherited from the past were broken, but also where the separation and divisions inherited from Apartheid were reproduced. The concept of re-territorialisation expressed by Shanon M. Jackson (2003), G. Saff’s concept of de-racialisation (1998), Grant Farred’s concept of double temporality (2004) in the post-Apartheid period are all conceptual tools which allowed me to approach my object of study through an elevated level of abstraction. This distant viewpoint was not to be understood as opposed to the first, but rather complementary to it; just as a film director would alternate a distant viewpoint with a close-up and then zoom in to show the most minute detail.

The last part of my method was the exploration of the city through its inhabitants’ viewpoints. In order to organise my interviews, I decided to create a map made up
of different routes that crossed the city's places. By creating urban pathways along which the inhabitants of Cape Town retraced the most significant stages of their life experience, associating them with urban places, I would be able to observe the signification of the city through a multi-perspective viewpoint. Taking Long Street as my starting point, I would explore different areas of the city by following the movements of my interviewees. Each urban pathway would be subdivided into ten stages scattered across the city. Sometimes a place in the city was considered to be significant due to the fact that something had happened there many years earlier; sometimes this was associated with a desire. Sometimes it transpired that a place evoked an event which had taken place in another country or in a faraway location.

During my interviews, I realised how interviewees often used metaphors to describe the places we went through. In the eyes of a young homeless man, Long Street became "the mother" who fed him and the "stepmother" who rejected him. The N2 highway that connected the centre of Cape Town to the airport, would be perceived by Anne, a middle-aged woman of Afrikaans origin who came to Cape Town when she was 17 years old, as an "imaginary bridge" that could connect her current life and her turbulent past. A pot in a township reminded a former soldier of a bloody revolt that happened during the years of Apartheid.

Observing the city through their memories often evoked the use of metaphor-rich language. George Lakoff (2003) has noted how metaphor has often been considered a dangerous element in the philosophy of language. Yet, as he notes, the (conventional) metaphor is part of everyday language. Lakoff compared an argument to a war where the metaphor can be used as a tactic. Metaphor operates on different levels of communication, moving between different contexts, including the real and imaginary, the rational and the irrational. In this case, the contexts through which my interviewees moved were their memories and the urban spaces. Metaphor served as a bridge for connecting these two realms. Observing the city through their inner worlds led them to replace a habitual viewpoint and triggered a process of defamiliarisation in which the city's territory become an unknown place yet to be explored.

According to Shklovsky, the defamiliarised view leads to a distortion of habitual reality and the adoption of a poetic language. He gives literary examples of
writers like Leon Tolstoy who presents objects in his novels as if they had never been seen before: “In describing something he (Tolstoy) avoids the accepted names of its parts and instead names corresponding parts of other objects. For example, in ‘Shame!’ (1895), Tolstoy defamiliarises the idea of flogging in this way: to strip people who have broken the law, to hurl them to the floor, and ‘to rap on their bottoms with switches’ and, after a few lines, ‘to lash about on the naked buttocks’” (Shklovsky 1917:13). Tolstoy avoids defining concepts and places with their names, distorting them instead through metaphors and other definitions. Yet it is precisely the semantic shift (sdvig) typical of poetic language and its distortion which Shklovsky says ensures the perception of the object.

Like for the Russian formalists, for whom art had the task of "restoring the perception of the world", in my ethnography of the city, I sought to reveal a different city, a distorted city that emerged from the meeting of my interviewees’ inner worlds and the urban spaces. Considering the distortions of interviewees as primary research material did not mean considering the interviews as pure inventions or as just fruits of imagination. Like art, ethnography can also take on the task of "restoring a perception of the world", but it can’t be considered as pure invention. A link of continuity with the represented object, though transformed and "distorted" through representation, was the essential precondition for the city's ethnographic observation. Though Cape Town was the result of the memories, hopes, and imagination of its people, it was never completely reduced to them. There was a thin line of continuity between the perception of the city by its residents and the city itself, within which the ethnographic poetic could operate, but which it could not do without.

For this purpose, it is useful to consider the theoretical dispute between Shklovsky and Derrida and the opposition between the concept of defamiliarisation and that of différance, summed up by Lawrence Crawford in the article "Viktor Shklovsky: Différance in Defamiliarisation" (2008). According to Derrida, the concept of defamiliarisation was the limit of the Shklovsky's theory of perception. It stopped Shklovsky from having any continuum between the representing agent and the denoted object.

While Shklovsky saw art as having the role of "restoring perception of the world", through the concept of "différance", Derrida emphasised the possibility of bringing
aesthetic perception alive: “The economic character of différance in no way implies that the deferred presence can always be recovered, that it simply amounts to an investment that only temporarily and without loss delays the presentation of presence, that is, the perception of gain and the gain of perception” (Derrida in Crawford 2008:18). Derrida wrote: “Since we are only in the non-simple presence of the text, life can only manifest itself as a memory of an originary experience” (Derrida in Crawford 2008:15). Taking defamiliarisation as "pure invention", it becomes a threat to its theoretical partner, "life", which it intends to restore and preserve. Derrida wrote, “If the economy Shklovsky outlines depends on an origin, originary différence, and presence, how could it plausibly begin? (Derrida in Crawford 16:2008).

James Clifford noted that “to recognise the poetic dimension of ethnography does not require that one give up facts and accurate accounting for the supposed free play of poetry” (Clifford 1988:26). He observed, “Poetry is not limited to romantic or modernist subjectivism: it can be historical, precise, objective. And of course it is just conventional and institutionally determined as prose. (…) Ethnography is hybrid textual activity: it traverses genres and disciplines”. (Clifford 1988:28) In this sense, poetic language found a place in this study as the possibility of using a multiple viewpoint made up of the hybrid intersection of languages and ways of perceiving the city that embraced both the rational sphere and the irrational sphere, memory and hope, the imaginary and the real.

Another aspect of my methodology was photography and the use of photo elicitation. Inspired by the work of the American photographer Joel Sternfeld, I sought to photograph urban places that evoked "other" situations. In one of his most famous works: On This site: Landscape in Memoriam (1997) Sternfeld takes pictures of spaces where a crime or a tragedy had happened many years earlier. His photographs tell of "absences". Likewise, my pictures of places of Cape Town tell of events that had happened (or had never happened, in some cases). All evoke absences. Observing the places together with the city’s residents, I discovered the particular meaning that they attributed to them. This process of signification was not stable or definitive. During the photo elicitation process, during which my interviewees explored their memory again, this time looking at the photographs, it came out how a place that had evoked a particular event, or to which a particular meaning was attributed, could now take on a different one.
The final aspect of my research was the montage of the data. In the final composition of my work my role was not to be that of making these voices uniform, or of attempting to trace an inner coherence among them, but rather to set them free and allow them to emerge in their complexity and their contradictions. In this respect I drew my inspiration from the literary criticism of the novel by Mikhail Bakhtin (1973).

Bakhtin conceived the novel as a pluri-stylistic, pluri-discursive, and pluri-vocal phenomenon. He noted that when we read (or study) a novel, we find heterogeneous stylistic units on different linguistic planes (the direct artistic-literary narration of the author, the different forms of extra-artistic discourse such as moral reasoning, ethnographic description, protocol information, and discourses that are stylistically individualised by the protagonists. These stylistic units are joined in a harmonious artistic system. They are subjugated to the stylistic unity of the whole, which cannot be identified with any of its subordinate units. The novel's artistic singularity is precisely in the union of these subordinate units that stay autonomous from the superiority of the whole.

The novel is social pluridiscursivity and individual plurivocality that is artistically organised. With the novel's social pluridiscursivity and the individual plurivocality, it orchestrates its themes and its object world has the meaning that it represents and portrays. The author's discourse, the narrators' discourses, and the interspersed literary genres and the discourses of the protagonists are just the main compositional units that allow for the novel's pluridiscorsivity. Each of these units admits a multiplicity of social voices and a variety of bonds and correlations. The theme's movement between languages and discourses, the breaking off into rivulets and drops of social pluridiscursivity, and its dialoguisation are the unique traits of the novel style.

Concepts found in Bakhtin's literary analysis such as pluridiscursivity, dialogism, heteroglossy, the chronotope, utterance, voice, and polyphony have been of great value for disciplines outside of literature as well. Julia Kristeva was strongly influenced by Bakhtin in her conception of "dynamism to structuralism". (Dosse 1967:56). She considered the division between monologic writing “that includes descriptive, representative, historical and scientific models” (Dosse 1967:57) in
which “the subject assumes the role of I (God) and submits to this role by the same gesture” and the dialogic story both a method of literary analysis and “the basis for the intellectual structure of our period” (Dosse 1967:67). Bakhtin's work also shaped the thinking of Lacan, Derrida, and Roland Barthes. Barthes thought that the relationship between the active writer and the passive reader could be redefined through the creation of a plural text allowing for many voices and paths” (Dosse 1967:72).

Bakhtin's influence on anthropological thought was greatest in early postmodernism (Marcus, Clifford, Tyler). Wendy Weiss (1990) notes that Bakhtin's great contribution to ethnography was in upsetting its assumptions and postulates such as “the unity of cultural system, the incontestability of cultural norms (...) and the paradoxical passivity of the actor who is mindful of the norms that are supposed to guide his action” (Weiss 1990:414). Bakhtin made it possible to challenge “the traditional authority [of the author] in the traditional theory” (Weiss 1990:414). Clifford credited Bakhtin with having created “a utopian textual space where discursive complexity, the dialogical interplay of the voices, can be accommodated” (Clifford 1983:48). Bakhtinian analysis suggested a textual alternative in ethnography as well: “a utopia of plural authorship that accords to collaborators not merely the status of independent enunciators but that of writers” (Clifford 1983:51). This overlapping of authors could undermine the monographic authority of the ethnographic tradition. Another contribution from Bakhtin that Clifford took up was in the concept of heteroglossy that recognises the multiple dimensions of cultural life and is, therefore, an important corrective to static, unified conceptions of culture. “For Bakhtin, preoccupied with the representation of nonhomogeneous wholes, there are non integrated cultural worlds of languages”(Clifford 1983:46). Likewise “a culture is an open-ended, creative dialogue of subcultures of insiders and outsiders, of diverse factions”(Clifford 1983:46).

Bakhtin’s thinking continues to influence diverse realms of social research. The analysis of Dorothy Smith (2005) is interesting in the concepts of the "text" and "dialogue" of paradigmatic models for studying the relationship between the genders. Through the concept of 'gender subtext' (1988,1990), she explored “the objectified forms, the rational procedures and the abstracted conceptual organisation” that create an appearance of neutrality and impersonality that
“conceals class, racial and gender — subtexts” (Smith 2005:65). Norber Willey saw the notion of voice as a research tool to apply to social research. He identified two categories of voices: institutional ones “(that) position you into a particular set of do’s and don’ts, even though this positioning may be implicit” (Willey) and structural ones inspired by Bakhtinian thought: “Bakhtin used the concept of voice with a rich set of attributes. For one thing there are no simple or single voices. All voices are multi-vocal, polyphonic and replete with sub-voices” (Willey 2007:3). According to Willey, through this concept, we can capture the different modulations and forms of thought and expression that institutional voices muffle. These “structural voices,” so to speak, are usually inaudible, but they have a powerful influence over the humans in their range. And with enough attention they can be decoded (Bakhtin 1981:341-350 and Shotter, 2008).

Bakhtin’s concept of dialogue is also a model for autoethnography, a genre of writing that involves personalised accounts in which authors draw on their own lived experiences, connect the personal to the culture and place the self and others within a social context (Reed, Danahay 1997). In her article The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography (2004), Carolyn Ellis notes the importance of Bakhtin’s thinking in his concept of the act of authoring as a creative answerability/responsibility (otvetvennost) “that invokes a much-needed dialogue between self and others in human inquiry” (Ellis 2004:12). The concept of authoring views a self “as answerable not only to the social environment but also a self that is answerable for the authoring of its responses” (Ellis 2004:13). Dialogue in this sense means the "interior dialogue" of the author observing his or her object of study.

As for the study of urban phenomena by social scientists, Massimo Canevacci (1997) Ruby and Melnik (2007) saw the concept of the chronotope as an invaluable conceptual tool for observing the city. Canevacci compares Sao Paulo to an urban chronotope in which its inhabitants' temporality merges with urban spaces. Ruby and Melnik use the chronotope to observe ways of representing the world by immigrants in U.S. cities. In Language of the City: Town Bemba as Urban Hybridity (2008), Debora Spitulnik applied the concept of heteroglossy in her examination of Town Bemba in Zambia. She explains how the concept of heteroglossy, the model of centripetal and centrifugal forces in language proposed by Bakhtin, is an invaluable tool for studying the city, “definable as an oscillation between a
normative model and a jumble of incongruities, contradictions, and innovations” (Spitulnik 2008:33).

In this project, I borrowed several concepts from Bakhtinian analysis (including the concept of polyphony, dialogue, interior dialogue, voice, and chronotope). The most significant contribution was in being able to consider my ethnographic work as a polyphonic novel. The model for this was Bakhtin's literary criticism of Dostoyevsky’s novel. Bakhtin notes how the Russian novelist never suffocates the personalities of his characters with an authoritarian voice, but rather leaves his characters’ voices free, restricting himself to intervening in writing the plot which connects them. Vulcan writes: “In Dostoevsky’s novels the characters retain their separateness, their voices are not assimilated into or sublated by the authorial voice, and all forms of "consummation" — significantly translated as "finalisation" at this phase — are perceived as acts of violence” (Vulcan 2006:154).

Comparing the city’s ethnographic description to a polyphonic novel, I could consider the city’s inhabitants as authors who interpreted and "created" their social worlds in different ways. On this point, it is useful to stop and consider an interesting analogy between Bakhtin's literary analysis of the novel and Friedrich Nietzsche’s conception of the world as "artwork". Rapport notes how for Nietzsche “human society and human culture are above all poetic projects, artworks, and it is to artistic models and aesthetic evaluations that one may best turn for an understanding them” (Rapport 1997:47). Like an artwork, social worlds are also "constructed" and subject to interpretation. There is no human (and social) world with its own truth; it possesses no independent character. The human world is subject to a plurivocality of interpretations; “the world can be interpreted equally well in innumerable, vastly different and deeply incompatible ways” (Rapport 1997:47). Based on these assumptions, the social world can be understood as the contradictory, unstable sum of these interpretations. As in the novel understood by Bakhtin as a pluridiscursive reality in which the different voices (of the author and narrating voices) are taken as parts of a whole but do not coincide, in the world as "artwork", human beings are simultaneously an essential part of the whole and autonomous voices that cannot be reduced to it. Though they are part of the whole, they scrutinise it, interpret it, and create it: “Human beings may themselves be part of the world, may be viewing in from situated, interested and partisan perspectives, but nonetheless, it is they who created the world, create
themselves, and their perspectives in their interpretations” (Rapport 2000:86). Taking inspiration from Bakhtin’s literary analysis and Nietzsche’s view of the world as artwork, we can compare ethnographic, textual construction to that of a novel and to the city as an artwork. This means that each social actor can be conceived as a creator and a co-author who writes, interprets, and creates a particular meaning.

Nuttall and Michael (2000) say that theorising in South Africa has been characterised by the overriding analytical weight given to politics, resistance struggles and race as determinants of identity. This thinking is shared by other writers like Sean Field, Renate Meyer and Felicity Watson. In Imagining the City (2007) Field suggests a reading of Cape Town in which the city is observed through meanings produced from below, through the memories, imaginations, and thoughts of regular people. “We assert the centrality of people’s creative attempts to construct, contest and maintain a material and emotionally secure sense of place and identity in Cape Town” (Field 2007:7). The author’s choice is in keeping with a tendency shared by many South African authors, who have shown distaste for the tendency to see the post-Apartheid city in a monologic and verticalistic view, what Wiley calls the institutionalisation of the city’s voices. Field invites us to take a mobile viewpoint that can identify with the viewpoints of regular people: “Understanding how people individually and collectively remember these sensory experiences and cultural formations is central to understanding how they manage their lives in the city” (Willey 2007:4). In this project, I decided to follow this suggestion and observe the city through a multiple viewpoint and listen to its different voices. The intention is not to provide description of the city to give it a univocal interpretation. The author’s viewpoint and interpretation are also overlapped with the viewpoints and interpretations of the city’s inhabitants. I sought to join the thinking of the South African activist and poet Stephen Watson when he wrote: “My Cape Town may well not be your Cape Town...its ways are many, its realities multiple” (Watson 1986:177).
CHAPTER ONE

The Final

I am buses, trains, and taxis. I am prejudice, bigotry and discrimination. I am urban South Africa.
Richard Rive Black writing in the back room of the District Six Museum (No date).

Cape Town is a racist city, Cape Town is not a racist city.
Sean Field Imaging the city 2007

Time, space: necessity. Fate, fortune, chance: life’s traps. You want to exist? This is how it is.
Luigi Pirandello Uno nessuno e centomila 1926

Summary

On 28 May 2011, the final of the European Football Champions League was played in London between Manchester United and Barcelona. The match was broadcast in every corner of the world. Long Street took part in the event that evening too. People of different races, social backgrounds, and from different parts of the city poured into the street to watch the final on the video screens in the bars.

Different aspects of this event caught my attention. First of all, the final was not being played in South Africa, but in London. It was only possible to participate in the event through a television broadcast and the Internet. This aspect did not detract from people's level of enthusiasm and participation. The event was much-awaited and had been prepared for long before it took place, involving a vast number of people. Another interesting aspect was the fact that the final did not involve any national or local teams, as it was played between two European teams. This also didn't lessen the level of participation. The people of Cape Town chose to support either Barcelona or Manchester United and expressed their preference through flags, hats, shirts, and other merchandise. The choice between
the two teams might be spurred by various factors, including personal taste, affection, colour preferences, or particular processes of identification that had to do with people's personal histories.

It had been more than twenty years since the fall of Apartheid. Its people were encountering each other and reasserting their ideological and racial affiliations. Watching the preparations for the final, I felt like I was watching the rise of new affiliations that crossed these categories. Though Apartheid appeared as if it had been completely erased amidst the colours and sounds of this event, refining my view, I realised that the reality was more complex. Behind the desire to forget the past, behind the rise of new behaviours, attitudes and the rise of new affiliations, there are many memories, prejudices and hatreds spawned during the regime that still dwell in the memory of people, and new fears and divisions are arising. Choosing my interviewees from those who were on Long Street to watch the match on the evening of the final, I decided to create urban pathways that started from this street and branch off to the city's different areas. In this sense, the final will be taken as a pattern that connects the different life stories that crossed that evening on Long Street. This chapter's objective is to see how, starting from a single event, we can observe the city through a multi-perspective viewpoint.

1.1 A Home for all

It’s a city of love, it’s like a mother, there’s a love. It’s not like Jo’burg where there’s greed and where the wealth is underground, it’s all on top, it’s visible, it’s got a, there’s a sweetness about it you know a graciousness about it.

Former District Six resident. Written on the wall in the District Six Museum (No date).

Cape Town is the oldest urban area of South Africa, for this reason it is called the Mother City. The bay on which it is located was an ideal port for the sailors who plied the route from Europe to India. Table Bay is, in fact, one of the few places sheltered from the wind in the Cape of Good Hope area, where the two Oceans meet each other, giving rise to dangerous currents. In 1652, Dutch settlers, led by Jan Van Riebeck, established the first settlement, which gradually became present-day Cape Town. The Dutch settlements did not have a particularly high population level, but after the British occupation in 1795, this started to grow
apace. After one century the population had doubled, and it started to become a real urban area. At the end of the Second World War over 450,000 people lived in the Mother City (Bickford-Smith 1999:155). During the colonial period, Cape Town’s population had already experienced racial segregation. The first compulsory removal of people was forcibly introduced after the spread of bubonic plague (1904) which was put down to the poor hygienic conditions of the black people (Swanson 1977:388). In 1923, the colonial government with the Natives Act forced the African natives to live in defined and restricted areas. In 1937, African people were forbidden to buy land outside of the reserves. Nevertheless, it is estimated that in 1948, 80% of Cape Town immigrants lived outside of these areas.

It was, however, through the electoral victory of the National Party (1948) and the institution of Apartheid (literally "apartness") that the racial division of the territory was radicalised and first took on an ideological character. The Apartheid legislation aimed to radicalise this separation by the promulgation of laws such as the Group Areas Act (1950), which divided the entire South African territory into white, black and coloured areas.

This legislation entailed urban replanning, including the demolition of District Six. As a council report of 1941 stated, “All the buildings, except those that are of sufficient value to preserve, will be demolished as part of the slum clearance scheme and the land acquired under the Slum Act so that (a)...desirable street system (can be) devised as though a new area were being dealt with” (Cape Town city Engineer’s Department in Bickford 1999:173).

Under Group Areas legislation about “150,000 people - mostly coloureds and African – were forced to move from older, often unplanned residential areas to the Cape Flats” (Western 1989:70). There, many found themselves in new municipal townships “designed on ‘scientific lines’, close to industrial zones” (Bickford 1999:174). The rationale for this measure was that it would reduce social conflicts in the territory. Smith explains the rationale as follows: “If you reduce the number of points of contacts to the minimum, you reduce the possibility of friction. The result of putting people of different races together is to cause racial trouble” (Smith 1992:137). Actually the real aim of the Group Areas Act was more insidious and ambitious: As Henry Trotter noted, the Group Areas Act aimed to determine the spatial limits within which “memories circulated, creating a reflexive,
mutually reinforcing pattern of narrative traffic”. (Trotter 2009:49). Through measures such as the Groups Area Act, as well as through the Mixed Marriage Act (1949) and the Immorality Amendment Act (1957), Apartheid’s architects intended to transfer the contents of apartheid ideology on to the urban territory.

Measures were progressively introduced that sought to segregate all urban spaces and the different realms of social life: “from maternity wards to graveyards, shops entrances to restaurants, taxis to ambulances, beaches to park benches to pedestrian subways and bridges” (Bickford 1999:171) and in 1956 segregation was introduced on buses. In 1959, Apartheid legislation was extended to universities. The University College of the Western Cape was assigned to coloureds and at the University of Cape Town black students were admitted “only if a course was not available at bushes campus” (Bickford 1999:173). In the 1960s, measures were increased to contain migration that involved constant checks of residence permits, hiring white and coloured personnel and firing blacks, and the breaking up of informal areas occupied by migrants. Despite these measures, the number of Africans in Cape Town did not decline for the entire decade. Indeed, it increased exponentially from “70,000 in 1960 to 160,000 by 1974, with illegals estimated at a further 90,000” (Kinkead, Weeks 1992:483). The repressive measures that the government adopted and growing social discontent caused mounting tension between the government forces and the black community. New political movements grew, including the Pan African Congress (PAC) which joined the African National Congress (ANC) in opposing the regime. Fringe, armed resistance groups started to form like uMkhonto We Sizwe (MK) and Poqo which organised attacks destroying government buildings and murdering police.

In the early 1970s, South Africa was hit by a major recession, which exponentially increased the unemployment level. Together with the political tensions already in place, this caused a volatile situation that led to two urban riots. In June 1976 in Soweto thousands of students demonstrated to protest against a government plan to teach Afrikaans in African schools. Police opened fire, killing hundreds of demonstrators. The protest spread throughout the country. In Cape Town, riots started in the black townships of Langa, Guguletu, and Nyanga and soon spread to coloured townships like Boeuntewel where some groups of young people decided to join the urban guerrillas.
The urban riots and growing protests from the international community put the government in a crisis situation. It responded in the following years with an alternation of proposing reforms and applying increasingly repressive measures. The plan to teach Afrikaans in African schools was abandoned. Coloureds were allowed to take part in the parliamentary system with whites, and some forms of segregation were abolished. In the mid-1980s, political movement parties were legalised, such as the United Democratic Front (UDF), which included members of different races. Private schools were allowed to admit anyone and the Mixed Marriage Act was abolished. This strategy of relaxing the laws did not have the hoped-for results. Protests, demonstrations and various kinds of boycotting continued to rage in the country to the point that in 1986 another state of emergency was called. In the late 1980s an unsustainable social situation existed. The streets of Cape Town became a battleground. The various strata of the population started to join in protest in non-violent demonstrations like the famed one on September 13, 1989 in which members of different parts of South African society marched together and demanded the liberation of Nelson Mandela and the end of conflict.

In 1990 President De Klerk declared the end of Apartheid, followed by negotiations and the country’s first democratic elections (1994). After the electoral victory of the African National Congress (1994) many initiatives were implemented to encourage a process of deracialising the urban spaces of South Africa (Saff 1994:42). Specifically in Cape Town, the city management adopted ambitious plans like the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) that aimed to transform the city's Apartheid landscape into a “home for all”, ‘’n Tuiste vir almal’, ‘iKhaya lethu sonke’” (Field 2007:8). Major edicts were enacted, such as for the supply of water and electricity to marginalised areas. The institution of the Commission on the Restitution of Land Rights (CRLR) led to legal actions and financed compensation for the resettlement of the city by those displaced during the regime (such as the former residents of District Six). After the implementation of national programs to redress the inequality between social groups like Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) (established in 2001), many black and coloured residents in the townships found employment in areas that had been considered white, like the Central Business District (CBD). This led to new forms of urban movement and the breaking of some economic, psychological and social barriers that had divided the city in the past yet. Cape Town is still afflicted by old social
tensions and new forms of inequality are emerging. The attempt to foster employment in the social groups most affected during the years of Apartheid (blacks, coloureds, women) is obstructed by an open, competitive market that increasingly demands high levels of education and high technical skills, which were denied to most of the population for decades (Field 2007:6). Plans for urban transformation were also labeled as sources of new forms of social marginality. Shannon M. Jackson writes: “Development beyond the city center is oriented to pleasurable surfaces, private desires, and accessible strictly by means of the automobile and, thus, privileges class boundaries while obscuring from global view the inequalities that still structure the economy” (Jackson 2000:66). In addition to the lasting economic inequality and new forms of urban marginalisation, new forms of xenophobia and the spread of violence have led many scholars to question the actual effectiveness of the political transformations in their attempt to change the social fabric.

In May 2008 in Cape Town, there was a surge in attacks on immigrants. The attacks led to forty-two deaths and hundreds wounded. In Reinge Park, some immigrants from Zimbabwe were burned alive with the "neckless" technique used during the 1980s when police informants, and those presumed to be so, were trapped in tyres, covered with gasoline, and set on fire. Elke Zuern explains these episodes by attributing them to the fact that in the post-apartheid era, as it had in the past, violence continued to govern relationships between South Africans, affecting all spheres, including those that do not directly have anything to do with politics (Zuern 2008:22). Lloyd Vogelman also emphasised how the climate of violence during Apartheid, particularly in the ’80s, still dominated the country’s relationships. Violence continues to be a method to resolve conflicts and achieve one’s objectives in family life, sexual relationships, at school, as well as in economic and political relationships (Vogelman 1993:87).

During my exploration of Cape Town, I discovered a reconciled city and a violent city, a freed city and a city enslaved by its past, a rich city with European economic standards and a very poor city. Cape Town disoriented me with its complexity. The artist and activist Mike Van Graan wrote “Cape Town is still a city in the making.... The question is, whose tastes, smells, feelings, sights and sounds will come to prevail in defining the character and experience of the city?” (Field, 2007:9) It was still impossible to try to answer this question, but the place
where more than anywhere else, it would be possible to simultaneously observe different tastes, smells, feelings, sights and sounds of the city was, without a doubt, Long Street.

1.2 The street of differences.

I consider it as impossible to know the parts without knowing the whole, as to know the whole without a precise knowledge of the parts.

Pascal B. *Pensées*. 1660

Situated in the heart of Cape Town’s Central Business District, Long Street is one of the oldest streets in the city, and has a reputation as “a liberal, heterogeneous, or ‘mixed’ space” (Tredoux 2009:14). Because of its proximity to the harbour, in the colonial period, Long Street was frequented by people of different ethnicities and of different social backgrounds. At the beginning of the 1960s, black people lost the right to live in the street (and to be out and about on the street after six o’clock at night), or to go to the cinemas, bars, clubs and restaurants reserved for whites. However, in South African cities “the engineered space” didn’t always coincide with the “lived space” (Murray 2007:1). As Murray noted, the Official projects were often subverted, bypassed and evaded by “popular energies” (Murray 2007:1). Urban planning collided with the resistance (manifest and latent) of the population. During the time of Apartheid, several areas of Cape Town continued to be frequented or inhabited by people of different races. That was the case in Long Street which persisted in being a grey zone: “a place where the normal rules of apartheid could be flouted” (Tredoux 2009:9). Long Street represented for many people a place that was “partially free”, where it was possible to break the physical psychological and social boundaries imposed by the regime.

During my fieldwork I met several people who told me how Long Street became a significant place for them. Walley, a coloured man, former resident of District Six, used to go to Long Street when he was a young boy and when he lived in the city centre. Walley told me that after his eviction and compulsory removal to Mitchells
Plain: “I returned countless times to the city centre and to Long Street; even just to look at the people and places, and smell the smells of the places I considered my home”. Walley disregarded the barrier to “remember” the place in which he was born and where he had lived as a child. For him, walking down Long Street was a way to reclaim his sense of belonging to the territory. Walley recreates this sense of belonging through movement; his “presence” on Long Street is a tactic (De Certeau 1984) to counter the authority’s decisions.

Walking down Long Street with Shirley an anti apartheid activist, I discovered how an upper-class girl from Cape Town, studying medicine at the prestigious U.C.T., started to visit a bookshop on Long Street where she bought books on philosophy (Marx, Bakunin, Marcuse). These books inspired her to change tack and espouse the armed conflict alongside the blacks. In this case Long Street became, for Shirley, the starting point of a life dedicated to the struggle against Apartheid and against racial discrimination. Hence the “anthropological space” of Long Street was not characterised by uniformity, but by the convergence of people’s different ways of relating to the urban spaces. Walley continued to consider Long Street as a zone to which he belonged, while Shirley, the A.N.C. activist, who started to develop her ideological views in the very same place, was soon to consider the white zone “enemy territory”.

In the post-Apartheid period, Long Street was adopted as a symbol of the Rainbow Nation to present the city as a tourist destination and for advertising purposes. In particular, its burgeoning night life was viewed as a “bohemian melting-pot for a mixture of people, cultures, activities and tastes: a site, par
excellence, of contact and integration” (Tredoux 2009:766). The presence of people of different ethnic origins both from the city and from other parts of the world was celebrated as the triumph of the multiracial over the divisions of the past. An advert for an agency which rents flats and lofts ran as follows: “Take a walk down Long Street to take in the diversity of the Rainbow Nation together with its arts and crafts and curios” (Tredoux 2009:766).

The presence of diversity, which in the past was considered a chink in the post-Apartheid system, became the symbol of the new multiracial nation. From 1990 on, the barriers which maintained the divisions in the urban territory were progressively dismantled (Jackson 2003:7) and many blacks and coloureds found employment in this area where they headed every day to carry out their work. Working together gave many people the opportunity to get to know each other, spend time with each other and break down the prejudices created during the years of the Apartheid regime. Kay, a young woman who arrived in Cape Town from a small city in Western Cape Province looking for work, explained to me how in Long Street “I finally managed to forget the fact that I was a coloured girl”.

During the post-Apartheid era, the boundaries which divided Cape Town have become more fluid and uncertain and a process of the “deracialisation of urban spaces” (Saff 1994) has started to take place. In Long Street this phenomenon takes place both on the lower side of the street, which is characterised by the presence of offices, banks and hotels, and on the upper side of the street, popular for nightlife, night clubs, discos and restaurants. When Kay arrived in Cape Town, she found work in an office situated on the lower side of the street whereas Upper Long Street became a reference point for her social life: “Here I met people of different races who come from all over. Nobody minded the colour of my skin; here I could be just Kay”.

Bars and clubs such as The Jo’burg, The Zula Bar, and The Dubliner are frequented equally by white, black and coloured South Africans, immigrants from other African countries and tourists from all over the world. It is not uncommon to see groups of friends of different races or mixed couples having a drink together at the Long Street Café or playing a game of billiards in The Stone. Most of the city’s clubs, restaurants and discos are concentrated in the upper part of the street. This aspect of the street’s social life too is racially, economically and socially heterogeneous in nature.
Nevertheless, the Cape Town of post-Apartheid still maintains some of the divisions created in the past. The heterogeneity and the multicultural character of Long Street do not render it immune from the economic, social and psychological divisions of the past. Some of the more significant aspects which conspire to keep alive the spectres of the past are the financial and social differences and social marginality inherited from Apartheid which continue to impinge upon the least advantaged members of the population. Long Street, like the entire City Business District, is a mixed area frequented by people who come from all the different areas of the city. Nevertheless, as Cecil Vigouroux recalls, the majority of blacks from the townships “will stay at home, as land close to the historic CBD is limited and comes at a high premium” (Vigouroux 2005:241).

Walking down Long Street with Xolewa she tells me that she considers the Center Bussiness District is still “a white zone”. It is a place where “at best, us blacks can beg to be taken on as servants”. As under Apartheid, post-Apartheid Long Street is permeated by conflicting phenomena: the dismantling of racial barriers, the re-emergence of conflicts which seemed to have been placated, the desire for liberation and change in people’s social position and the fear of plummeting to a lower social level.

The relationship between the inhabitants and urban spaces of Cape Town has been the subject of various studies which have attempted to offer a consistent and illustrative reading of the transformations which came about as a consequence of the collapse of the Apartheid regime (Saff 1994, Robinson 1997, Christofer 1990). The idealistic champions of the Rainbow Nation on the one hand, and their detractors on the other, have both put forward an explanation which is as standardised as possible for the transformation of the city. However, by observing Long Street and listening to the voices of those who frequent it, contradictions and contrasting opinions emerge which make a standardised reading difficult. Rather than the consistent and homogeneous incarnation of a historical transformation, Long Street appears to be a hotbed of complexity, made up of a multitude of voices, actions, events, interactions, retrospective actions, coincidences and exceptions. Louis, a white Afrikaans-speaking young man, after losing his job, survives by begging in Long Street. He considers Long Street as a metaphor for an entire country which accepts and rejects him at the same time. Marleane, a young woman resident in the townships, looks on Long Street as the “place of freedom”,

the freedom promised by Nelson Mandela during the elections of 1994 that she has never seen in her district. Noeleen Murray (2007) uses the expression “lines of desires” to describe the complex plot of “memories and desires (but) also fear and forgetting” which reach across the urban spaces of South African cities in the post-Apartheid time. According to the author’s perspective, the “lines of desires” don’t follow a linear and uniform pathway but are ambiguously interlaced and juxtaposed. This analogy seems particularly appropriate to the case of Long Street where the “lines” of memory, desire and hope are intersected and never converge into a single direction (Murray 2007:12). In Long Street, there was a convergence of different ways of reconstructing the past, envisioning the future, and building the world converged. These perspectives on the world intersected like independent lines in a single space to form a whole. Long Street is made up of each of these lines, but can be reduced to none of them.

1.3 Long Street: One, no-one, and a hundred thousand

One Saturday morning I headed to Market Street, a pedestrian area in the City Bowl parallel to Long Street which runs from Green Market Square to St George’s Cathedral. Here local artists organise exhibitions; there are souvenir markets and stalls which sell second-hand books. Walking through Long Market Square I saw an English translation of Pirandello’s novel Uno, nessuno, centomila (1926) (One, no-one, and a hundred thousand) on display. I stopped at the stall and I immediately felt the urge to buy it.
Rereading Luigi Pirandello’s masterpiece was a way for me to re-appropriate something familiar. I had first read it in Palermo during a trip to the island of Sicily. Reading the novel was like going back home and reliving the pleasure I had experienced, when I read it the first time in the land where its author was born.

However, the fact that the novel was the perfect way for me to “return” to Italy was just one of the reasons I felt compelled to buy it. There were analogies between the subject of the text and the challenges of my field of work. *Uno nessuno centomila* tells the story of Vitangelo Moscarda, a young man of means who as a result of a trivial episode (his wife’s comment that his nose is slightly crooked) goes through a crisis of identity. It caused his awareness that those who live around him have a completely different image of him from his own. This thought leads Moscarda to the awareness that a person is not “one”, and that reality is not objective.

The main character in the novel moves from considering himself to be unique for everyone (one), to a large number of different selves (one hundred thousand), which take form in line with his relationships with other people. His flight from the glances of others leads him to social isolation and the loss of his identity (no-one), until he comes to the conclusion that the only way to live life is to surrender himself to its transitory nature and multiplicity, and experience it one moment at a time, dying and coming back to life over and over again. Pirandello’s novel offered me an important key to interpreting this tricky period in my work. As I proceeded, I had often asked myself if I should consider Long Street as a single organism, or if I should focus on the individual life stories of those who frequented it. Considering Long Street as “one” would have meant suffocating the contradictory voices and faces that make it up. Focusing on the individual parts of the street, i.e. taking a reductionist view, would cause me to lose perspective on the whole. Pirandello’s novel suggested the possibility of a third path: Long Street was one and multiple at the same time.

There was an interesting analogy between the literary view of Pirandello and the theory of complexity put forth by the French sociologist, Edgar Morin. In *Method* (1995) he presents the principle of “Unitas Multiplex” or the unit composed of different heterogeneous elements which are linked to each other in an inseparable way. Edgar Morin explains how the model of complexity is different both from an
holistic and from a reductionist one in that both come out of the same “paradigm of simplification” that seeks: “a perfect Order, regulating a perpetual machine, which was in turn made up of micro-elements diversely assembled into an object and a system” (Morin 1995:101). In both of these approaches the categories of “all” and “part” cancel each other out. On the contrary, the concept of complexity is based on the paradox of the co-existence of the single with the multiple; “complexity poses the paradox of the one and the many” (Morin 1995:24).

The idea of cultural complexity could be suited to the study of the city. As Ian Chamber noted: “The city suggests creative disorder, an instructive confusion, an interpolating space in which the imagination carries you in every direction, even toward the previously unthought… (cultural complexity) that includes Lagos as well as London, Beijing and Buenos Aires ….”(Chamber 1993:89). It becomes an important tool for observing “hybrid cultures, contaminations, and what Edward Said recently referred to as atonal ensembles” (Chamber 1993:89).

By considering Long Street as a complex organism, I was able to lose myself in its creative disorder. In my observation of Long Street I had discovered how the street spoke through the “voices” of its regulars who were part of the street. Long Street was one and many at the same time, while each person who frequented it, each bar, each corner, while still retaining its own independence, embodied it. Just as Vitangelo Moscarda discovers that he is perceived and imagined in a different way by the people he encounters, so Long Street was one, no-one, and one hundred thousand.

1.4 I’m an ethnographic eye.

“I’m an eye. A mechanical eye. I, the machine, show you a world the way only I can see it. I free myself for today and forever from human immobility. I’m in constant movement. ... My way leads towards the creation of a fresh perception of the world. Thus I explain in a new way the world unknown to you”.

Dziga Vertov Manifesto 1923

In 1923 Dziga Vertov presaged the contents of the artistic and philosophical revolution that took place six years after the release of his masterpiece, The Man
with a Movie Camera (1929). With this film Vertov sought to criticise fictional films that “separated (too easily) the realms of work and leisure according to the governing opposition between methods of analysis (science) and practices of interpretation (art)” (Tomas 1992:7). On the contrary, The Man with a Movie Camera was a (not acted) film through which the Russian director sought to suggest a merging between art and science, interpretation and analysis. Following the principles of the Kino Eye Method, Vertov used this work to seek “a theoretical manifestation on the screen” (Tomas 1992:8). To reach this goal, Vertov used different techniques including the space-time deconstruction of the action sequence through the use of different speeds "to produce arrested, slow and accelerated motion that call into question the notion of normal film speed and thus the pace of conventional cinematic vision” (Tomas 1992:14).

George Marcus considers Vertov’s work “an excellent inspiration” which he defines as “multi-sited ethnography”. This kind of ethnographic approach “defines their object of study through different modes or techniques” (Marcus 1995:106). Marcus uses the term "multi-sited ethnography" to mean the ethnography that seeks to reveal the multi-dimensional nature of the object of study, just as Vertov revealed the countless sides of the city.

I would add that Vertov is a source of inspiration as well for the interplay between familiarity and distance between the anthropologist and his or her object of study. David Tomas notes how the Man with a Movie Camera represents a rite of passage between pre-revolutionary reality, “whose dominant model Vertov isolated and defined in terms of the natural or unconscious acceptance of an unproblematised illusionism, and a post revolutionary cubo-futurist model that took form as a dynamic, dialectical, 'nonacted' cinematic culture predicated on a new logic of perception or method of constructing a film: montage” (Tomas 1992:18).

Through a frenetic montage, changing speeds and unexpected associations, Vertov seems to seek to remind viewers that the film is a fiction and not a faithful replica of reality. Interpretation is not a faithful photocopy of reality. It is its deconstruction and reconstruction in a new order: montage.

I was inspired by Vertov in my observation of Long Street. I used a series of observational techniques that did not aim to be a faithful summarising of the street (a replication of its territory), but rather its interpretation. Like Vertov, I adopted a
multiple perspective view, using different points of observation. Like him, I deconstructed and reconstructed these images of the city through a new narrative sequence. I started to observe Long Street in different situations. In the early morning when people arrived from different areas of the city to work; during the break when labourers queued up to get their lunch and when the “white collars” read their newspapers in a bar. I observed Long Street during the evening when the clubs started opening their portcullises and music started to come out and the end of the night when the street was frequented only by homeless who mumbled and fought for a coin or for a sip of beer. But above all I observed it during the liminal moment when the lower side emptied and the upper side woke up and started to be progressively populated.

On my path, I met regulars and occasional visitors to the street. Sometimes I lingered with them and decided to look more deeply and establish dialogue with them. I was told their life stories and we went over the most important moments of their lives. Sometimes my view stayed on the surface and the people of Long Street appeared like extras. Like in the chorus in Greek theatre, the regulars described the city in the first person, and the "extras" revealed what was in the darkness of the background, sometimes by their mere presence, and sometimes with a short interjection, and sometimes with silence.

1.5 Kay’s shadow line.

I started observing the street at dawn by following Kay’s pathway. Kay’s day started early in the morning at 4.30 a.m. when she would leave her flat in Sea Point and wait for the minibus which was to take her to Long Street. At that time of day the street was still shrouded in darkness; the buildings were lit only by the windows of one or two offices where someone had probably stayed to work right through the night.
As Kay went into the building we could hear the voices of young people who were leaving the bars and clubs on the upper part of the street. Kay would later tell me that these voices reminded her of the time when, shortly after her arrival in Cape Town, she would spend her nights on Long Street with her friends: “I had no real plans at that time; I just wanted to escape from the provinces and experience life in the city …. Now, after passing through so many different experiences, I had a plan for how I wanted to live my life; and I was lucky enough to have found a job which would allow me to make it happen”.

Kay had experienced the event of finding work on Lower Long Street and abandoning the clubs on its upper part as a transition from youth to maturity. Like Conrad’s _Shadow Line_ (1917) which separated the carefree times of youth from those of adult life, Kay had lived through her transition from Upper Long Street to Lower Long Street as a sign that she had gained maturity.

Kay links the two spaces of Lower Long Street and Upper Long Street to two distinct temporalities. The voices of the young people who were leaving the bars and clubs at the same time as she was going to work served as a bridge between the two temporal units, causing her to think again about certain aspects of her life. For Kay Long Street embodied the double temporality of her past and of her present. The memory of her youth and her arrival in the city is evoked by the voices of the people who come out from the night clubs and by her looking to the upper side of the road. In this case the street suggests to the young woman an
overlapping of two different phases of her life: the images of the night spent in some disco where Kay discovered Cape Town “and one part of my self” was juxtaposed with the images of the days spent in the office “where my life finally took a direction”.

1.6 Sunset and incomprehension in the Rainbow Nation.

Towards five in the evening Lower Long Street started to empty; people who worked in its buildings would leave their offices and their work and return to the different areas where they lived. Many workers would travel home by private car; driving out of the underground carparks; others would be waiting for the minibuses which left from Strand Street, but most would be heading towards the station.

I would rove around the crossroads in order to observe the stream of humanity composed of people of different tongues, races, social and cultural backgrounds, as they would leave the City Bowl, pass along Strand Street and disappear into the underpasses of Cape Town station. There would be office workers of Afrikaner or English origin in jacket and tie with briefcases who would be walking shoulder to shoulder with their black colleagues who lived in the townships; the African women with children fastened to their back, marching alongside white women in suits; coloureds, Indians, immigrants from other African countries and workers from European countries would be walking along side by side.

This scene made me think of how much South Africa had changed since the Apartheid period, the events I had only read about or seen in documentaries and photographs which depicted the clashes and battles between the different factions. In spite of all the problems which Apartheid brought with it, the dream of the Rainbow Nation of Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu and others, had come true. I would mix with this heterogeneous crowd and feel I was part of a single body made up of its differences.

It was Anthony, a young man who lived in Langa, one of the nearest townships to the city centre who succeeded in “breaking” or “rendering uncertain and problematic” the spell of my perception. Anthony considered himself privileged in so far as he had succeeded in finding a job in an NGO based in the CBD area.
When I spoke to him of my satisfaction at seeing and being part of the multicoloured crowd which would leave the CBD he stopped me short and told me I had stopped too soon and that to observe the Rainbow Nation in depth: I should have followed people along the entirety of their return journey to the respective quarters where they had their homes.

Anthony explained to me that the whites continued to hold the positions of power in the CBD and that, notwithstanding the fact that some non-whites worked in this area of the city and sometimes succeeded in having similar roles, once work in the office was over for the day, each would return to their areas, segregated by an infinite economic and social divide. He explained to me:

“Most of the whites who work with me do not understand what returning home means. Even though they live in the same city, few if any of them will ever have set foot in a third class carriage. They’re used to having a seat or even going home by car. In third class you need to fight for every square centimetre of space or climb over someone else in order to get home. Once back in the township you need to cross the “no-man’s lands”

those areas where no one knows you and you are more likely to be mugged and robbed.
Anthony took some delight in telling me about how certain people seemed incapable of understanding his everyday life experience outside the world of work with his colleagues. For safety reasons I was advised that it would not be a good idea for me to get into a third class carriage headed for the townships; but on a later occasion I got into one of these carriages to the townships to the south of the city by mistake. I saw scenes not only which I was not used to seeing, but which I could never even have imagined: a mass of bodies crammed together all pushing against each other; at each stop people would shove each other out of the way to get on or off the train to such an extent that at certain moments it was impossible to find anything to hang onto. I saw a young man left hanging onto the train while it was moving off at high speed. When I struggled off the train at Rondebosch station I thought of Anthony’s words, of the fact that my way of travelling on public transport in Italy or in the UK or in the “first classes” of the countries I had visited had conditioned my “view”.

Nonetheless I was convinced that this “otherness” would not prevent me from entering into a relationship with people and cultural environments which were “foreign” to me. After having met Kay, Anthony and other regulars of Long Street, I felt the need to find a narrative pattern that could connect these different views. The occasion came up unexpectedly through the final match of the Champions League. I started my observation of the event’s preparations and I participated in the evening first hand. Later, choosing three people who had attended the event in Long Street, I built urban pathways that started from the street and branched throughout the city, going over the most important moments of their lived experiences.

1.7 The Waiting

After six in the evening on 28 May 2011 it was no longer possible to find anywhere to sit in the bars and clubs on Long Street. A vast crowd of people from different areas of Cape Town had invaded the street with hats, caps and scarves bearing the emblems of Barcelona and Manchester United. The final of the Champions League was being played at Wembley Stadium in London: one of the year’s most important sporting events, watched by millions of people all around the world.
In Cape Town people had been looking forward to the match with great interest for many weeks. The main daily newspapers such as the Cape Times and the Cape Argus had carried articles featuring a technical analysis of the teams and predictions about the final result, taking over column inches in the opening pages normally reserved for news items and local politics. The flags and banners of the English and Catalan teams had begun to appear in windows and on balconies along Long Street. In the street’s bars and nightclubs the people of Long Street had forecast the outcome of the match and the fate of those involved, and engaged in animated debate about the merits of the two teams and their individual players.

In those days there seemed little distance at all between Long Street and any street you cared to mention in Manchester or Barcelona. On television, one image followed another of preparations in the stadium, the teams in training, and fans trying to hunt down the last ticket available. Pictures of the careers of the two teams' most famous players, views of the most typical areas of the two cities while features on the history of the clubs came onto the screen one after another and became part of everyday life in Cape Town. While I was walking down Long Street with a notebook trying to capture the most important elements for my work, I asked myself about the border between the "real" space of the street and that of an imaginary one linked to a sporting event which was traveling down the virtual channels of the media.

I soon realised that trying to separate the relationships which came to pass in places along the street from the events happening in other parts of the world might have led me to deviate from my subject of study. A sports event being played on the other side of the world could affect people in a way which was strong enough to transform their everyday life. Walking down Long Street I saw unfolding before me the actions and little gestures which resulted from the encounter between the public space of the street and the virtual one of the images relating to the event: a hotel doorman of Xhosa origin was engaged in a debate about the match with a guest of British origin at the entrance to the hotel; a man getting into a four-wheel drive vehicle gave some small change to a waiter who was wearing a Manchester United cap, wishing him good luck for the outcome of the match; Nigerian immigrants were carefully placing a Barcelona flag in front of their bar, provoking a disagreement with a local road-sweeper whose loyalties were to the English team’s colours.
In spite of the fact that the game was being played over 10,000 kilometres away, the level of “involvement” was extremely high. Hence, it was possible to consider the Champions League final as a “social fact” which, although it was taking place in a different space, had overwhelmed the lives of Long Street’s regulars. Appadurai notes how the coincidence between “social fact” and geographical space is placed in a state of crisis in modernity and above all in urban spaces passed through by “scapes” which “travel” at planetary level (Appadurai 1996:34). So, where were Cape Town’s boundaries at that point? And where were Long Street’s?

Ideas, images, people and financial transactions which originate in different parts of the world pass through Cape Town on a continuous basis. Long Street in particular is a vortex-like cross-roads for urban scapes. The skyscrapers stand out on the lower part of the street. These contain the offices of multinationals like Shell, whose symbol dominates the city’s business centre. Inside these buildings a series of communications, business and financial transactions take place which are influenced by other actions and decisions taken in New York, London or Amsterdam.

Every day people from all over the world pass along the street. In addition to those who work in the offices on the lower part, there are the tourists who may experience Long Street only for an hour or so, or a day or so, before heading elsewhere. There is also a significant immigrant presence. The Nigerian community has a number of different businesses on Long Street. Others, such as political refugees from Zimbabwe, work as taxi drivers or storemen. All of these people bring with them memories, customs and meanings which have their origins in other places, yet whose presence passes along the street.

There are also sounds and images relating to specific ideas, meanings and ideologies which have their origins in America, Europe or other places in South Africa and have “invaded” Long Street. These messages did not reach the street in a “pure” state, but have blended with elements of local culture and have taken shape on the street as a result of this fusion. One of the best-known clubs on Long Street takes its name from Johannesburg. Jo’burg is the informal name for South Africa’s largest and richest city. The Jo’burg tells the story of the city through the
language of the street: it is its epithet through the linguistic codes of Long Street. A few metres from the Jo’burg is the Café Mojito, which takes its name from the famous Cuban cocktail. Here one can listen to Latin-American music and eat Caribbean food. One aspect of interest is that the bar’s sign is a red star which recalls the symbol of the pro-Castro revolution. Socialist ideology and the pleasures of “consumption” are merged and superimposed.

1.8 Long street: mother and stepmother

With fifteen minutes to go till the kick-off Long Street was deserted. Most people were crammed into the bars and clubs in front of the big screens showing the events in London. Only the homeless were drifting round the street; they seemed almost to be the guardians of a space which, without their presence, would have been abandoned. The public space of the street and the private space of the bars were two territories which faced up to each other in a “war of meanings”.

The former territory belonged to the street kids who knew its every nook and cranny; they knew the rules which governed it, even those which were invisible to passers-by, who were completely unaware of them; they knew the tricks through which it was possible to survive, and lived it as if it were their own. The latter belonged to the owners and managers of the bars and clubs who protected their space through their drink prices and the right to control admission. These two kingdoms seemed separate and unconnected; yet, in reality, they were interdependent and often in conflict with each other.

On the evening of the final I noted how some homeless people were trying to follow the match from outside the bar, engaged in a war of nerves with the security man who was trying to shoo them away. But as soon as he was distracted, they moved in close again. These people participated in the event by listening to the sounds and voices coming from the paying public with whom they were attempting to establish communication through hand gestures in order to ask about the score.

A few months later, I discovered that Louis too, was a member of this group of “spectators” who were excluded from the bars and clubs. Thirty five year-old Louis had become homeless four years earlier and had found his new “home” on
Long Street. Unlike the majority of street dwellers on Long Street who were coloureds or blacks from other African countries, Louis was white from Afrikaner stock. The fact that he was the only white made things extremely difficult, but also offered some opportunities which Louis had learned to exploit.

One of these was the fact that he could easily camouflage himself among the customers; strike up a conversation with them and maybe get someone to buy him a drink, something to eat, or at least some cigarettes. His physical appearance was extremely important to Louis; in fact, during an interview he explained to me “I have to look perfect in order to survive”. I met Louis in a bar in Lower Long Street. He came to sit close to me and we started talking. At the beginning I did not understand he was a homeless person. Indeed his behaviour and his way of dressing did not give the impression of someone living in the street. What made being white difficult for him was trying to fit in with his new street companions.

“Being white means you remain an outsider, even for these people. They’re united, they have their own rules, I’m an outsider whose misfortune has led me to end up here. They often make fun of me behind my back. It’s like a kind of revenge against whites in general; it’s just that I’m the easiest target”.

Louis’ fall from a “middle-class” life to the street had its origins in Great Britain where he was living with a local girl who had helped him to emigrate there. Even though he was living there without a residence permit, Louis managed to find odd jobs and live happily with his partner. “I had escaped from a country in which they gave people work on the basis of their skin colour.... Like many whites my age I went to England to look for work”
My journey with Louis started on Long Street, where he had been living for two years by that time. He explained to me that previously, when he had a job he would head to Long Street at the weekend and considered it a place to spend an enjoyable evening. Now, however, the street had become the thing which fed him where it was possible to find a bit of small change in order to survive, but which at the same time “rejected” him and left him excluded.

Walking along Long Street with Louis he spoke of his mother who had died a few years before in a road accident. The allegory of his late mother was born of the fact that he considered the street to be a "second mother" who had brought him up anew, but in a different way to his natural mother and that this change had caused him to completely re-adapt himself. Walking along Long Street, he compared the two different types of upbringing and learning he had undergone; they overlapped, leaving him in a perpetual state of limbo.

"My mother loved me a lot and this made me happy, but at the same time, all the love she gave me prevents me from adapting to the situation I am experiencing. I can’t bring myself to steal, or to knife someone to take their money, or to be totally unscrupulous. The people with whom I live now feel no remorse at all in taking whatever action they feel necessary; they bear hate within them and this enables them to survive in this environment. The more hate you have within you, the more lacking in manners and morals you are, and the better you can adapt to this type of life. It is as if everything
has been turned upside down: in normal white society if you are well-behaved, if you are loving, you win the prizes; where I am now, these are considered limitations. My background is a handicap and “they” are aware of it, they feel it, they smell it. From a certain point of view, my mother’s love has destroyed me”.

One day Louis and I decided to walk around without a specific goal and headed towards Cape Town Castle. When Louis saw the city’s old port he remembered the day he was arrested by the police in another port in the UK and how this episode had conditioned his life. From this connection we can see how a specific space in the city can evoke “other” spaces which are distant in terms of both time and space.

“I had been in England, in London, for three years and my residence permit had already expired a long time before, but I didn’t want to return to South Africa. Just thinking about going back made me feel ill; I loved London. The pent-up energy it released made me think that everything was possible; that here there was room for everyone. In London there was no distinction between blacks and whites; no-one was bothered about what colour you were. In South Africa I felt the pressure of the divisions between people; it is something within you, which hurts you; but, in the end it becomes normal. The tension between people, the hate between people; the categories into which we are placed make prisoners of us, but we don’t even realise it. When you leave, you understand that all that isn’t normal; that outside you can be white without necessarily being hated. I was living a dream with my English girlfriend; everything was easy and everything seemed possible to me. One day we took some bloody boat to go to an island and we had some hash with us. When we got off there were police with sniffer dogs who found the dope and arrested us. My girlfriend said the dope was hers, even though it wasn’t true. She did it so I wouldn’t get into trouble, but they’d already checked our documents and had discovered I was there illegally. Every time I think of that day I curse myself for being so stupid. I probably ruined my life for the sake of a little bit of dope.
(Back to Long Street)

“I remember when I got back to Cape Town I saw Long Street and I had the impression that I’d reached the end of my road. I don’t really know how to explain it; but it’s as if I’d seen that my life would end here. Strangely enough, I ended up living here, where I’d had this feeling. Long Street has become my home”.

Although Louis considers Long Street his home, the street itself rejects him and makes him feel like an outsider. Passing in front of an intersection between Upper and Lower Long Street Louis recalled a day on which a friend lent him his guitar and he started to play:

“A passing tourist gave me two rand, so I had the idea of putting my cap on the ground, just like that, without even thinking about it. People started putting small coins in it and at the end of the day my takings had reached 30 rand; I thought I had found how to turn things around, the way to make ends meet. While I was playing and singing I was saying to myself, I’ve found the way to make ends meet; but it lasted all of one day. A black policeman stopped in front of me and told me I couldn’t stay there without permission. I saw his air of triumph, enjoying the power of his uniform and thoroughly relishing the fact that he had stopped a white guy. I told him the street was full of people begging, that the bars were rife with pushers and
thieves and that I wasn’t doing anyone any harm. He told me that if I didn’t shut up he would arrest me...These people won and now they’re taking it out on me because I’m weak”.

On the day of the final Louis was on Long Street as usual; he hadn’t managed to get into any of the bars or clubs and was following the match from the street. “That evening, I was supporting Manchester United, because in England I’d met a guy who supported them and out of solidarity I’d decided to do the same. Recalling the happy times I’d spent in England helped me get out of the hell where I’d ended up”.

1.9 A township girl.

I met Xolewa in an internet café on Long Street where she went to check her email. When I asked where she was living, she said: “In Khayelitsha. Do you still want to talk to me?”. Khayelitsha is the largest township in Cape Town and the second-largest in South Africa after Soweto. Khayelitsha means “new home” in the Xhosa language. The people who live in the township come mainly from different areas of South Africa, above all from the Eastern Cape. The migrants who arrive in Khayelitsha establish informal settlements, building their new houses, or rather shacks, here. During the Apartheid years the townships were dormitory areas
where the blacks who formed part of the city’s workforce were permitted to reside and to which they had to return in the evening.

In the post-Apartheid period the townships remained segregated areas of the city. Despite the recent improvements the Government had made to these areas, a high level of crime and social marginality continued to plague the population of these urban areas. Nevertheless, the townships gave their inhabitants a sense of belonging and identification with the territory which, in certain respects, was reassuring. Xolewa explained to me that for many young blacks heading into the city centre means entering a “foreign territory”, which for many years belonged to the whites and which, even now, is accessible only with difficulty. Many of these people considered Long Street a “free zone”, accessible to people of all races, but at the same time it was undiscovered territory. Xolewa explained to me how being black is linked to the way everyday life is lived in these areas.

“The township is a world apart. People speak Xhosa, rather than English; the community is more important than the individual; if you have a problem you don’t rely on the police to solve it for you, but the village chief or, in other cases, a gangster. This is the blacks’ place: which doesn’t just mean having black skin, but also living in a way which is incomprehensible to you whites”.

After the encounter in the internet café I stayed in touch with Xolewa and agreed to have an interview. Listening to her story I discovered how, before going to live in Khayelitsha, she was living and studying in other areas of the city and that she considered this as a sort of multiple belonging. In the period when she was living in the centre of Cape Town she experienced isolation and exclusion. The young woman (27 years old) remembered an episode when she was studying in a school situated in Bo Kaap. Therefore, we decided to go to this district where we walked for a long time before we stopped in front of the school.

1.10 Click language at the Bo Kaap.

Bo Kaap is a neighbourhood located on the slopes of Signal Hill, near the City Bowl District. The colourful houses and the steep streets that climb the hill give the area an unusual appearance, making it seem like a city within the city. From
the hills of Bo Kaap the skyscrapers of the City Bowl just a few hundred metres away are clearly visible. But the architecture, the colours and the different sounds in this area give the visitor the impression they are entering a world which is miles away from the centre of Cape Town.

Bo Kaap is a multicultural neighbourhood which under Apartheid was inhabited mainly by Malays. Today, it is a poor area which can be equated to the township. When she lived in Cape Town Xolewa went to high school in this area. She told me that at high school the majority of pupils were coloureds, with very few blacks, but no whites at all. The relations between black and coloured students were conditioned by the social divisions inherited from Apartheid:

“The coloured boys and girls felt superior to us and made fun of us, above all for our click language. They used to imitate us and that used to infuriate me. I put up with it at first and pretended not to notice, without allowing myself to be provoked, but my situation had left me intolerant. The fact was that I’d had to put up with so much in life, and had to put up with even more at home living with my aunt, meant that at school my patience was exhausted. I remember we were here at the back of the school and there was a group of boys and girls who were imitating me as I walked past. I look at them and turned to the biggest of them who was behaving as if he was the ringleader. I grabbed him by the neck and told him he’d better not make fun of me and my language, because it was my tradition and deserved respect”.

1.11 The Invisible Line

Xolewa linked the above episode, which had happened many years before, to the event of the Final. Remembering the night spent in Long Street she recalled the difficult time spent in Bo Kaap. On the evening of the final, Xolewa too, was in Long Street for the match. She had an African National Congress pin with her that she wore on the chest of her Barcelona T-shirt. Her pride in being black coexisted with that of being able to identify herself with an emblem which involved people from all over the planet. The Barcelona T-shirt opened a breach towards the outside world, through which Xolewa might have the possibility to be part of the heterogeneous group which was filling Long Street.
Xolewa watched the match along with many of her friends, all black and all township dwellers. In the course of the evening Xolewa saw a coloured guy with whom she had been very good friends when she was at school. In spite of the fact that he was coloured, she had decided to disregard this, and had become really close to him.

“After school each of us went our own way and people lost touch with each other. That evening, as often happens, there were a lot of people, both coloureds and blacks, in The Dubliner, but the coloureds were keeping to one side of the bar and the blacks to the other. It was like there was an invisible line across the floor, a barrier and unwritten borders which divided the bar in two. My friend came into the bar with a group of his friends; I found he’d changed, above all in the way he behaved. He looked like a white who was dressed in a certain way and behaved like someone posh. Our eyes met, I’m sure he recognised me, but he pretended not to have and turned in the opposite direction. This was a great disappointment for me, because we used to be friends and I’d placed my trust in him, but now he didn’t want his friends to see that he was friends with a black girl”.

Xolewa described the distance between her and her friend and between the racial groups as an “invisible line”; an intangible barrier which continues to divide
groups of humans in post-Apartheid Cape Town. But the space in itself is unable to explain the significance which Xolewa attributes to this distance. It is the combination of her life experience with this space which gives it meaning. The conjunction of time and space gives meaning to the distance; it is represented as an invisible line which cannot be crossed.

1.12 Desmond’s Angel.

On the evening of the final Desmond wasn’t supporting either of the teams. He had parked his taxi outside the Long Street Café and was waiting for a potential fare to come out so he could take them home. Desmond is a 45-year-old man. I met him in Long Street while he was waiting for customers in his taxi. He had emigrated to South Africa from Zimbabwe, trying to escape from the economic crisis and the dictatorship of Robert Mugabe, arriving in Cape Town in 2008. At first he worked for a wholesaler company which delivered fruit to various businesses in the city, but in 2010 he started working as a taxi driver. Desmond told me about his life in South Africa and his difficult relationship with the local population, “particularly with the blacks”.

He explained to me that immigrants: “are viewed as a threat by black South Africans because we work hard and employers prefer us to the local population. The blacks here are lazy and expect to be paid even when they don’t do anything”. Although Desmond has never been a victim of violence he lives in a state of constant fear. An incident in a township when he was forced to buy drinks for all the regulars and attacks on his fellow taxi drivers have convinced him to keep himself to himself and to avoid opening up to the local population.

Desmond is waiting until he has enough money to go back to his own country, because he is convinced that what happened in his country is about to happen in South Africa, i.e. that the blacks will seize the land from the whites, unleashing “a reign of terror just like the one at home”. The rumours already circulating in Samora Machel (the township where he lives) that they are “just waiting for the old man (Nelson Mandela) to die, then all hell will break loose” have already convinced Desmond that South Africa is about to relive what happened in Zimbabwe.
He told me that on the evening of the final he had managed to take some English tourists back to their hotel. When he asked them the final score he made it clear to them that he was disappointed their team had lost. He had told them he supported Manchester United because one way of keeping hold of a customer is to show that you are friendly and obliging, especially with tourists. That evening, half of Long Street was celebrating and the other half was in mourning over the result of the final. Desmond felt that if he were able to win over a customer like that he would be able to return to Zimbabwe sooner.

Working as a taxi driver in Cape Town is considered a dangerous job, especially during the night shift. It was quite normal for taxi drivers to be robbed, especially in the townships. “Choosing the wrong client or venturing into dangerous areas could mean losing your life”. Desmond applies two basic criteria when choosing his customers: the first is observation (of the person and how they behave) and the second is trusting in an inner guide which Desmond claims is an angel which “has been protecting me and giving me advice since the day I set out from my country to come to South Africa”.

“When I’m not sure whether to take a customer or not I trust my inner guide. He’s been helping me through since I set out on my journey. When I left home I didn’t have enough money to get to Cape Town. However, I decided to take the risk in any case, planning to stop in various places along
the way where I would find work. I crossed the border into Botswana and arrived at the capital from where my plan was to move on to South Africa. I met nine guys who were heading for Cape Town. Six of them decided to cross the border at 6 o’clock, while I joined the other three who intended to leave at 9.

This choice enabled me to reach the city. In fact, I found out later that the six who left before me were captured at the border and arrested. Right from the moment I decided to leave home, I’ve felt a strange power inside me, a kind of unusual instinct which guides my decisions. I think it’s an angel. When I had to choose between the first and the second group I had no hesitation. Guided by my angel, I chose the second, and it’s him who tells me whether to pick up a customer or not”.

With Desmond I headed to Khayelitsha where he went shortly after he arrived in Cape Town and he recalled his first impressions of the city:

“When I arrived here I thought I was going mad. I had spent 10 days in the Hillbrow area of Johannesburg at the house of a friend from Zimbabwe. It was hell on earth. At night we could hear people screaming, gunshots and sirens. It’s a place inhabited only by criminals. I don’t think there’s a single ordinary worker in the whole neighbourhood. I said to myself: I can’t live like this, and I decided to get out. Then I came here to Cape Town, but things have not improved much. The initial period, above all, before my wife arrived, was terrible. The first thing I saw when I woke up was the roof of my shack. The alarm rang and I saw the tin roof and said to myself: No, it can’t be true, another day has begun, and I hoped it wasn’t true, that I was still in Zimbabwe. I couldn’t stand being on my own anymore and I thought I’d go mad. Every evening I’d go to phone my wife to find out how the children were, and she’d ask me how I was, and I’d tell her ‘fine’, but it wasn’t true. I didn’t want her to know I felt wretched and I couldn’t stand it anymore. I picked up my first customer on Long Street. I didn’t know how much to charge for the journey and didn’t have a clear idea of the distance between one part of the city and another. A lot of tourists ask you not to turn on the meter and to agree a fare, but I would never do it. When I met Michael he asked me how much I wanted to take him to Claremont,
which normally costs 80-90 Rand. I didn’t know how much it should be, and thinking that if I asked too much I’d lose the fare, I told him 30. He looked at me in amazement and I think he must have been frightened because he was getting out of the taxi again, so I thought I must have asked him too much and said 20. He looked at me strangely and got in. He didn’t say a word the whole trip and when I dropped him at this house he told me that taxi drivers normally charged him 80 Rand and gave me 70. I gave him my card and he became my first regular customer”.

After this customer, Desmond had many regular customers, including myself. I spent many days in Cape Town with him and we went through many of its areas. I discovered with him how one could live in a city while always having one's mind elsewhere. Desmond lives in Cape Town and Zimbabwe at the same time. He is perpetually outside of and in the city.

Conclusion

Participation in the preparations for the final of the Champions League and the meeting with Long Street’s regulars led me to consider the street as a complex organism. The organism concept as a paradigm for observing urban phenomenon has been around for long time. It was one of the conceptual underpinnings of the Urban Ecology of the Chicago School. The city described by Park (1925) is a whole that can keep its different elements and activities in harmony. In Burgess’ organicistic vision, each quarter, each behaviour, each hope was seen as “an integral part of the whole” (Burgess 1924:6). Burgess framed the transformations of the American cities as the result of a single process of development comparable to that of the metabolism of the body. From this perspective all the elements of the city (even those considered to be the most dysfunctional, such as crime and vice) were considered harmonious parts of a single organism which tended to maintain its internal “equilibrium” (Burgess 1924:6). The Ecological theory of the Chicago School has influenced many recent studies (Anderson 1990, and Wacquant 1994). But it has been noted that this perspective is proving increasingly inadequate to understand new urban situations. The macrocosm-microcosm equation proposed by holism starts to demonstrate all of its weaknesses with the emergence of a complex and differentiated society. Marcus wonders provocatively: “What is holism once the line between the local worlds of subjects and the global worlds of
systems become radically blurred?” (Marcus 1984:171). What is more, the affirmation of the post-modern trend in the social sciences meant that the chaotic currents of change, the acceptance of uncertainty and the ephemeral which had previously been rejected in scientific research, were beginning to be considered.

New urban organisms need new forms of analysis that are more discursive (Jacobs, 1993), equipped to recognise complex relationships between specific, local situations and global and general movements. The conception of the city-organism as a cohesive whole, as suggested by the Urban Ecology of the Chicago School, does not meet these demands. In my case, considering Long Street as a homogenous organism would have meant not being able to represent its distinctive character, which is, in fact, constituted of the different “voices” of its regulars: Long Street was the cry of a young man fallen on hardship. It was the frustration of a woman who felt a foreigner in her own city. It was the day dream of an immigrant waiting to return to his country. Long Street was the return home of a displaced man from District Six. It was the place chosen to participate in a struggle for freedom. It was the place to feel like oneself, beyond one’s racial group.

Long Street was all of this, but more, it was also the sum of all this. It was one and multiple at the same time. It can be considered as a complex organism (a Unitas Multiplex) which is not reduced to its parts, though part of a whole. The principle of the Unitas Multiplex is juxtaposed to the paradigm of simplification “which has characterised Western thinking from the seventeenth to the twentieth century” (Morin 2008:9). According to Morin the simplified paradigm has its origins in the very act of recomposing this initial disjunction, hence making linear, simplified and homogeneous that which in reality is complex, heterogeneous and discontinuous. The ideal of classical scientific knowledge was to discover, behind the apparent complexity of phenomena: “a perfect Order, regulating a perpetual machine, which was in turn made up of micro-elements diversely assembled into an object and a system” (Morin 2008:4). Against this, the paradigm of complexity does not consider the characteristics of disorder, the inextricable, ambiguity and uncertainty, as distortions of the system, but rather as integral parts and constituents thereof.
Considering Long Street as a complex organism, my aim has been to represent it through the different perceptions of the spaces of its regulars without wanting to force them into a cohesive, uniform, descriptive synthesis. The Champions League final was the pattern that could connect the life stories of the street’s regulars and their perceptions of the urban territory. Meeting the regulars of Long Street also made me reflect on the post-Apartheid period as a temporal unit that is experienced heterogeneously. Previously, I had considered the post-Apartheid era as a historic period. I had emphasised the regularity and uniformity that marked it. I started to think that it could be observed too through its differences, exploring the influences that it had on individual residents, and how it was perceived by them. In the next chapter, I will demonstrate how the post-Apartheid period can be observed and represented through a multi-perspective viewpoint.
Dissolves in Cape Town.
From double to multiple temporality of the post-Apartheid era.

Summary

The power of memory is great, very great, my God.
It is a vast and infinite profundity.
Who has plumbed its bottom?

St Augustine, Confessions 397-398 AD.

Around the late 20th century, biology came to surprising results in the study of memory. It seemed to have verified that the process of memorisation could be explained through changes in the electrical activity of neurons and synapses. "Based on this revolution in neuroscience, we may be approaching the discovery of the secrets of memory in the genes" (Ferrarotti 2003:40). Yet it has been noted that it is premature to think that biology can replace philosophy, psychology, and social sciences. There are still unresolved problems, like the relationship between individual and social memory, to which the classification of neuroscience has given no satisfactory answer. In this chapter, memory is compared to cinematic dissolves. This concept was inspired by the metaphor employed by Kay. Walking with Kay on a scenic street of Cape Town, I discovered how she connected and superimposed images of distant memories with more recent ones. Unique, one-time memories in her life merged with habits and attitudes established over time. She used the term ‘dissolve’ to describe the superimposition of images from her life experience on a day on which she was recalling her arrival in the city. The concept of dissolve suggests a view of memories that cross, superimpose and cut through different classifications of memory made in neuroscience: procedural or implicit memory, semantic memory, episodic and autobiographical memory, and iconic, photographic, and auditory memory.
Memory as a dissolve suggests that we depart from a view that tends to mathematicise living beings, starting from De La Mettrie (L’Homme Machine 1747) through to the most recent biological studies on brain processes. It invites us to go back to considering memory as a philosophical problem of a search that is contradictory and cannot be completed in itself. “This power is that of my mind and is a natural endowment, but I myself cannot grasp the totality of what I am” (St Augustine, Confession 398 AD 10.8.15).

Memory as a dissolve also suggests the uncertain meeting between personal memory and social and collective memory (Halbwachs 1950). Like a cinematic dissolve in which two images overlap without one excluding the other, in memory personal memories (including the most intimate ones) cannot be completely separated from the memory of the social group and society in general. Individual memory is spawned and grows around a general context. However, individual memory is not a pure epiphenomenon of social memory. Though personal memories reflect collectives ones, they do not coincide. This interdependence that does not end in complete coinciding can be represented as a dissolve in which images cut through one another without fully merging. Starting from this concept of memory, my intent here is to observe post-Apartheid Cape Town as a collection and intersection of memories, images, sounds of the past, present and imagination projected towards the future. In dissolves, they constantly cross and cut through each other.
2.1 February 11th.

La storia siamo noi, nessuno si senta offeso,
la storia siamo noi queste onde nel mare,
l'aria siamo noi nessuno si senta escluso,
la storia siamo noi queste onde nel mare,
questo rumore che rompe il silenzio,
questo silenzio così duro da raccontare.

We are history, let no-one feel offended,
We are this meadow of needles under the heavens,
We are history, let no-one feel excluded,
We are history, these waves on the sea,
This sound which breaks the silence,
This silence so hard to relate.

Francesco De Gregori La storia siamo noi. (We are history) 1985

In his song “La storia siamo noi” (We are history) the Italian singer-songwriter and poet Francesco De Gregori notes that the history of great events and individual history are not two separate entities. At times history may appear distant from the common man, but in reality it is he who is an unwitting author of history. This is true. Every subject belongs to history; regardless of how marginal or negligible their experience may appear to be. The “history of great events” would be inconceivable without the minor histories that accompany it. This generates a paradox: “historical history” needs the histories of the common people, of those very people who are excluded from the great history. The two histories: personal history and collective history need each other.

Human beings do not live and do not develop in the wilderness. They need a family, cultural and social hinterland which precedes them, and orientates and conditions them. In other words, they need history. Even an extremely personal event or experience is always related to periods, places and situations which are external to the subject that is, to a series of facts which do not belong exclusively to the individual, but which refer back to and form part of the common heritage of an entire social group. Even when the individual recalls and “talks to himself”, he
is not alone and cannot consider himself to be unfathomable, in accordance with the romantic myth of an absolute inner life. For individuals as well, their development should be conceptually based on a relationship to the *otherness* of other people.

In spite of all this, people do not belong completely to history, or at least not to the “history of great events”. There is a “bottom-up” history which does not necessarily coincide with that of the most memorable events of dramatic epoch-defining changes and of great leaders and decisions taken in the palaces of power. Next to the history of great events runs the history of people who live an everyday life, which is often marginal and excluded from the great significance of epoch-defining events.

One day, in the course of my fieldwork, I walked past the Parade with Anne. The Parade is the famous monument where, on February 11th 1990, Nelson Mandela made his first speech as a free man. Commenting that Nelson Mandela had changed the country’s history from that balcony, Anne explained to me that for her, February 11th didn’t represent the day the country was set free, but the day she was released from Pollsmoor Prison the date of her personal freedom.
After the end of the Apartheid regime and the release of political prisoners, an amnesty was pronounced for whoever had not committed crimes of violence and who had children under the age of twelve. At that time, Anne was in Pollsmoor Prison, serving a sentence for fraud. Following a period during which she had worked as a prostitute, Anne became involved with a man of Indian origin who had convinced her to change her life. As she had left her highly remunerative work as a prostitute and had recently developed a drug habit, Anne had little choice but to join forces with a group of fraudsters to which her Indian husband also belonged. Her role was to purchase various articles using the credit cards stolen by the other members of the gang.

“As my presence seemed reassuring – Anne recalls – no-one bothered to check the signature or the name written on the card. … Unlike my partner and his friends, I came from a well-off family; I knew how to behave in luxury goods shops and my manner was reassuring”. After several years spent defrauding various shops Anne was caught in a shop in Cape Town city centre. “By this time they knew me and had an identikit. When they arrested me near Strand Street there was no doubt that it was me they were after”. Anne spent several years in Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town; terrible years which she recalls as an extremely arduous experience: “It was dreadful living in that confined space. To give myself the impression of being free I would place my head next to the bars on the window and look at the sky”.

The news of the amnesty was completely unexpected and Anne could not even imagine what her life would be like outside prison. Anne’s biggest surprise was when she left prison to find one of her clients, with whom she’d kept in touch while she was inside, waiting for her with a number of presents. The client had another surprise in store for her: he had booked four nights at the Four Seasons, a five star hotel in Cape Town.

“I couldn’t believe it was true. I’d gone from prison to a five star hotel, but my life was like that. It was fate. I went from hell to paradise, while the others were condemned to their monotonous and repetitive existence. When I walked into the hotel I was sure my life would change forever, that I would never end up in that situation again. Finally, I was free; no-one could stop me now”.
When she saw The Parade it caused her personal life experience to overlap with that of the country’s history; the images of the historical monument and the Four Seasons Hotel blurred and merged with each other: “Whereas the country had celebrated Mandela’s release on The Parade, I celebrated mine with a bottle of champagne in one of the best hotels in the city”.

After listening to Anne’s story I started to reflect on how this woman and my other interviewees had described the post-Apartheid period through memories which related to their intimate personal experience. I asked myself what relationship there might be between my interviewees’ personal experiences and the national history of the country. In addition, I considered how I should observe post-Apartheid Cape Town: as the incarnation of the historical transformations which had affected the country, or as the complex and nonhomogeneous whole of the personal experiences which characterise its everyday life in a highly contradictory way?

2.2 The double temporality of Cape Town and the sounds of Century City

The post-Apartheid period has been described by Gran Farred as *a moment which is not yet part of history* (2004). The very suffix “post” indicates the transition from one clearly identifiable moment with a tendency which is easy to characterise to a
period which is ambiguous and uncertain and is not yet clear. Grant Farred writes: “Post Apartheid is a historic temporality that is unusually aware...of itself as history. In this way history (apartheid) and not-yet history (post-Apartheid) coexist within the same temporality in post-1994 South African society (Farred 2004:594)”. According to Farred, the “non-historical nature” of the post-Apartheid period owes its origins to the overbearing presence of the past which refuses to allow new historical tendencies to delineate themselves in a clear and defined way.

He notes that this phase of ambiguity and stasis has cocooned the country after a period in which its was clear that history was turning over a new leaf, something which he defines as The Thrill: “The thrill, the ecstatic moment of liberation from racism and the entry into full, equal citizenship did not last very long; the thrill that it marked for blacks has been replaced by a confrontation with continuing inequality” (Farred 2004:596). Farred notes that, once “the Thrill is gone”, initial enthusiasm is replaced by a state of frustration and impotent waiting in which past and present co-exist in an ambiguous way.

According to Grant Farred’s definition, the city seems to live a “double temporality”: “South Africa is... a nation living with a dual orientation: it looks, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes discretely, to its past and its present; it has a historical vision that is alternately bifurcated and cyclopean—split in its visual outlook or too trained on a single moment” (Farred 2004:594). Cities too, are influenced by this double temporality. In Cape Town, like in the rest of the country, past and present co-exist in an inexorable way. The political changes enforced since 1994 were not sufficient to completely cancel what Louis Bremer defined as the “apartheid landscape”.

“(This was constituted) by countless instruments of control and humiliation racially discriminatory laws, administration boards, commissions of inquiry, town planning schemes, health regulations, pass books, location permits, police raids, removal vans, bulldozers and sites of regulation and surveillance registration offices, health clinics, post offices, recruitment bureaus, hostels, servant rooms, police cells, court rooms, park benches, beer halls that delineated
South African society during the apartheid years and produced its characteristic landscape” (Bremer 2000:45).

In post-Apartheid Cape Town, many of the aspects of the apartheid landscape belong to the past. Nevertheless, some elements are still present in contemporary society. For example, the city is in many ways still affected by the racial segregation inherited from apartheid and the colonial era. As a result, a *symbiosis* “between population and areas of residence started to come into being” (Western 1981:16). During apartheid, living in a particular area of the city meant not only belonging to a certain racial group, but also being part of a specific political movement. Bradley, a former political activist, explains: “There was no choice at that time. Living in a certain area of the city meant embracing a political ideal. Either you stayed on the right side or you were a traitor”.

The *ideologisation* of urban spaces (Jackson 2002:64) became exacerbated in the 1980s with the dawn of the riots and the urban guerrillas. “Trains, buildings, plazas, cemeteries, and universities have all provided contexts in which violent and non-violent protest proliferated” (Jackson 2002:65). During the 1994 elections, Cape Town was still a city divided by ferocious conflicts, the desire for revenge and reciprocal fears. Nevertheless, during the post-Apartheid period some of the psychological, social and ideological boundaries which divided the urban territory have started to become more uncertain. We witness what Grant Saff defines as the “deracialisation of spaces” and the sprouting of new mixed areas in the city (Saff 1994). Certain zones of Cape Town such as Sea Point, Observatory, the upper side of Woodstock become areas inhabited by people of different races. Other areas like Long Street become the point where people of different races from different areas of the city encounter each other. The barricades, which divided the different political fringes are progressively replaced by shared and mixed areas.

Long Street has been elected by the media as a symbol of the new *deracialised* society, finally liberated from the spectres of the past. This kind of enthusiasm is not always shared by social scientists who are sceptical about recent urban transformation. On the one hand, it is argued that space sharing by itself “is not sufficient to cancel the prejudices and separation between racial groups which still characterise South African society” (Tredoux 2009:29). On the other hand, commentators have highlighted that the neo-liberalist politics adopted by the
African National Congress after 1994 have provoked a process of privatisation of urban spaces which is erasing the political meaning linked to such spaces.

According to Shannon M. Jackson, South Africans are experiencing the defamiliarising, anti-geographical effects of privatisation and new urbanism occurring elsewhere. In the essay, “Being and Belonging: Space and Identity in Cape Town” (Jackson 2002:68), the author notes that a process of deterritorialisation has occurred post apartheid where the place of memory is progressively “erased” by the privatisation of urban spaces. Post-Apartheid Cape Town is described as a city where “new planning strategies and new development” have begun to fragment and privatise space:

“Their [urban spaces] significance is gradually being erased from memory and experience by the privatising effects of new infusions of global capital that focus on improvements in infrastructure, communication technology, and the growth of the tourist and service sectors of the economy” (Jackson 2002:65).

Rafael Marks and Marco Bezzoli (2000) take Century City, a megastore situated near the townships area, as an example of Cape Town’s urban spaces becoming empty of meaning: “Such projects are attractive to the public/private partnerships characteristic of current development agendas because they provide an increasingly global middle-class public the imaginative distance it craves from the pain of the past” (Marks, Bezzoli 2000:24). As is evident from these statements, the double temporality of Cape town divides even its observers and analysts. On the one hand, it is claimed that the persistence of the past prevents a significant transformation of the city; on the other hand, it is claimed that new economic forces are sinking the political meaning linked to Cape Town’s urban spaces during apartheid into oblivion. The question is whether it is possible to escape from the bond of double temporality at least during the observational and the analytical process. In other words, is it possible to think of a concept which is able to represent the co-presence of the past and the present in its relationship between citizens and urban spaces? Moreover, is it appropriate to separate the city into places of memory and places of oblivion?
In order to address these questions it may be valuable to quote an episode which took place in the course of field work at Century City, the same megastore which had been studied and quoted as an example in earlier research on memory conducted by Marks and Bezzoli. During my experience in the field I had the opportunity to visit Century City with one of my interviewees. Walking through a shopping centre with Ibraim, I discovered how the sounds of a cash register juxtaposed with the voice of his mother in a small village of Somalia and a shout in a Pretoria township during an attack. Ibraim was a young man who had been living in Cape Town for some years and had decided to leave his own Somali community in the city. This decision had led him to feel isolated and deprived. He had been sleeping rough for several weeks and had managed to survive by begging. Thanks to a chance encounter he had been able to find work on Long Street as a waiter. Once he had got his first wage he decided to go to Century City to buy a pair of shoes.

Hearing the sound of the cash registers, Ibraim recalled how this noise had made him think of a “concerto”: “Hearing this ticking sound made me think that there was something ordered which worked well and of which even I was a part”. Ibraim related his return to society to the “ordered and reassuring” mechanical sound of the cash registers and Century City. In this case, the shopping mall had triggered in him the recollection of a difficult period in his life and how it had been resolved. Ibraim’s mnemonic reconstruction shows how even a place such as a shopping mall can trigger a specific signification of the territory.

Among the shop windows and signs of the luxurious shopping mall, Ibraim reconstructed his personal experience in relation to the city. Every view and aural stimulus was the trigger for his mnemonic reconstruction. In their analysis, Marks and Bezzoli make a contrast between remembering sites and forgetting sites. They consider the Century City a cathedral of oblivion, identifying in it the negation of the past. Ibraim’s example shows that even a place like a shopping mall can elicit a process of mnemonic reconstruction. The young man “translates” the urban environment through his personal experience. The escape from Somalia, the pursuit of protection from the Somali communities which he meets during his journey and finally the choice of openly expressing his homosexuality.
Each element of the city (a building, an advertising sign, a street) can be read as “material with significance” triggered by the conjunction between the temporalities of individuals and groups of people and urban spaces. Even an object which may appear insignificant, such as an isolated alleyway or a traffic light, can take on meaning if it is placed in relation to human experience. The concept of double temporality expressed by Grant Farred (2004) reflects the tension between the need to remember and the need to experience the present which characterises post-Apartheid society and, in this specific case, the process of signifying Cape Town. This duality influences even the intellectual sphere. Most social scientists seem to be divided between those who underline the persistence of influences inherited from the time of apartheid and those who warn against the temptation of oblivion which is emptying urban spaces of any political significance. Neither of these approaches takes into consideration the fact that remembering and forgetting are co-present in the mnemonic process.

Maurice Halbwachs (1952) suggests that in addition to the process of recollection, the creative and modelling faculty of the memory also forgets. According to Halbwachs, for the individual, recollection does not mean “drawing on a repository where images are preserved in a latent state”; recollection is interpreted as a “reconstruction, a remodelling” (Halbwachs 1952:32). Ibraim remodells his experiences by selecting, cutting and shaping episodes of his life. Present and past are two complementary dimensions in the process of reconstructing events. Memory is not a passive photographic plate which faithfully records the past, but an agent which transforms, highlights and obscures. The present situation determines a particular perspective on our past. Assuming the co-presence of forgetting and remembering, it is possible to elude the dichotomic acceptance of the “double temporality” expressed by Farred. Present and past coexist in Cape Town’s post-Apartheid process of signification.
2.3 Cape Town as a dissolve.

On Christmas Day 2010 Kay was travelling alone along the scenic road from Camps Bay to Sea Point, which offers one of the most stunning views in Cape Town. She had spent the day at a private party in the area and was returning to her flat, thinking about what had happened that same day.

“I was making my way home. Images of the past came back to my mind: I saw the houses in Worcester; each one identical to the others. To me they seemed like the cells of a prison where a very close watch was kept on who and what I was to become: a coloured. At the same time, images were superimposed of when I arrived in Cape Town and watching the people pass by. For the first time I felt that I would be able to forget forever who and what I had been before…”

Born in a small town in Western Cape province (Worcester), at the age of 23 Kay decided to leave her birthplace and go to live in Cape Town where she would finally be able to forget life in the provinces. In Cape Town Kay discovered a place rich in opportunity but, above all, the place where she could build her own personal identity regardless of her racial background and political affiliation.
The 1980s were characterised by violent confrontations between the opposing factions and as Kay’s family was involved in the political conflict, their house had been searched and they were under constant police surveillance. After the collapse of Apartheid, all Kay wanted was to forget those years and start a new life for herself. She told me that in 1994 she got a job in a hotel in Worcester which was patronised exclusively by whites and that she was the first coloured girl to have been taken on there. Her experience at the restaurant did not turn out well. Kay understood that in spite of the change in policy and the laws which allowed her to work side by side with whites, her town was not ready to accept these changes. Tired of the atmosphere in Worcester, Kay decided to leave the small town once and for all and to go and live in Cape Town:

“I wanted to forget everything: the problems with my family, the provincialism of my town, even the fact that people knew me. One day I was speaking to a girlfriend who had moved to Cape Town and had come to Worcester to see her family. She told me that she felt free, that her life had changed completely and she was happy. I didn’t think about it a minute longer. I decided to leave and a week later I was in the city. I believe that if I’d started to think it over, if I’d considered all the risks, if I’d talked it over with my family, I’d still be in Worcester with three kids, a huge belly and a coloured husband who expects his dinner to be waiting for him. But it didn’t turn out like that because I took action immediately”.

Kay’s arrival in Cape Town represented a watershed in her personal life story. She had come to realise that to be able to reinvent herself she would have to leave Worcester. Leaving that small centre meant not only leaving behind her personal past, but also a past in the more general sense of the word. Her family’s involvement in politics, the difficult inter-racial relationships in the Worcester community, the township itself where Kay lived, are all expressions of a past which was slow to disappear from this small centre. When she arrived in Cape Town Kay was to discover a new way of life and of perceiving herself: “People were very different from those in Worcester. Everyone was pursuing something. Some wanted to become rich; others wanted to enjoy themselves; others to meet someone who would take them away from Africa”. In Kay’s eyes Cape Town was a city which looked to the future and did not have time to recall the past. “In Cape Town everything would
change very quickly; everything was in motion. There was no time to look back, because here everyone was looking forward.”

Arriving in the city is the moment in which it is possible to recast whatever has gone before. It was oblivion more than memory which would allow Kay to live her new life in Cape Town to the full. She felt the burden of her past, but also that of the historical past of Apartheid which had paralysed her desire to live in the present. In an early work, Friedrich Nietzsche (1873) writes that an excess of history prevents the making of history. According to the philosopher, historical action is viable only when it is not paralysed by a “sense of history”. History is, at the same time, useful and harmful: useful because it offers the opportunity to criticise the present; harmful because it paralyses the ability to choose and act. A human being is bound to the past, as if by a chain he must always carry with him. In historical action there is an initial moment, which is neither historical nor anti-historical, and only a “strong natural instinct can produce great historical decisions in these moments” (Nietzsche 1873:24).

Kay’s “great decision” consisted of leaving Worcester and the inheritance of a past to which she felt no longer belonged. By leaving the township she felt she was breaking the shackles of a history which was holding her back and trapping her there. However, as Halbwachs notes, temporality does not belong to history alone. Temporality recalls an atemporal moment to which we look back in order to reconstruct, give meaning to, and interpret, time. In this sense present and past are not mutually exclusive, but co-penetrate each other in the same process of signification. What was oblivion in Kay was to become recollection, while other memories which seemed to have vanished were to resurface unexpectedly. Kay and I decided to retrace the most important moments in her attempt to forget about Worcester. One of the first places we headed to was Sea Point where she had found her first flat after a short period spent in a bed and breakfast.

“For me going to Sea Point was a symbolic victory. When I was little my father used to take us to Sea Point which was considered to be one of the most beautiful places in the city where only rich white people could live. We used to walk on the grass in front of the promenade which faces the sea and look at the houses of the rich white people who used to live there.”
When I finally arrived in Sea Point to view the house I wanted to rent I couldn’t believe that I could go to live there. They told me the price and I realised that I could afford it with what I was earning working for Lufthansa. I would have to make sacrifices, but it was definitely within my reach. It seemed incredible, I left the apartment, my heart bursting with joy, I was in a position to go to live in the most beautiful place in Cape Town, the place of my father’s and my family’s dreams. What more could I wish for?

Sea Point was the place where Kay was able to forget a past characterised by exclusion, a period in which she and her family could only exist next to the riches enjoyed by the whites, riches which were inaccessible to them. Living in Sea Point meant cancelling out that past in a definitive way. The decision to go to Cape Town meant experiencing the city in a different way compared to the past. But, if there was one place above all where Kay was finally able to break with her past, this was, without a doubt, Long Street.

Kay and I headed there and retraced our steps from Lower to Upper Long Street while she recalled her first experiences, when for her being in Long Street meant discovering a new world. Kay explained to me that an important stage in her experience was her first job in the Lufthansa call centre located in a side-street off Upper Long Street in the heart of the Central Business District (CBD). Here Kay was able to form new relationships with the young people she started to see regularly both inside and outside her work environment.

“I remember finding the environment very different from when I used to work as a chambermaid in Worcester where I was the first coloured girl ever to be given a job there. Many white customers refused to be served by me, but not openly, because the anti-discrimination laws introduced after the A.N.C. victory punished this type of behaviour. I felt tired of this. I had friends, but I felt different from the others and I don’t know why. At Lufthansa there were young people from all over, there were whites too, but they were different from the people in Worcester, they were more open-minded and more used to being with people from other racial backgrounds”.
But Long Street was not only Kay’s workplace; it was also the place where she would be able to get to know new people. Kay explained to me that in the 1990s, and the first years of the new millennium, Long Street became the place where such relationships were now possible. Long Street is a sort of free space where impossible relationships become reality. Tourists in search of entertainment and relaxation populated the bars and clubs on Long Street, and it wasn’t unusual for a relationship with one of them to turn into a marriage.

“You could say we were always on Long Street, at work in the mornings and out dancing in the evenings”. She told me Long Street became a point of reference and an open window on the world:

“In the morning we spoke to tourists who wanted to book a ticket, in the evening with those who’d already bought one and had come here on holiday. (...) All the girls who worked for Lufthansa have two things in common: they all spoke German and they all had an ambition to marry a (possibly white) foreigner. For a coloured girl going out with a white man was a real step up in the world. My girlfriends from Lufthansa and I used to go to Long Street in the evening for this reason, too. Long Street was the right place to meet a tourist. We had different shifts, but sometimes it happened that we all left at six. Then it was funny, because everyone used to go home from Long Street to get changed and then we used to meet up again… on Long Street. We usually went to the Zula Bar or The Snap. We used to take a table all to ourselves. Usually there was me, Michelle, Melanie and Natasha, but very often Vermeer, who shared our interests and tastes (especially where men were concerned), used to come along, too”.

For Kay, winning the affections of a white man or being desired by him, meant a definite break with the chains of the past. Sex and relationships became the way to break down and cross the barriers between racial groups. Long Street is to be understood as a liminal zone; the place where it is possible to subvert the rules which govern social and interpersonal relationships in the country. For Kay Long Street is the place to find the exceptions which prove the rule, where whites (above all the tourists) do not consider non-whites their inferiors and where it is possible to gain access to a forbidden world through the game of seduction. Kay had many different white partners who allowed her, even if only briefly, to gain
access to that world which seemed unattainable to her when she used to live in Worcester. Her most important relationship was with Yuri, a Russian who had a business in Cape Town. Her relationship with Yuri enabled her to go to places and clubs or restaurants she would never have been able to afford otherwise. She wanted to tell me about one particular episode involving Yuri which happened in Camps Bay. Kay and I headed there and stood outside a restaurant.

(I felt fantastic)

“One night we came here and there was a white waitress serving the tables. When I saw her I felt a sense of triumph. I’d spent many years of my life listening to white customers’ protests and complaints, often while keeping a forced smile on my face. Now I was on the other side of the fence. I went into the restaurant, she greeted me and I didn’t reply and put my arm around my partner; I felt fantastic”.

Like Sea Point, Camps Bay became another fundamental stage in which Kay was able to forget her past in Worcester. First renting a flat in a white area and then her official entry into their world meant overturning the situation in which she had seemed condemned to live in Worcester. Kay was transformed from being an intruder to being a resident, from waitress to customer; and even from someone who was discriminated against to the person doing the discriminating. Yet Camps Bay is also the place where Kay was to experience anew the very social exclusion which she seemed to have left behind her forever. Reliving an episode which had
happened a short time earlier, she decided to stand before a villa to which she had gone with her partner to attend a private party:

2.4 The party.

"It was Christmas Day and I had stayed in town because I had to work the next day. I would have liked to spend Christmas with my family in Worcester, but it wasn’t possible. Yuri decided to take me to his friends’ house in Camps Bay. I told him I’d rather be alone with him somewhere more private, but it was no use. At about 10 in the morning, a young guy I’d never seen before came to my house. He came in almost without saying hello and started talking to Yuri, paying hardly any attention to me.

He sat down and without even asking my leave pulled out a bag containing cocaine. He emptied it and started cutting it on the table. I’d never snorted cocaine, but I’d seen people do it once at a party. That stuff scared me, and above all, I was frightened about people doing it in my house. I didn’t know that Yuri did cocaine, but he started doing it right in front of me with that guy. Without asking me he offered me a banknote rolled like a pipe and invited me to take a snort, but I refused. I felt really alone. I saw Yuri snorting coke and felt him becoming more and more remote from me.

It seemed like his personality was changing and I felt that the fact that I’d refused had made him even more remote from me and had brought him even closer to that man. I hadn’t seen cocaine before, but heard people speak about it. The two of them did a couple of lines while I was watching. I really didn’t know how to react. I felt like I’d become a stranger from one minute to the next. I wanted the day to finish there in an instant and for it to be time for bed already. But the day didn’t finish there. Yuri told me we were supposed to be going to a party and I need to dress well, because there would be ‘a certain type’ of person there, without specifying what type he meant.

We got into the guy’s car, which was some kind of huge white off-road vehicle and he started driving like a madman through the bends between Sea Point and Camps Bay. There was no-one on the road, they were all with their families and this made me feel even worse. I felt empty; I didn’t know
what I was doing there on the road with these two bastards. I wanted to tell them to slow down because I was scared and wasn’t enjoying myself, but I didn’t. We arrived in Camps Bay at a big white house with an enormous garden.

We went into the house and I was the only coloured girl there; the others were all white and they started to look me up and down, as if to say what’s she doing here? Yuri disappeared again and left me with those whites who hardly even spoke to me. I felt so ill at ease that I started going to the bathroom all the time just so I didn’t have to stay in that room with those guys. I just wanted it all to be over, but it seemed to be going on forever. So I stayed in the bathroom and cried so no-one would see me”.

Her experience at the party in Camps Bay brought Kay back to a position of exclusion that she believed she had left behind her definitively after leaving Worcester. Cocaine, the luxury of the house, the guests’ clothes and, in the final analysis, the colour of their skin made her feel once more that she was back on the margins of life from which she felt she had moved away forever.

Kay told me that she decided to leave that place and go back home. Together, we took the road that links Camps Bay to Sea Point. Kay’s return was a moment of introspection in which she once again thought through her entire experience in Cape Town and the memory took her as far as Worcester: the place which she wanted to forget forever, but which was now to resurface in her memory.

2.5 The return.

“At a certain point I left the house without saying a word to anyone and started walking. There was no-one on the streets. I walked past various villas in Camps Bay and headed for the beach. There was no-one there and I started walking in the hope that a bus would pass, but it didn’t because it was Christmas. I started walking towards Sea Point, even though it was a long way. From time to time I looked at my mobile to see if Yuri had called me because he’d realised I wasn’t there, but he didn’t call me.
I walked for hours and hours and finally arrived in Sea Point, dead tired and soaked in sweat. It was now evening. When I got back I saw a coloured prostitute who was out working the streets every night on Main Road in Sea Point. I realised that every time I’d seen her I’d look on her as my inferior, someone who didn’t know how to look after herself and who I didn’t want anything to do with. That evening I felt I almost wanted to hug her. It was Christmas and she was alone just like me. Once I’d passed her with Yuri and we’d made fun of her. Look at her, the catwalk model, etc.

I felt like a queen with him and she was the lowest of the low; now I felt very close to her as a person. I got home, took off my boots and realised the phone was ringing. After more than three hours Yuri had realised I wasn’t there. I switched off the phone and the light and looked at the view over Sea Point. It was beautiful. The moon lit the ocean and there were lots of stars. I put out the light and left the roller blinds up so I could keep watching the moon until I fell asleep”.

Kay later explained to me that she had experienced her return to Sea Point as an imaginary return to Worcester. She was leaving behind the world of the whites; the very world she had been pursuing so assiduously since she had arrived in Cape Town, and which now seemed foreign and dangerous to her. During her return she superimposed the recollection of that day on that of her past in Worcester and in Cape Town.

In the article “La mémoire collective chez les musiciens” (1939), Maurice Halbwachs defines individual memory as the confluence of two collective memories. Taking the example of the audience at a concert, Halbwachs notes that it is possible to experience contemporaneously the state of belonging to a group of music lovers present at an event and other experiences evoked by the music itself. By allowing ourselves to be transported by the musical notes, we can in fact evoke situations such as belonging to a family or a love-affair which has ended or our place of birth, all while still forming part of a group enjoying the concert. In the same way, on her way home Kay was to superimpose the images of Worcester and that of the party and the panoramic road on an imaginary return to her origins. As in a cinematic dissolve, the images of the past and those of the present blended with each other, without either of them asserting itself in a definitive way.
2.6 The post-Apartheid era as a creation of memory

In one of the most beautiful passages in Hermann Hesse’s *Siddharta* (1945), it is on the bank of the river that the Prince comes to understand that the past is always present, just as in the river manifests its presence in the current's flow.

“Siddharta was listening. He was all ears, fully immersed in listening, completely empty, totally disposed to absorb whatever he heard; he felt that he had mastered the art of listening. Often before he had listened to everything, to these thousand voices of the river; but now everything had a new sound” (Hesse 1945:47).

The story of the prince who sought himself in the river presents memory as an inner search, a search for ourselves in a past that does not completely pass and can come back up. We are in time. In fact, we are time; we are personified memories. But if we are memory ourselves, what is the agent that lets us observe ourselves, explore ourselves and study ourselves?

Sigmund Freud (1917) saw the human faculty of recollection as an agent suspended between two polarities: the conscious and the unconscious. In the unconscious live the fantasies, recollections and episodes which cannot be understood in their entirety in the individual’s conscious sphere. In other words, man is said to hold all his life experience within himself and forgetting is nothing less than his inability, or the impossibility, to consider it. Indeed, the role of psychoanalysis is to render tolerable a past which would otherwise turn out to be “unexplorable”. Freud concentrated his analysis on the repressive aspects of memory which are realised in the dynamic between unconscious and conscious thought (Freud cited in Ellenberg 1970:94). In these terms, memory’s creative faculty can be said to have its origins in the balance between the conscious dimension and the unconscious dimension governed by the self.

The essence of Sigmund Freud’s great discovery, and of psychoanalysis in general, consists fundamentally in the possibility of letting the displacement emerge, allowing the subject to recognise what is concealed in the depth of the subconscious. Therefore, memory shows, and at the same time hides, our
recollections; it is not an automatic recorder of the past. Rather it is a creative activity that selects, transforms, remembers, and, most importantly, forgets.

In *Hope and Memory* (2000), Tzvetan Torodov argued for the co-existence of remembering and forgetting in memory. He pointed out that memory is not the opposite of forgetting; the two terms are about the cancellation of the past (forgetting) and the preservation of it (memory): “Memory is always an interaction between them. The integral reconstruction of the past is certainly impossible. Memory is inevitably a selection”. The Italian sociologist Franco Ferrarotti called memory a “distracted, faithless guardian” (Ferrarotti 2003:76). Like a guardian, our memory holds the past, but it can also hide parts of it and reveal them unexpectedly. Likewise, the people of Cape Town choose aspects of their past, considering certain facts, events, meeting and situations while concealing, neglecting and forgetting others. Kay repeated many times that as soon as she got to Cape Town, she wanted to forget Worcester and everything it represented.

“It was an incredible moment; I had left Worcester and had managed to get to Cape Town under my own steam. The city seemed to offer a wealth of opportunities which were right there for me for the taking. The only factor that could have stopped me was the way I had been conditioned by my life in the provinces which was making me afraid and preventing me from being who and what I wanted to be. As I walked along the street, I saw the Nike ad which said: Just do it. Looking at it I thought that was really what I should do: stop thinking, stop remembering the past and throw myself into new adventures. A few days later I headed for a tattoo parlour [also on Long Street] and had the Nike slogan tattooed on my back just above my backside”.

For her, Cape Town is the place of oblivion and the triumph of vitality, living here and now, at any cost, without memories and without turning back. Kay’s story suggests another aspect of memory that is marginal in Freudian analysis: its formation in the social environment where it develops. We’ve seen how the interviewees projected their memories and oblivion onto the city’s places. For Ibraim, Century City became the place of social rebirth; for Anne, the Parade and
the Four Seasons were the place of her liberation and for Kay, Long Street was the place to forget Worcester.

For Antze and Lambeck (1996), memory emerges from consciousness and is externalised through cultural vehicles: “symbols, codes, artefacts, rites, and sites” where it is embodied and objectified (Antze & Lambeck 1996:14). According to these authors, in collecting the present and the past, memory works like a narrative. Life itself is a creative construction; like a narrative, memory needs an interlocutor, it has a starting point and does not exclude the context in which it is situated. Through the analogy between memory and narrative it is possible to eschew dichotomies between reality-fantasy, primary and secondary thought, forgetting and recollection. Both memory and narrative are chronotopic practices in which the fantasies and imagination of the subject-author are constrained by the conventions of the time and place in which they are generated. As with a narrative, memory takes on the conventional forms of the time, the space and the point of view through which it is observed. “Our stories have individuated characters; memory is organised around an intrinsic, essential subject, whether an individual I or a collective we” (Antze & Lambeck 1996:1).

Memory is nurtured by the context in which it evolves; it is chronotopic. Individuals’ recollections are associated with specific situations, smells and images created within their context. Hence, memory is not only temporal, but also spatial. Just as a novelist writes his stories, so, in recollecting, the subject connects events from their life experience to specific spaces. The subject’s observations on their life experience can be compared to a literary montage in which images of places and the flow of events intersect to form a spatial-temporal sequence. Comparing the inhabitants of Cape Town to writers who rewrite their memories, choosing and shaping their recollections, the post-Apartheid era was not considered an extraneous temporality, to which the city’s inhabitants were subjected, but the result of subjective space-time creations.
Conclusion

In this chapter, the post-Apartheid era was observed as a product of the social memory and historic heritage of an entire country, as well as the product of the personal memory of Cape Town's residents. These two seemingly antithetical views do not actually exclude one another. In *Mémoire et Société* (2000), Gerard Namer explains how social memory and individual memory are two entities that do not exclude each other, rather, they penetrate each other. He writes, "Social memory, in its conceptual generalness, encompasses a large number of collective memories" (Namer 2000:126). According to Namer, social memory prevails both over the pure intimate memory of Bergson and over the collective memory (Halbwachs) considered as the sub-memory of a group that is part of the wider, or global, society. In Namer the concept of social memory is taken as the "virtual intersection" of both individual and group memories. Following this conceptual specific, the post-Apartheid era can be understood as the virtual point of intersection of the way of remembering (as well as of forgetting) the past by its people. The memories of the interviewees are set in a particular social and historical context. It is in light of this context that the different personal memories take shape they take on meaning. Anne remembers the experience of her personal liberation contrasting it with the country's liberation. She seems not to consider the social context in which she is placed. But it was precisely her desire not to consider this context that gives it a particular meaning in light of that context. The juxtaposition of the historic monument of the Parade as a symbol of the country's social memory and the Four Seasons Hotel (as a symbol of her personal liberation) takes on meaning in light of the overall context. Kay's personal escape and her desire to forget the past can be understood in the light of the historic transition from Apartheid to democratic society. Likewise, Ibraim's memories can be framed in the migration phenomenon that is one of the post-Apartheid era's distinguishing traits. In other words, the post-Apartheid period can be considered a single temporal entity, or as a multiple temporal entity.

While it is true, as I have noted, that many scholars of the post-Apartheid era preferred a uniform view of this historic period, trying to establish its regularities, we should remember that, at the dawn of the post-Apartheid era, there was one of the most illustrious precedents of the multiple perspective representation of history: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1995). The T.R.C. was founded
in 1994 through the Promotion of Unity and Reconciliation Act with the purpose of investigating and recording the violations of human rights between 1960 and 1994.

The goal of the T.R.C. was to create a historic bridge between a past of "strife, untold suffering and injustice, and a future founded on the recognition of human rights, democracy, peaceful coexistence and the development of opportunities for all South Africans, irrespective of colour, race, class, creed, or sex" (Du Preez 1998:8). Between 1995 and 1996, the T.R.C. opened 50 hearings in city halls, churches, and hospitals throughout the country in which thousands of citizens gave testimony about the violence suffered. During the proceedings, more than 21,000 testimonies were collected, more than for any other commission in history (Terry, Ntsebeza 2003:24). The T.R.C. was founded with the intention of ensuring a peaceful transition for the country from Apartheid to a democratic system. The violence during the 1980s risked leading the country towards a civil war. The political condemnation of the members of the National Party and its outside affiliates would have aggravated the situation, whereas a general amnesty did not seem a viable solution. The founding of the Commission was considered the only solution that could create the foundations for national reconciliation.

One of the most interesting aspects of the T.R.C. had to do with the memory of events recounted by the direct testimonies of the perpetrators of the crimes, the victims, and their family members. Apartheid is interpreted from the perspective of ordinary people rather than in ideological terms. Through listening to the testimonies, it was possible to discover the multitude of aspects of society during that historic period. Another defining aspect of the T.R.C was the dramatisation of experience and the use of dramatisation as a method for exploring the past. In the next chapter, we will see how dramatisation and a multiple viewpoint are the methodological underpinnings of ethnographic observation. Urban spaces are considered as performance stages where we can explore and understand our own experience. As in the T.R.C., this research will not be dominated by a single authorial voice, intending instead to free a plurality of different voices.
CHAPTER THREE

A playful methodology

Summary

In the introduction to Imagining the City (2007), Steve Field describes different positions from which Cape Town can be observed. He gives the example of two rhetorical images through which Cape Town is represented for tourists (that of the Gateway to Africa and the multicultural Cape Town of the Rainbow Nation.) The first scene includes: “Devil’s Peak, Table Mountain, Lion’s Head and Signal Hill, and the city centre located between the mountains and the bay” (Field 2007:6). The second includes: “The centre of the view is of sprawling suburbs from the edge of Devil’s Peak and the Cape Flats, reaching as far as the outer limits of Khayelitsha. The view is framed at the edges by Table Bay to the north and False Bay to the south, and is best observed from the vantage point of Rhodes Memorial, the monument erected in honour of the architect of imperial conquest, Cecil John Rhodes” (Field 2007:6).

Each of these images reveals different aspects of Cape Town, but, as Field notes, these images both reveal and conceal. One of the most interesting aspects of the first image is the "hidden perspective of the viewer", which is the point where the image is taken: Blouberg Beach. During Apartheid, this beach was a “whites only area”. “For the majority of Capetonians classified coloured, African and Asian, it was for many decades one amongst many sites of racist exclusion by the apartheid government” (Field 2007:12). The city is a complex organism that cannot be understood in its entirety through a single viewpoint or a single perspective. Each viewpoint on the city is inevitably a selective viewpoint that reveals and conceals at once. This project chose to take a multi-perspective viewpoint on the city, a viewpoint made up of many viewpoints, a panoptic viewpoint that can reveal the city through different perspectives. For this purpose, using urban movement became an essential tactic to observe the city from different positions and at different times of day. Originally, I planned to move through the city alone, which let me move from one place to the other with great ease. This preliminary phase was very important for discovering the city, but could not be considered a full-
fledged, methodological tool. In the second part of the research, urban movement became an essential part of my method and became an experience to share with my informants. Following a series of urban pathways with them, in which they chose the ten places that were most important in their past, we could observe the city from different vantage points. Urban movement was taken as a heuristic tool that could reveal the polyphony of the city manifested through different faces and expressed through different voices. Moving through the city with its inhabitants made it possible connect these elements in narrative plots. All the urban pathways start from Long Street, the place I most often frequented and where I lived for almost my entire fieldwork. The interviews with some interviewees were recorded and then transcribed. In other cases I directly transcribed the interviews in my journal because some of my interviewees did not like having a microphone there.

3.1 Is this Play?

The solitary viewpoint that I had adopted in describing the city at the beginning of the work could not, of course, be the entire framework of my methodology. It couldn’t be considered effective until I had included the viewpoints of my interviewees. As I had done in my personal journal in which I took my memories, imaginations, and reveries as the raw material for my research, with my interviewees, I tried to explore their inner lives. I ventured into what Andrew Irving has called imperilled anthropology: an anthropology that ventures “beneath the surface so as to gain a better understanding of the interior dialogues and imaginative worlds of people's experiences” (Irving 2011:12).

Irving noted how, unlike art and literature, in anthropology the exploration of inner life is still an unexplored terrain in many ways:

“The capacity for a rich, multifaceted, imaginative inner life...is a distinctive, essential feature of human thinking and being... Nevertheless anthropology, the quintessential study of humanity, finds itself without a generally accepted theory of how interiority relates to public expression, nor an established methodology with which to access interior expression” (Irving: 2011:11).
The study of inner dialogues and imaginative lifeworlds in the social sciences is an epistemological problem because we cannot get objective access to the direct experiences of people. Yet, as Irving notes, while "people’s inner lifeworlds are continuous with—and indivisible from—their public expression, they are not identical to them and do not coincide exactly with their outward manifestation” (Irving 2008:14).

According to Irving, reconciliation between the consideration of inner lifeworlds with their extrinsic linguistic and cultural expression is more of a methodological problem than a conceptual one (Irving 2010:25). In order to present the inner realms of the interviewees in relationship to their social perspective and the cultural context in which they were placed, Irving used a method that draws on the ideas and techniques of artists as much as ethnographic techniques. Irving’s method is based on the idea of observing and representing interior dialogues of the interviewees through the “dramatisation of being”. This method includes walking, narrating and photographing. The subject is asked to walk around the city, telling his or her thoughts and life and observing how the past emerges in the present. The researcher records the interviews, asks questions, comments, and takes pictures of the places they go through.

Irving observed how illness changed the way in which his subjects perceived urban space. The recollections, hopes and fantasies of an AIDS sufferer are projected onto places in the city, and different places evoke different emotions in the subject. The researcher builds an urban pathway made up of different stages defined by places that have significance for the interviewee. The city is subdivided into psychic and emotional areas which the subject experiences and experiments with through movement.

At first, I didn't fully understand the deeper meaning of this method. I started from the assumption that every representation was different from the represented object. I didn't understand how walking in an urban territory could lead the subject to relive episodes from the past and explore the relationship of his or her inner life with the urban spaces. A visit to the District Six Museum and meeting a former resident of the district helped me better understand this method.

The District Six Museum is one of the museums in Cape Town that is most recognised internationally. It was chosen by The International Coalition of
Historic Site Museums of Conscience (SOC) as one of the nine “Historic Six Museums of Conscience” in the world. The museum is called District Six after the district that was almost completely demolished during Apartheid, after its former residents were forcibly moved to areas outside of the city. The suffering, resistance and protests that followed the removals were fundamental images of the campaigns against Apartheid that the museum now remember and attempt to represent. One of the museum’s main traits is that it is “a museum in the making”: it does not have permanent collections; instead, it “relies on the testimony of ex residents and the fragmentary remains of their possessions, often literally unearthed from the debris of demolition” (Coombes 2003:123).

The other unusual trait of the museum is that it is made almost completely of material made by ex-residents. Their writings, thoughts, and installations form the majority of the exhibitions. This creates a direct connection between the ex residents of the museum and the visitors: “Theirs are the intimate histories of (extra)ordinary lives lived in an Apartheid city, and not only are they the strength of the museum, but they also helped to bring into existence” (Coombes 2003:123).

One day when an appointment for an interview was skipped, I decided to go to the District Six Museum. It wasn’t my first visit. I had already been there during my previous stay in Cape Town, but I decided to return, out of curiosity and to take advantage of a free day. As soon as I entered into the museum, I was drawn
to a map that covered almost all of the ground floor, which depicted the streets of the district demolished during Apartheid. I decided to go up to the upper floor and lingered to observe it from above. While watching people walk on the floor map of the museum, I was struck by a scene. There was an agitated man who was loudly pointing to a place on the map and a woman who seemed little engaged by the man’s excitement. She nodded good-naturedly, as if she was used to these scenes, and seemed more interested in calming the man down than in listening to what he had to say. I decided to go near and the man noticed my presence and turned towards me, exclaiming something loudly in Afrikaans, which I didn't understand. Noticing my lost expression, the man spoke in English and pointed to a specific place on the map and said: “That was my home”.

What amazed me most about these words was the fact that he identified his home on a drawing on the ground. He seemed to have so identified with it, pointing at the place that he didn't seem to realise that was just a drawing, a representation. What could be considered strange behaviour was a reflection on the relationship that subsist between the representation and a represented object. It was obvious that the map of District Six was not its territory (as no map is). Yet Walley, the man walking in the map, didn't seem to realise it. Why?

In the *Theory of Play and Fantasy* (1955), Gregory Bateson explains how human communication works on different, contrasting levels of abstraction. The first, simplest level is utterance. The second level is metalinguistic and includes messages in which the object of the discourse is the language. A third level is metacommunicative and has to do with the messages exchanged between two interlocutors. This scale of communicative level is marked by the human capacity (though not only human) to recognise communicative signs as being such. Through metacommunication, an individual stops responding automatically to the signs of the other. He or she starts to recognise the signals of the other individual, even if they are "only signs that can be believed, not believed, counterfeited, denied, amplified, corrected, and so forth" (Bateson 1972:56). *Play* is one such type of meta-communication. Bateson explains that play is an action whereby the actions denote other actions of “non play” for example, the fact of playing at fighting does not imply the fact of fighting, but merely denotes this action.
The map of District Six Museum could be compared to a modality of play that denotes other non-play actions, such as the daily life spent in the district, the relationship between its residents, and the relationship between the residents and urban space. Walking on the museum's map, visitors could imagine these moments and envision different situations, always keeping in mind that this was only play.

In his description, Bateson also notes that in play, as well as ritual or threat (which are part of the same phenomenological group of metacommunicative agents), there are situations in which the denotation of a fact can generate the presence of the actual fact. Bateson gives the example of a ritual representation of war that can ignite actual war:

“In the Andaman Islands, peace is concluded after each side has been given ceremonial freedom to strike the other. This example, however, also illustrates the labile nature of the frame “This is play”, to “This is ritual”. The discrimination between map and territory is always liable to break down, and the ritual blows of peace making are always liable to be mistaken for the real blows of combat. In this event, the peace making ceremony becomes a battle” (Bateson 1972:126).

This example takes us into the exploration of a *dim region* in which art, magic, and religion meet and overlap: “human beings have evolved the metaphor that is meant, the flag which men will die to save, and the sacrament which is felt to be more than an outward and visible sign, given unto us” (Bateson 1972:183). We can recognise an attempt to deny the difference between map and territory. This was the zone where Walley was. Observing his excitement, his excessive identification made him forget that it was just a game.

Irving's methodology could be called playful. The interviewees play at going over the places of their lives. They deconstruct and reconstruct the city, following their inner pathways. This play becomes "serious play" when the representation of an event spurs the interviewee to evoke that event. The act of walking in the city
spurs the interviewees to relive their past and explore it anew. Walking can be understood here like a performance.

The word "performance" comes from old French *parfournir* which literally means "provide completely or exhaustively". *To perform* means to produce something or implement a drama. Performance is a form of social meta-comment and therefore represents "a story that a group tells itself and about itself" (Turner 1982:76). Performance, on the one hand, facilitates one's own lived experience through reliving the actual experience (*Erlebnis*) or lets us have new experiences in new ways. Additionally, it can foster critical reflection on reality, allowing for an exploration within the cultural symbols, articulating and providing meaning to present conflicts. Performative walking has the potential to evoke past experiences again and explore interior worlds, playing with the city's urban spaces.

For my methodology I created urban pathways where the interviewees went back through and relived their experiences. The city was observed through the playful reconstruction of its residents who projected their memories, hopes, and emotions onto the places of the city. Taking Long Street as my starting point I created eleven urban pathways consisting of eleven different steps that referred to significant moments for my interviewees. In this way, I was to establish 100 points of view from which it would be possible to explore Cape Town. Each pathway would consist of different stages (ten in total) in which the citizens linked specific places in the city to a given memory.

Here I will illustrate some of the steps that I went through with my interviewees. At the beginning Penelope’s and Xolewa’s pathways will be shown in such a way as to explore how the aspect of racial belonging can be experienced in a different way in post-Apartheid Cape Town. In both cases Long Street becomes the place where one’s own life can be recalled and rebuilt and which arouses different meanings in both the interviewees. Later on I will describe how Long Street was perceived by its regulars not only as the place of memory, but also that of oblivion and fantasy where it was possible to dream and imagine other situations.
3.2 Penelope: Speed and blackness.

“We want to glorify aggressive movement, feverish insomnia, high speed, the somersault, the slap and the punch”.
Marinetti - *Futurist Manifesto*, 1909

At the end of the dawn, rich in fragile pretexts, the Antilles which are hungry, the Antilles pock-marked by variola, the Antilles ravaged by alcohol, shipwrecked in the mud of this bay, ominously shipwrecked in the dust of this city.

*Aimé Cesaire. Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, 1947

One day in April 2011, I was in Cape Town station waiting to get on the train to Cape Aghullas when I met someone who was to become of my interviewees. While waiting on the platform, a young black woman (27 years old) came up to me and asked for the departure schedule. I was surprised by this fact because there were other black people (the majority) at the stop, but this woman chose to ask me. In light of the experiences I’d had up until then, this seemed highly unusual.

This was how I met Penelope, who became one of my most important informants. I went with her to Eastern Cape where she spent her childhood. I went to the bars of Long Street where she went on the weekends, and I met her friends and groups of people with whom she spent most of her time at the Observatory. The more I knew her, the more I realised how difficult it was to fully understand my object of study. At first I had separated my interviewees into different categories: blacks, whites, coloureds, and immigrants. I intended to thereby give a heterogeneous representation of the city. Penelope would be in the category of blacks and immigrants.

By getting to know Penelope in depth, I discovered how these categories could be altered and subverted by her intelligence, imagination, and creativity. For many residents of Cape Town, racial belonging was experienced in ideological terms and the colour of one’s skin was considered an essential aspect of one’s identity. In contrast, Penelope experienced her blackness in a more complex way and considered it as an uncertain category. In some ways, this way of inventing her blackness could be compared to that of Aime Cesaire, the poet of Negritude. For
Cesaire, blackness is not an abstract concept; it is a cultural invention which is opaque and uncertain. It will never assume the status of an ideology where the poet’s intentions are concerned.

Cesaire refuses to translate his blackness into conceptual form; this would mean enslaving it to rationalisation, the progeny of Western philosophy: “We hate you, you and your reason; we boast of our early-onset dementia, of our disruptive madness....” (Cesaire in Carrilho 1974:67). Cesaire does not look for blackness in ideological abstractions; for him it is linked to the contingent situations which created it: “my blackness” he writes “has its roots deep in the red flesh of the earth... and in the burning flesh of the sky” (Cesaire in Carrilho 1974:67).

Blackness is embodied in individual people and in the crowd “which does not throng together; which does not become confused” (Cesaire in Carrilho 1974:77). For Cesaire, Blackness is “conscience”; it is generated by the meeting between people’s inner worlds and the contingent situations in which they live: “My blackness is above all a concrete sense of awareness, not something abstract” (Cesaire in Carilho1974:89). Like Cesaire, Penelope refused to experience her blackness in ideological terms. On the other hand, for Penelope blackness was something faraway and extraneous to herself. It was a sneaky presence in her life that she tried to avoid and to forget.

I was surprised at how her way of “living” Long Street was characterised by a never-ending movement between the street’s different social, cultural and racial environments. This disorientating movement allowed her to experience indirectly the different ways of belonging to Long Street. Penelope explained to me that each bar or club on Long Street has its own different character and through these she is able to “experience everything in the one evening”: “I start with an aperitif at the Long Street Café; then we go to the Neighbourhood and dance on the terrace; then on to the Marvel, then the Dubliner and finally to the Jo’Burg or the Pretoria”.

Penelope’s parents were immigrants from Zambia and she had studied in Eastern Cape at a school where most of the students were white. She had understood that, in South Africa racial difference was a problem where social relationships were concerned and how the barriers inherited from Apartheid continued to condition the period that followed it too. If relationships with whites were problematic,
those with blacks were not easy either. Penelope told me that people often told her she wasn’t considered a black because she didn’t speak Xhosa. Her search for her own identity had become almost an obsession until the time came for her to relocate to Cape Town.

By establishing a dialogue with Penelope and listening in detail to her life story, I understood that her way of “living” Long Street was a way for her to express her “inner conflict”; a struggle played out between the need to assume an identity and the need to rid herself of one. Long Street is the place where Penelope deconstructs the different cultural, social and racial categories from which she intends to escape. Movement acquires a sense of negation, not of a specific sense of belonging, but of the concept of belonging itself. In a certain sense, movement is understood as an anti-cultural moment, as it represents the negation of the crystallisation of characteristic and categorical meanings. At the very moment in which she negates certain meanings, Penelope’s movement creates other meanings that are indirect and in a state of flight from the various senses of membership or belonging. This technique through which Penelope had learnt to “live” Long Street was predicated upon and enabled by the considerable speed with which she moved through her differences without ever lingering long on any of them.

It is possible to experience Long Street in a way which is both complete and absolute, as long as you follow one simple rule: “don’t come to a halt”, because “coming to a halt means belonging”. Hence movement is understood as a technique for escaping any form of cultural, social or racial belonging. “While many people go regularly to one bar or club because they belong to a specific group, race or social status, I prefer to experience them all together”.

On Long Street movement is marked by a sense of loyalty to one’s own inner world and not to the different social environments. These are simply passed through without there being any sense of belonging to them: “I don’t belong to any one culture, I like to experience them all, but without ever coming to a halt”. Through urban movement, Penelope reflected on her condition of being outside the systems of the environment where she lived. Her movement on Long Street reflected her way of thinking, disconnected from any type of belonging. The movement of her body and her vision of the world could not be seen as separate. Merleau-Ponty noted how human activity cannot be understood without
understanding the body’s movement: “We must go back to the working, actual body - not the body as a chunk of space or bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement” (Merleau-Ponty 1994: 123).

For Penelope, the movement of her body coincided with exploring her past and her social identity. The young woman saw her frenetic movement on Long Street as a performance through which she could explore herself. The director Richard Schechner noted that through performative experience we can relive and give a new meaning to events. His practical theory of performance is based essentially on the experimental factor and on learning by representing. In Schechner’s theatre, the part grows gradually with the actor, taking form through the process of rehearsals, which can sometimes lead to moments of deep self-revelation. Through the body’s action, new behaviours are developed from reviving past experiences, while new experiences are had at the same time. This type of theatre approaches real life. Experiencing one’s own body, acting in a liminal zone, in which all experiential experiences are made possible, a critical reflection is made on the individual and on society.

As in Schechner’s theatre, Penelope’s frenetic movement on Long Street could be considered a way of observing and understanding that can interpret her past experiences through reliving them. Penelope’s movement on Long Street could also be compared to the work of an artist where the street is considered as a “text” through which it is possible for her to write her identity. Penelope had found in the big city a place where she could overcome her past. Cape Town with its countless faces, stimuli and different realities was the ideal place to escape from her blackness. Penelope had discovered the city’s simultaneity in which different identities existed; and she had learnt how to play with this simultaneity. It was possible to “live” the city simultaneously, employing movement to blend and blur different types of “membership”. Identities were linked to people’s pasts, but in the city the past appeared to have been dissolved into the present.
3.3 Clubs

We decided to go together to the clubs of Long Street where Penelope played herself in a role that she was used to playing almost every weekend. This walking down the street sparked in her a reflection and understanding (Verhsten) of her relationship with the city’s places and her condition as a citizen of post-Apartheid Cape Town.

Passing the different clubs on the street, Penelope remembered the situations, the people and the events that marked her life. Therefore, there is not a direct relation to the places that we went and the young woman’s experience. This kind of recollection related to urban spaces is reminiscent of what may be the most memorable scene in Jean Rouch’s Chronicle of a Summer (1961). One of the main characters in the film, Marceline, is walking through the streets of Paris when she is triggered by the iron girders in the roof to recall the railway lines on which she and her father were deported to a concentration camp. Also, in this case, there is no direct bond between the two places, but the urban space becomes an imaginary bridge which connects the present to the past.

3.4 Jo’burg.

With Penelope I stopped in front of the Jo’burg, a club frequented mostly by black people. She explained to me that on Friday nights she comes here and she dances for no more than one hour. This place is frequented mainly by immigrants who come from other African countries. Most of them are Nigerians but there are also some customers from Zambia. Penelope explained to me that she tried to avoid
meeting Zambian people who stay together and form a very closed group. She likes to meet with them for only a short time and then she likes to move on and leave them there. “I like to dance and chat with them but what I like best is to disappear when they are busy doing something and they cannot see me”. Leaving the Jo’burg assumes a particular meaning for Penelope, who symbolically left her origins the day her father died. In front of the Jo’burg she remembers that day:

“I was in my room when our neighbour came to tell me I should go to the hospital at once: Dad had passed away. A few weeks earlier we had been eating with him at the same table and it seemed impossible that he had died. I remember feeling as if a part of me had fallen into an abyss forever. I was in South Africa because I had decided to be here. I knew nothing; I didn’t know what to think any more. I knew nothing. After two days there was the funeral. I remember that the minister was talking, but that inside, I was thinking about something completely different. I knew that I’d been left all alone and that now I would become something different. I didn’t want to have any constraints any more; those my father had imposed on me, that discipline which would have been of no use to me without him. I wanted to forget his “tradition” as a black man from Zambia, his beliefs, his convictions. He had abandoned me, but now I was going to abandon him and everything he represented”.

3.5 Neighbour.

Neighbour is one of the fanciest clubs of Long Street. Penelope explained to me that here it is still possible to meet artists, writers and people who work in the fashion industry. She explains that she goes there with some colleagues from the university. At Neighbour, she explained to me, the colour of your skin is not important, but what is important is how much money you have. “There are coloureds who work in important agencies or blacks involved in political activities who are members of the African National Congress”. She explained that people who meet at Neighbour are young, ambitious “people who love life”: “They do not seem very interested in politics but more in the good life”.

In front of the club she remembers a romantic relationship she had in Grahamstown with a coloured guy who was also involved in political activities, but unlike Neighbour's customers, he seemed to be very committed to his ideals. Penelope’s partner was the son of a white ex-pat and an African woman. He was therefore considered an atypical “coloured”, or rather, one not born in South Africa and hence “acquired”. However, the young man perceived himself as black, and at university he had joined groups aligned with the African National Congress who were inspired by the Black Consciousness movement. In contrast, Penelope did not share his political convictions. Instead she felt oppressed by the world to which her partner had tried to introduce her:

“It felt like I was being obliged, being forced to enter a world I had left behind forever when my father died. I had no intention of going back there; I didn’t want to”.

The relationship between Penelope and her partner was marked by the search for personal identity; but while the man was trying to find himself by identifying with his blackness, she was trying to find herself by trying to escape from it. Now she has found herself outside the categories by which she feels constrained and caged. She maintains: “School cannot teach me what life has already taught me”. Penelope recalls the evening when she cheated on her own boyfriend before his very eyes.

“All hell broke loose because he slapped me and everyone there came to my defence. I wanted to get out of that relationship because I felt it was oppressive. I remember the anger on his face and the fact that I felt a certain pleasure in observing it. When he hit me, he was out of control, but I knew he was going to do it. I wanted to show him that he couldn’t control me, both him and the bastards that were his friends. I was free; I didn’t need to imagine freedom like him; I was living it every day. Everything I had gone through had taught me freedom. Fixed allegiances did not exist in the club; we changed friends, groups and partners all the time. Here I could be myself”.
3.6 The Lightness of The Zula Bar.

If movement across the territory may be compared to a performance (Irving 2008) in which the social actor expresses and interrogates himself or herself, for Penelope the most effective way to conduct such processes of investigation is interrogated through dance. Passing in front of the Zula Bar she explains to me how dancing with tourists would trigger a process of identification in her.

“The first time I came in here I was quite frightened. The Zula Bar is frequented above all by tourists and I had never met that many tourists before. I had met foreign students in Grahamstown, but they were young people who were staying in South Africa long-term, for a year or two and they used to go out with us. The tourists seemed different to me; they scared me because they moved around quite confidently even if they had no idea where they were. I like watching tourists because they seem light; they don’t share the burdens that the people who live here have to bear. Slowly, through contact with them, I learnt how to take on their lightness myself; it was as if they had an energy that you can pick up on by dancing, or simply by walking around with them. When I dance at the Zula I strip off the burden of my everyday problems, of work, of everything and I experience life like a tourist: light and oblivious”.

In the Zula Bar, Penelope transforms her identity in a place that is alien to the everyday normative system. The Zula Bar is the place where the categories that constrain her within a given identity and racial category can be subverted. By dancing, she transforms herself into something different; even if, when she leaves the bar, she has to return to the normal world.

3.7 Xolewa: Shack and love.

While for Penelope, her blackness was a category that she wanted to escape and "trick" through movement, for Xolewa, it was the mark of the social exclusion that she’d fought her whole life. Xolewa told me about many aspects of her life story before we started on our urban pathway. Her stories focused on two aspects: social exclusion and family exclusion, which often overlapped and merged in her
stories. Xolewa was born in Eastern Cape. When she was 13 years old, she was entrusted to the care of her aunt who was moving to Cape Town.

Due to the girl’s confrontational relationship with her mother and her partner it was decided to entrust her to her aunt: “When my mother met her new partner our relationship began to deteriorate. That man had two children with her and treated me differently because I wasn’t his daughter; they made me feel like an outsider”. Xolewa started living through a period of solitude within the family unit that she recalls with distress: “I lived with them, but sometimes it felt like I was invisible, that I didn’t exist. All the attention was reserved for my little brothers and I was treated like a domestic servant or worse”. The young girl’s feelings of privation and discomfort exploded in a confrontational relationship with her mother who decided to entrust her to her sister.

“The situation didn’t change much with my aunt, she treated me like a maid who had to clean, iron, cook and didn’t allow me to go out with other kids of my age”. However, in Cape Town, Xolewa began to learn the realities of life for her contemporaries above all at school. This made her aware of the existence of other realities, different from her own circumstances and when she came of age she decided to leave her aunt’s house to live on her own in Khayelitsha. “The house was just a shack, but it was all mine. No-one could tell me what I had to do”. For many of those who live there Khayelitsha symbolised their hope to change their lives, to find work in the city. For Xolewa it represented freedom.

My pathway with Xolewa started in Senator Park (a building on Long Street) where she lived with her aunt after arriving in Cape Town. Until twenty years ago Senator Park was a predominantly white, middle-class residential block, but gradually its accommodation has been taken over by immigrants some of whom are involved in illegal activities such as drug dealing and prostitution. Today, Senator Park is seen as one of the most disreputable areas in Cape Town. It has also been the location of serious crimes such as the kidnapping or murder of those who have been lured into the building.
Our interview took place on the street (as safety reasons prevented us from going inside the building). Across from Senator Park, she started to remember the time when she lived with her aunt. When Xolewa arrived in Cape Town, the building was going through a transitional stage: “It was beginning to be inhabited by migrants who lived crammed six to a room, but there were also still white residents living in comfort in their own flats”. Xolewa explained to me that at this time whites were starting to gravitate towards other areas of the city like Sea Point, Rondebosch or Claremont.

“Every time the blacks arrive in a place, the whites start to take flight, it’s what they’ve always done and they did it at Senator Park, too. I lived with my aunt in a small flat on the ninth floor. I remember how difficult it was living in close proximity to that woman. When I used to live in the Eastern Cape and the atmosphere got heavy at home, I could go out into the street. Here, in town, that wasn’t possible, that woman wouldn’t allow me to go out and kept me shut inside those four walls. Sometimes the house would be clean. Everything had been washed and ironed and I was having a nap when she would wake me up and make me keep working, even if there was no need. I remember on one occasion the clothes were folded and I unfolded them, then refolded them just so I would look busy and wouldn’t have to put up with that woman’s screaming. For me this building has a curse on it; it reminds me of how lonely I felt and the sense of powerlessness I experienced within its walls. My mother never phoned me and sometimes I tried to get
in touch with her but she never answered. That man had taken her away from me and I hated him for all I was worth”.

A few days later, I decided to go with Xolewa to Khayelitsha to visit the house she lived in when she moved to live alone. Here, she connected her inner distress at Senator Park with a specific event that she considered repayment: the day she got the call about the death of her step-father. Xolewa’s shack was very small, just like the majority of the shanties in Khayelitsha. Inside there was only a bed, a small camping stove and a cupboard made of salvaged materials. When I went inside, Xolewa stretched out on the bed and, looking at the ceiling, recalled an episode that happened many years before:

“I know it’s horrible to say it, but one of my fondest memories is of a telephone call to tell me that my stepfather had died. I was in my boyfriend’s shack and we were still sleeping. The phone was ringing, but I didn’t answer the first time; the second time I answered and I was still half-asleep. I heard my mother’s voice, she was crying and I was worried. She told me that man had been shot dead in Pretoria.

It was as if she was looking to me to comfort her and this made me feel uncomfortable. She’d abandoned me for that man and his daughter and now he’d been killed; she was asking me to console her. Perhaps she was hoping I
would feel grief, but I felt I had been set free. When I was little, I hoped he would die so I could become close to my mother again, but now I was with my boyfriend I didn’t need her anymore. I had a man and she didn’t have one anymore. When I hung up my boyfriend asked me what had happened; I didn’t tell him anything and we made love. I was happy and I felt free”.

Xolewa identified Khayelitsha with her "hard-won” independence and the city centre as the site of exclusion. Her life was left hanging between these two dimensions: the township where she lived with her people, and the city centre where she could redeem herself by finding a job and living a better life. This is why she decided to enrol in university. Yet this plan did not free her from the fear of possible new exclusions. She told me that some of her friends, like herself, had chosen to study to improve their social status and had found themselves in a "white" environment where they felt marginalised.

Walking down Lower Long Street by a bank where her friend had found a job and then quit, Xolewa told me of her fears about taking the "wrong" path. After finishing her studies, one of Xolewa’s friends, who also came from the townships found a job in one of the big companies located in this area of the city. However, problems in her relationship with white colleagues convinced her to resign and look for another job. The episode made Xolewa feel frustrated and ill at ease. She explained to me that every effort to improve her social position might well turn out to be useless, as: “this country’s economy is still ruled by the whites (…) Gaining access to jobs at the highest level means ending up in an environment where we are considered intruders.”
I met my friend Jenny who’d become a manager. Just like I am now, she’d done everything on her own. She’d always worked and studied at the same time, and in the end she took a Masters in Administration and became a manager. She used to work for a big company, but she resigned, in spite of the fact that it was her dream job. The reason she resigned is because she was the only black woman in her position. Whereas her other colleagues were able to get on with their work without problems, people were always checking up on her and her work was always being inspected. Did these people find it so strange that a black woman knew how to count?”

Jenny told her friend that she’d heard comments that she’d only got her job thanks to laws that favoured blacks in hiring. A few months later she asked for a transfer. “When I come here, I ask myself if I’m really doing the right thing, and whether it really is worth taking a degree, a Masters and who knows what if then I have to end up working with whites. Whites, whites, I always find whites in my way. It’s not enough to study, to climb the ladder, they’re always higher up”.

3.8 Dreams

Vincent Crapanzano compared the real and the imaginary to “two embraced lovers” (Crapanzano 2004:91) where it’s not possible to conceive the existence of one without considering the other. So far, it is possible to see how Long Street’s regulars have given meaning to their experiences through memories of things that
they actually experienced. Penelope and Xolewa went through the places of the city and reconstructed things that really happened to them and signified them through reconstructions. Yet, during the interviews, it often happened that they started telling me about their fantasies and imaginary situations that the city's places sparked in them. Long Street in particular represented a place where they could remember, and even more, a place where they could forget the real situation they were in and imagine a different reality. These fantasies, these imaginary worlds, could not be considered separate from their reality.

### 3.9 Marleane

I got to know Marleane in the township of Philippi. Marleane is a 19-year-old woman who lives with her aunt, who had adopted her after both her parents had passed away. I met her one day when I went to Philippi. Marleane's house is in one of the most dangerous areas of the township frequented by drug dealers. She used to spend most of her time in the street, but now she spends most of her everyday life in her house, as she is frightened of associating with her peers in the township “who do drugs and get drunk in the shebeens”. Her life is spent between school in Belville and the shack where her girlfriend often comes to visit her.

The few times that Marleane has been into the centre of Cape Town have been a real event for her. She recalls the first time an NGO volunteer took her to the Waterfront (Cape Town’s former port) as a particularly memorable day. There is absolutely no sense of resentment in Marleane towards people who have access to the comforts and conveniences of the centre.

“The thing I remember most about the centre are the escalators. When we went to the Waterfront they really made a big impression on me. So, one day I came to the centre with my girlfriend just to play on the escalators. We went back and forth, up and down, joking all the time. Now I feel stupid when I think about it, because when all’s said and done, it wasn’t a normal thing to do”.

Marleane saw the centre of Cape Town as a place of possibility where she could live protected from the dangers of her neighbourhood. What scared her the most in the township were drugs, particularly “tick”, a very popular amphetamine in
Cape Town townships because of its low cost though it can cause severe addiction. She told me:

I don’t know exactly what it is; I’ve never wanted to see it, because it scares me. People are talking about it and it’s a recent phenomenon in our community. We’d never heard of it before. I’ve seen the effects it has on people. There’s a guy who uses it and he’s gone mad. He talks to himself and shouts, at night, too. To be able to buy drugs he started selling them, so sometimes people who want to buy drugs come from the street, climb over the fence and come into our street. I’d like to be able to walk around in peace where no-one can hurt us. At night in Philippi we hear shots, the next day people talk about what happened, but at night we don’t know anything. We just wait until it’s over. I’m frightened that they’ll come into our house and rob us or kill us.

To get Marleane out of Philippi, her aunt decided to send her to school in Belville, an area close to her township. Setting out of Philippi increased her desire to explore other area’s of the city, particularly the city centre. Sometimes she would find an excuse to ask her aunt for the money for a train ticket so that she could head into the city centre; for example, so that she could go to the central library where she would be able to find books which did not exist in the small library in her school. In reality, when she was in the centre, Marleane took advantage of the situation to head for Long Street to go window-shopping. In this way – she explained to me – she managed to escape from Philippi, even if only for a few hours. Marleane considered Long Street as the place to which she could escape from the oppressive atmosphere of the township. At the time we first met, she had been there only a few times in her life, but all the same, the street represented an important point of reference for her.

“When we came here to the CBD, we would only stay in the library for a short time and after that we’d go to Long Street to see the shops. We’d use the term ‘going shopping’, but we didn’t buy anything, because we didn’t have enough money to do that. We’d go in all the shops and make a list of what we needed and we’d pretend to buy it, but we didn’t. For example, I’d choose a jacket, a pair of shoes or a skirt. We played this game several times. Once, we went into a shop and we chose the same pair of shoes and we
imagined that they were the only pair available. So we had a discussion about who had to take it. The argument became so serious that we almost forgot that we were playing”.

She told me that another place in the centre that was important for her was the Parade where she looked at the balcony from which Mandela addressed the people. In front of the Parade, she told me how one day she stopped to reconstruct with her imagination that memorable day. “I looked at the building on the Parade and imagined those moments drawing on my aunt’s accounts and my own imagination”. For Marleane, the centre of Cape Town became a place to escape the reality of the township and to take refuge, even if only with her imagination. Playing at going shopping on Long Street and pretending to watch Mandela’s speech, she explored a place that was still off limits for many inhabitants of the city’s townships.

3.10 Walley’s Silence.

Like Marleane, Walley considered Cape Town’s centre as a place to escape from the reality of his neighbourhood. Wally was 58 years old and had spent almost his entire life in Mitchell’s Plain, one of the largest townships of Cape Town, where mostly coloureds lived. He told me:

"In Mitchells Plain you have to be careful of the thin line between courtesy and confidence. It’s important everywhere to have good relations with neighbours, but in Mitchells Plain it can be vital to be nice to the neighbourhood bosses and with their affiliates. Failing to greet someone could be considered a huge mistake, a lack of respect, a failure to recognise authority. However, an excess of courtesy, saying too much, showing yourself too willing could lead to forming a connection, a belonging with dangerous people who can provide major favours and give protection but always ask for favours in return that you can’t get out of”.

Walley spent his days thinking about being able to move back to District Six some day. Following the demonstrations by the former residents of District Six who were insisting that they be given the right to return to live in the territories from which they had been evicted under Apartheid, the Government recently decided
to allow former residents of the area to purchase houses there at favourable rates. To buy the house in District Six at a favourable price, Walley would need to sell his house in Mitchell’s Plain and ask for a small loan, which he would be able to pay off gradually from his earnings at work. Perhaps he would have to do overtime and face making further sacrifices, but for him, it was definitely worth the effort in order to achieve his dream. However, his wife didn’t even want to hear of leaving the area and her family to move to a place she didn’t know and which she had heard about only through the memories of her husband.

She also claimed that they were already living under straightened circumstances and that taking on debt to satisfy Walley’s flights of fancy seemed crazy to her. Frustrated by his wife’s rational approach, Walley used to head for Long Street every week and buy a lottery ticket in the hope that his numbers would come up. Walking along the street, he would imagine a future which was different from the one that his wife and the rest of the family had planned:

“*When I walk with my lottery ticket in my pocket, I imagine what it would be like to return here. At that point, I could even die; nothing would matter to me any more. I would be at peace with myself. I imagine how I would decorate and furnish the house; I’d take my wife out to dinner in this restaurant; my children would stop thinking I was crazy and would respect me. They would see life through different eyes, and not with those of the township. The older one could go to work in a restaurant and the younger*
one could study. In the evening, I would be relaxed and happy with life, because I had managed to return here”.

3.11 Photo elicitation as reawakening.

After having gone through the city with my interviewees, I decided to go back with them to look together at the photos I took during our urban pathways. Re-observing the pictures, we discovered how the same place could take on different meanings from that which it had before. The photos sparked memories, emotions, and reconstructions of events in the interviewees that hadn't come out during the interviews. It seemed that a new view had changed their way of perceiving the city's places. The practice of photo elicitation can be compared in this sense to a reawakening.

The concept of reawakening is one of the foundations of Walter Benjamin's theory of knowledge. His Das Passagen Werk (The Passageways of Paris) studied in the hope of being able to awaken a society from a dream, from being under the control of the phantasmagoria of commodities. Canevacci notes that the reawakening "is the go-between for moving from the 19th-century dream based on society divided in classes to the awareness of the 20th-century in which a new freed society could be established" (Canevacci 1996:99).

To effect the reawakening, Benjamin uses interpretation, saying that we can read reality like a text. Distinguishing the construction of a historical fact from its reconstruction implies the essential step of destruction. The construction of a text entails the destruction of the original one. "The destructive instance coincides with the constructive one. Without mediation, each construction of a historical event is simultaneously its destruction" (Canevacci 1996:100).

It was with the help of the process of photo elicitation that I realised that my interviewees changed their previous attributions of meanings to attribute new ones. The places we crossed reawoke them through a new exploration. I was with Xolewa in Camps Bay where she had told me how she had spent many of her days off. She considered a particular restaurant important as she had spent an evening there with friends after exams. Now, observing the photo, she remembered an
event that happened much earlier at Mossel Bay, a tourist site on the Eastern Cape, where her boyfriend lived.

“It was my birthday and my boyfriend had saved to be able to buy a ticket from Cape Town to Mossel Bay. In the evening we’d decided to go to a restaurant so we could celebrate. We went to the seafront, which looks very like where we are now and chose a restaurant. We were just on our way in when a white waitress stopped us from going any further, telling us that the restaurant was for Members Only. We went to a second restaurant: same thing, a guy told us that it was Members Only.

The same thing happened at the third. These places have the Right of Admission and there’s nothing you can do if they decide they don’t want to let you in. No-one will admit that the reason for the refusal is the colour of your skin, but they’ll find other excuses, such as the way you’re dressed, the fact that the restaurant is full, or there’s a private function. At the end, we managed to get into a restaurant where there was a white couple having dinner. By that time our evening had been ruined. All my boyfriend and I could think about was that the whites were racists and that we still hadn’t been able to celebrate in a top-class restaurant.

While we were still in the township or doing menial jobs we were able to think that all was going well, but when we decided to gain access to the
privileged world of the whites, like going to a top-class restaurant, we realised that things hadn’t changed at all. While we were eating, I noticed that that white couple were looking at us constantly and making comments about what we were eating. They were making comments and laughing. I wanted to wreck the place. I wanted to get up and smash something in their faces because they’d ruined my day.

My boyfriend had made me feel like a princess by treating me to that day and they were wrecking everything. That evening we went back home in silence. I wanted to cry, and my boyfriend wasn’t speaking either. When we got home, he promised me he’d become an engineer and one day he’d buy the restaurant. He told me not to worry”.

By extrapolating images of the city through the means of photography it has been possible to de-contextualise places from their urban context and observe how different subjects experience their relationship with the same place in a different way. Roland Barthes writes: “Photography (…) de-territorialised citizenship, reaching beyond its conventional boundaries and plotting out to political spaces” (Barthes R. 1980:72). Hence, observing places through photography has been useful for observing how citizens signified the city in different ways, and how the process of signifying places was related to their own memories, fantasies and emotions. In Xolewa’s case, looking at the restaurant of Camps Bay served to create a connection with another event and “reawaken” a new type of interpretation.

Sometimes, the fact of observing the photos together with my interviewees provided an opportunity to return to the field and discover new aspects that had remained hidden during the first part of the interview. When I went to Walley’s house to look at the shots I had taken with him and retrace the journey we had made through these images, I discovered how he had never settled into life in Mitchell’s Plain. Walley hated Mitchell’s Plain; he couldn’t stand the fact of being far from the city and found it impossible to accept the behaviour of the young people who behaved like gangsters and had no respect for the community. He explained to me that District Six had a real sense of community: “Even the real gangsters were gentlemen and helped the poorest people”. In Mitchell’s Plain it seemed
to Walley that everyone was only interested in themselves, and although he lived there, his imagination kept taking him back to District Six.

On the other hand, Walley’s wife was perfectly integrated into Mitchell’s Plain. Her whole family lived there, just a short distance from their house. As she didn’t work, she spent her days between household chores and visiting her relatives, as well as listening to the complaints of her husband whom she loved dearly, but who she considered in many respects to be “obsessed” with District Six. When, finally, the opportunity arose to move to District Six, the different viewpoints of husband and wife turned into outright hostility.

(Back to District Six)

Along the pathway I followed with Walley was a photo of the flat where he had lived as a young child. While we were looking at the images alongside Walley’s wife, he seized the bull by the horns to convince her to return to District Six in the hope that she would understand once and for all what it represented for him. He explained to his wife that, through the interview, he had recalled aspects of his past which that previously eluded him and that it was really important to him for her to accompany him.

So all three of us headed there and stood before the building where Walley had lived many years before. Here the cold war between husband and wife transformed itself into a heated discussion. The building in which Walley used to live had become an elegant serviced apartment block complete with a swimming
pool and 24/7 security. Walley seemed unable to see the current situation, and wandering around the area where the building stood, he recalled every single detail of his past life: where now there was a swimming pool, he remembered a courtyard where he used to play with his friends; in a building which had been converted into a garage, he recalled there used to be a boxing gym; and in the open space in front of the building, he recalled the route he used to take every week to get to church.

All this time his wife had kept quiet, listening patiently to her husband. However, when he said that “the decision had been taken and they would move to District Six”, her face literally changed expression and her indulgent silence was transformed into anger. She invited her husband to observe the people going into and out of the apartment block and to think about how they were dressed: jackets, ties, gold watches on their wrists. Walley’s wife told him to “wake up” and understand that his youth was a thing of the past, that his life was now in Mitchell’s Plain and that if he wanted to live a normal life like other people did, he would need to learn to forget.

In this case the photos had involved a third party in the interview. Through the visual image we had managed to take District Six to Mitchell’s Plain, creating in the process a connection between two worlds which were quite different from each other. This connection also concerned two types of relationship with the past:
one related to recollection and the other to forgetting. The dramatization of the disagreement between Walley and his wife had ended up by revealing a deep-seated tension which characterised their relationship, but which, in many respects, governed the life experiences of many people in post-Apartheid Cape Town.

**Conclusion**

During my interviews I found out how my informants gave a particular meaning to places we passed, by putting them in relationship to a particular memory or wish. They could be compared to translators who, by reading and rewriting a text, turn its original meaning into something else. In a study on the visual representation of memory in the post-Apartheid period, Annie Coombes shows how places of historical interest such as museums and monuments take on a significance in the post-Apartheid period which is unheard of when compared with the one they had under the regime. Coombes bases her analysis on the Benjaminian concept of translation, that is, the additional significance attributed to a text or a place. “The concept of translation is helpful here, (...) in the Benjaminian sense of supplemental meanings that transform the ‘original’ through the act of translation” (Coombes 2004:25). Coombes shows how a monument erected to celebrate the pride of the Afrikaners such as the Voortreker Monument can become the symbol of democracy and tolerance through being visited by one of the most important exponents of the struggle against Apartheid.

Coombes compares monuments to texts and people to “active readers as translators capable of performing a reading against the grain and between the lines even in circumstances where the raw material reproduces a set of fairly standard colonial tropes” (Coombes 2004:25). The author’s intent is to show how the instability of memory can attribute new meanings to places that had seemed embodied in them until then. The meaning never coincides absolutely with the object to which it is attributed. (Not even for monuments like Voorkter or Robben Island). In the post-Apartheid period, meanings attributed to historic places were subverted by new readings and new interpretations.

The city was observed through a series of different views in the awareness that no view could fully represent the city. The crossing of these views and their overlapping constituted the result. My personal journal, the memories of my
interviewees, and the exploration of the photos crossed to create new attributions of meaning to the city. Each view on the city worked as a reawakening that broke earlier interpretive schemes to bring out new meanings that were once unthinkable. Penelope deconstructed and reconstructed the clubs of Long Street with her personal memories. Xolewa decontextualised the roof of her shack and connected it with a homicide that happened in Eastern Cape and a night of love. Cape Town appeared as a composition of texts that overlapped each other and in which no meaning definitively dominated the other.
CHAPTER FOUR

The urban chronotope

The term "chronotope" has its origins in physics, in particular in the theory of relativity, where it is necessary to render the idea of an intrinsic relationship between space and time. The concept of the chronotope was first used in the field of literature by Mikhail Mikhailovič Bakhtin, in an essay written in 1937. For Bakhtin, the chronotope is the "interconnection between the spatial and temporal relationships, which literature has appropriated in an artistic sense" (Bakhtin 1973:85). It is used with precisely this meaning as a category which allows for the indivisibility of time and space. Indeed, if on the one hand, space penetrates the web of events, the story, and hence, time; on the other, it is time which must reveal itself through space; for it is precisely time which gives space meaning and dimension. The temporal characteristics reveal themselves in space, to which time gives meaning and dimension. Time and space become intelligible in an artistic sense through their fusion.

In the literary chronotope there is a fusion between the spatial and temporal connotations “into a whole which has both meaning and concreteness”. Time becomes “dense and concrete” and becomes visible from an artistic point of view. Space becomes intensified and insinuates itself into the movement of time, of the interwoven effect and of history. The use of the spatial-temporal conjunction in the chronotope is thus a stratagem for rendering intelligible a human experience which would otherwise be emptied of meaning. Literature makes use of the chronotope to represent the production of human meanings which are the result of spatial-temporal fusion. Massimo Canevacci used the concept of the chronotope for his observation of the city (Sao Paulo). He compared the places of the city to literary texts: "an urban neighbourhood can be seen, read, and interpreted as a significant material, like a text written with montage" (Canevacci 1993:81). As in a literary text, space-time fusion is what attributes meaning to places and characters, just as the city can be understood as a chronotope. Canevacci wrote: "In a metropolitan context, the space-time indicators are merged into a new, tangible whole. On the one hand, time becomes visible, it becomes animate, it becomes
flesh or wall, street, building; on the other hand, space become layered in history, it incorporates time, and collects the many plots of urban stories” (Canevacci 1993:81). The city can be seen as an urban chronotope that arises from the intersection of the different temporalities that inform urban spaces. Drawing inspiration from the Russian formalists' concept of defamiliarisation, the criticism of Bakhtin's novel and Massimo Canevacci’s concept of urban chronotope in my observation of the city, I compared my interviewees to writers and their reconstructions of their lives to written narratives.

4.1 N2.

I had met Anne in 2004 and lived in her house for several months. In that period, she had decided to rent some rooms in her home to supplement her income. When I came back to the city (2011) I had tried several times to convince her to give me an interview, but she had always refused. In spite of her refusal, I spent a lot of time with her, I accompanied her to the stable where she kept her horses; I went shopping with her and sometimes we used to go to see a film. Once, when I was feeling ill, she went with me to the hospital and waited there all night until I was discharged. Anne and I developed an unusual type of relationship which could be compared to a fencing duel. It alternated between openings in which one of us would try to “touch” the other with understanding, and “en-garde” positions in which we covered ourselves and tried to defend ourselves when this attention became too intrusive and might cut to the quick.

The reason why Anne decided to tell me her story was suggested by a major road of the city, the N2 highway. We were in a view point on the Signal Hill from where a breathtaking view of the city can be admired. It was six in the evening and, as happened every day at that time, the city was emptying. Thousands of cars were leaving the centre and heading for the outer suburbs. Only a few cars were travelling in the opposite direction and were entering the city. We were watching this scene together when Anne recalled that the day she arrived in Cape Town she was headed for the centre in a taxi “while all the other cars were coming from the opposite direction”.

Taking the cue from the N2, Anne started to remodel events, encounters and thoughts that mark her life. The concatenation of her life’s episodes is situated in particular spaces. Like an artist, her images of places and the flow of events will be intersected to form a spatial-temporal sequence. Starting from the N2 she moves conceptually to her first apartment situated in Long Street “where, for the first time in my life, I had my private space”. She connects the freedom experienced in the apartment to the Long Street Café where she had “the most important encounter of my life”.

I’ve often wondered why Anne had decided to tell me her story when looking down at the city from the Signal Hill. It seems that observing the motorway changed her from someone who was concerned with her everyday problems into an author able to explore her personal life and to convert it into a text. Anne took the N2 almost daily and had a habitual familiarity with the motorway. But that evening, remembering the day that she arrived in Cape Town, it seemed to have become defamiliarised. She had started to look at the city through a different, new viewpoint.

Observing the N2, Anne seemed to have taken a new viewpoint that could feel the city and its places and project her sensations, memories, and emotions onto it. Now the motorway was discovered as a place that had connected two different parts of her life: “The first spent in Durban in a homey and safe context but with plenty of problems and conditioning”. The second in Cape Town, where she would have to
choose a new identity. The N2 became an Imaginary Bridge that can connect “my life in Durban and that in Cape Town”. From that point on, Anne’s descriptions and conversations transformed and recast the places of Cape Town, stripping them of their common meanings. A bar on Long Street became the place of her meeting with Daisy, the place of “destiny”, the city’s port as the “grey area”, free from the rules that oppressed the city, and the hospital became a place of redemption.

4.2 The city as chronotope.

Louis Crawford (2008) has noted how the semantic shift from representation and the represented object in the process of defamiliarisation should be read in its dual mediation of time and space. On the one hand, defamiliarisation entails an extrapolation of the temporal context in which the object was originally set: “Since an artistic device like defamiliarisation is a restoration of difference to an object which has lost it in the course of a life” (Crawford 2008:9). On the other hand, each representation can be understood only in so far as it is spatially outside the text to which it refers. “The text and its signs remain spatially secondary, since while they are metaphorically aligned on a spatial grid of meaning (a semantic chessboard) in which the semantic defamiliarisation is effected by displacements into different contiguities, the perception thus engendered is not of the signs and the text but of objects elsewhere” (Crawford 2008:12).

Here, each representation presupposes a transformation and a spatial-temporal (chronotopic) displacement of the object, in exactly the same way that Anne perceived the N2 differently than when she came to the city for the first time.

After many years, the N2 remained the principal arterial road which connects the City Bowl to the airport and to the city suburbs, once it is observed from another vantage point, the city’s centre. Anne has spent many years in Cape Town. Here she had several experiences and many encounters. Here she made choices which have changed her as a person. Now the N2 holds the memories of a story which is already written and which cannot be changed. Recollections, regrets, doubts on “how my life would be changed, if only I had made different decisions” are projected on the highway. In doing so Anne started to reshape the memories of her life, extrapolating them from the contextual situation and reshaping them in a new order. This new textual order could be called a chronotope.
In order to give space to the voices of my interviewees and not constrain them within a single perspective and a particular form of narrative construction, I drew inspiration from Dostoyevsky’s literary style. His novels speak through multiple voices; the voice of the author blends with the voices of the characters he has created. The voices of Dostoyevsky’s characters cannot be considered as elements that are subjugated to an artistic structure; they simply resonate alongside that of the author. As Bakhtin stressed, Dostoyevsky did not create silent slaves at the beck and call of his ideas, but free men who were capable of ranking alongside their author, of not sharing his ideas, and even of rebelling against him. According to Bakhtin, the fundamental characteristic of Dostoyevsky’s novels is that they contain voices and independent and unconnected consciousnesses. The novel is not the fixed object of the author’s explicit intention and fully artistic decisions, but a polyphony of fully independent voices. Dostoyevsky carefully avoids describing his characters’ biographies in an analytical way, but allows them to emerge in fragmented form as the novel is written. Something which could be simply considered stylistic choice conceals a deeper intention on the part of the author: that of retaining the individual subjectivity of his characters. Dostoyevsky’s characters are themselves creators, in addition to being created by their writer. Each one has their own philosophy within the novel.

Like Dostoevsky’s polyphonic characters, my interviewees were considered as and compared to authors. For example, Anne’s story could be compared to a novel where the protagonist explores different worlds and that facilitates her personal transformation. After Anne, I met other informants and I discovered how they could re-signify their experience by retracing the most relevant events of their lives. Ibraim’s life history could be compared to an adventure novel where the protagonist goes through different situations but remains loyal to his principal intention of arriving in Cape Town. Paul’s reconstruction could be compared to the cinematographic reconstruction of the film *Invictus* (2009) that inspired the start of our interview.

Informed by literature, my interviews were informed by different chronotopic forms: the street, the metamorphosis, the meeting. Through these categories, the aim was to discover how the space-time encounter might generate different forms of meaning between the interviewees. For example, for Ibraim, the street was the
objective of a journey, for Anne, it was a twist of fate, and for Paul, it was social exclusion.

4.3 Anne’s metamorphosis.

Anne’s life history has been marked by the experience of extreme situations that shaped the transformation of her person. She was born in Durban into a middle class family and she decided to go to Cape Town to change her life. A series of encounters and situations led her to discover social environments and aspects of herself which she had not known before. Going through these situations led the young woman to a social and personal metamorphosis. Anne’s metamorphosis may be compared to Apuleius’ tale of The Golden Ass (158/159 AD). The main character, Lucius, is a person who is largely outside the events of everyday life. Most of the time he is a rogue who wears different masks on a daily basis; he doesn’t have a specific role in everyday life, and plays on this fact. The everyday sphere is the lower reaches of the reality from which Lucius tries to free himself, and with which he never manages to harmonise from an inner point of view. During the process of metamorphosis, the character is constrained to stoop to leading a humiliating everyday life as an ass. “He ends up in the hands of some muleteers; he turns the grindstone in a mill; he works for a market gardener, a soldier, a cook” (Bakhtin 1976:89). He has to accept continual beatings and put up with the vexations of the wives of the muleteer and the baker. His status as an ass allows him to retain a certain degree of alienation and distance while satisfying his natural curiosity.

He becomes an undisturbed observer of daily life: “as no-one paid any attention to my presence, everyone spoke and acted freely before me, without giving it a second thought” (Bakhtin 1973:122). He uses his big ears to listen to and understand others: “I was able to hear everything very easily, even at a certain distance” (Bakhtin 1973:123). Even though he never completely immerses himself in everyday life, the experience leads Lucius to a metamorphosis as he is transformed by the experience. Like Lucius, Anne tried to come back to her social environment and to come back as the person she was before, but these experiences had changed her forever.
4.4 The meeting with Daisy.

It is rare for a work of literature not to include some variation on the street or road. Many works are built around the concept of the street and the meetings and adventures experienced “on the road”. In the folkloristic novel, the street or road is often used as a metaphor for life as a journey: “The choice of the street or road is the choice of life as a journey” (Bakhtin 1973:142).

The space of the street or road is filled by a sense which is vital and real and assumes an essential relationship with the protagonist’s destiny. On the other hand, the street is also the place par excellence in which exceptional everyday events occur which are capable of changing one’s destiny. On the street it is possible to break the tranquil repetitive nature of everyday life, of relationships organised within a specific structure of stable relations. On the street, unexpected meetings can occur which change one’s life.

For Anne Long Street is the place in which her intentions were to be put to the test and her destiny marked by a chance meeting. The possibility of meeting people, the presence of temptation, the risk of going off the “main road”; all this is intrinsic to Long Street. It is here that Anne had the meeting which was to change her destiny; after she had been to Long Street she would never be the same again. Both the N2 motorway and Long Street have meaning for Anne in the way she projects her memories, emotions and states of mind onto them. Both contain the meanings she attributed to them as a young woman; coming into contact with the street again after many years, these meanings are re-awoken and interpreted in a new light.

Anne went to live in a building (Senator Park), located near Long Street. Whereas in Durban she had lived within the four walls of her family home, on Long Street she started to live her life in its public spaces. Anne became a regular at the Long Street Café, one of the busiest bars on the street; and it was here she met Daisy, a woman who worked as a prostitute in a Cape Town brothel. The meeting with Daisy was to bring about a series of changes in Anne’s life and place her in situations that would previously have been unthinkable for her. Anne and I decided to head to the Long Street Café, where more than 25 years before she had
the meeting which was to change her life. We sat at a table outside, right on the street, and Anne started to recall her experience:

“I was sitting at a table, it was evening and I had just come back from work. A very pretty girl with a black eye caught my eye. She was sitting near me and I spoke to her. After a while I asked her how on earth her eye came to be in that state and she told me that she worked as a dancer, and one evening while she was dancing she had fallen and that was why she had a black eye. I had a couple of drinks with her and she invited me to the club where she worked. I didn’t usually stay out very late at night, but I decided to go with her, just for a change. I felt a strange sensation inside me as we were approaching the club which told me it would be better not to go there. However, another part of me wanted to go, so I decided to carry on”.

In literature the category of meeting often serves as the crux, the culmination or the moment when the temporal weave unravels. The meeting provokes a transformation in the characters and in their temporality. In the case of two lovers, the meeting will lead to a transformation both of external events and of their inner lives; or in the case of two duelists, it will lead to dramatic events such as death.

The meeting may also have the function of bringing about a change between the temporality of the individual character (private destiny) and the more general temporality (history taken as a whole). The “adventurous” time of chance is a time where irrational forces interfere in human life; the interference of destiny; of gods; of demons, (...) “of rogues who use simultaneity and fortuitous asynchrony as their very arms”, who “lie in ambush”, “lurk” and “rush forward all of a sudden”...“right when...” (Bakhtin 1973:189). By adopting the category of the meeting within ethnography we can note how a meeting is capable of bringing about a shift between a person’s life experience and their social destiny, understood as a corpus of expectations, beliefs and behaviours dictated by a particular social group included within a specific historical moment.

The meeting with Daisy became the watershed in Anne personal history. This was the point where she underwent a transformation from “shy girl with little experience”, shut within her family life, to a woman who was “wily, an expert in how to understand men and exploit their emotions to her own advantage”. It was Daisy, with
her own life experience, who brought about the possibility of a transformation in Anne, who would never be the same after that meeting.

4.5 The grey area.

After Long Street, Anne decided to take me to the place to which she was invited where Daisy used to work. The club, located near the port of Cape Town, no longer exists. Anne explained to me where it used to be and that it was located there because the majority of its customers were sailors.

Anne explained to me that the port was considered one of the “city’s grey areas” in which it was not possible to apply the racial segregation imposed in other areas of the city. So sailors from the Philippines or Japan visited the clubs and found themselves white girls, something which was prohibited during the years of Apartheid and which, in other areas of the city, would probably have led to police intervention.

“When we arrived at the club, which was near the port, I sat at a table and waited for my friend’s performance to begin. While I was waiting I felt that the men in the club were staring at me. Almost all of them were foreigners. Most were Asian, but there were also Indians and Europeans. They were sailors who worked in the port of Cape Town who stopped over in the city for a while and then moved on to other destinations”.

(The grey area)
This situation brought about a substantial transformation in Anne’s life in terms of her relationship with her primary group and society (post-Apartheid South Africa). Her meeting with Daisy provoked a movement across the territory which led her from “a whites-only environment” to one in which “there were people from other races”. This movement across the territory coincided with passing through a different socio-cultural environment, something which provoked feelings of uncertainty in Anne. She tried to withdraw from this situation, but at the same time felt an urge to experience it and to subvert the rules she had followed up to that moment:

“In Durban I’d never met anyone other than whites, apart from the Zulu woman who looked after me when I was little. I felt a bit intimidated being in that club, it was a completely new situation for me, and what’s more these men were all there on their own. Part of me understood that that club was “different”, but another part of me was in denial. Maybe I was being hypocritical with myself and didn’t want to admit I found that situation terribly exciting”.

The inner conflict that tormented Anne as a young woman was also the conflict between her socio-cultural background and a new “background” which she had glimpsed, but had not yet got to know. The brothel in the port was a place where illegal activities were transacted, not only where prostitution was concerned, but also because there were clients from other racial backgrounds who had sexual relations with white girls. The movement across the territory exposed and provoked an inner conflict in Anne that related to a series of other juxtapositions: society-individual; culture-person; structure-anti-structure (Turner 1969) and which seemed to be confronting each other here in a duel to the death. For Victor Turner, the essence of liminality is in the deconstruction of culture into the parts that make it up and its playful reconstitution of these parts into every possible configuration, no matter how strange. Liminality marks a moment (or a space) in which the social transformation of a person or a group can happen.

“Liminality represents the midpoint of transition in a status-sequence between two positions, outsiderhood refers to actions and relationships which do not flow from a recognised social status but
originate outside it, while *lowermost status* refers to the lowest rung in a system of social stratification in which unequal rewards are accorded to functionally differentiated positions. (Turner 1974:237)

The port here was to determine the turning point in Anne’s life. Anne defines the port as a “grey area: an area of uncertainty, where anything could happen”. The grey area of the port was also a grey area in Anne’s life. Up to that moment, Anne had considered herself a shy girl who was always rather intimidated by external situations (while still retaining a certain degree of power and a hidden inner strength); then she found she was a woman who could use her skills in seduction to gain power over others:

“One evening a waiter came over to my table with a cocktail and told me that a gentleman sitting at the table behind mine had sent it. I turned round and saw an Asian man. He smiled at me and I pretended not to notice and drank the cocktail. My friend had finished her shift on the dance floor and sat down next to me. At that moment the Asian man came and sat at the table with us. I kept talking, pretending not to notice. Then I felt an inner strength, an amazing feeling, I sensed that that man wanted me passionately and that I could have done whatever I wanted with him if I’d so desired”.

The port is understood as a liminal zone, where the prevailing cultural norms can be subverted. The liminal nature of the port also subverts Anne’s personality, as she is transformed from a passive subject into a dominatrix: “He could have ended up at my feet and I’d have manipulated him like a puppet”. It is the foreign nature of the place, in addition to the fact of being white, which gives Anne an advantage over the others; she knows that she is in an “uncertain area”; she recognises her “liminal” position and exploits it:

“I wasn’t a prostitute and he’d understood that. There are codes, which are difficult to explain, that only those who frequent clubs like that understand. It’s how you behave, how you move, how you dress that tells the other person who or what you are. He’d understood I wasn’t a prostitute and that made me irresistible in his eyes. He wanted to possess me and no-one else”.
Passing through the port, Anne tells me that she was to enter “an underground world in which no-one could tell her what she had to do and who she should see”. Of necessity, entering this world bought about a change at a personal level. Anne observed this new reality, was intrigued by it, but did not totally belong to it until she decided to sell her body. From that moment, Anne became fully immersed in a reality which she had only intended to observe: “I started thinking that I could have gone with someone else and could have made a lot of money in the process. I decided to change area and started to become a regular on Loop Street in the CBD”.

4.6 Loop Street.

From the harbour we went to Loop Street; a street situated in the central area of Cape Town. The Club where Anne worked does not exist anymore. Instead there is a building with private apartments. We stopped in front of the building and Anne started to remember:

“I remember that my first client after the Filipino was an ugly man: a white man, he was huge, old, bald and repulsive. He looked at me and I decided to go with him; I don’t know why. Afterwards, I thought I’d done it to punish myself, because in reality I was dirty and so I had to do something repulsive. That evening he took me from behind; I felt his flabby stomach against me while he was screwing me and felt great pleasure in having punished myself in this way; he even smelt revolting”.

This event may be compared to a rite of passage. Anne had entered definitively into an underground world with new rules and new codes of behaviour, of which changing her name was just one aspect.

“After a few months I started to become famous in Cape Town. A lot of clients knew about me even if they’d never seen me and even if they came from other parts of the country. Sailors speak to each other and it can happen that they talk about you in other places like Port Elizabeth or Durban. In the meantime, I’d changed my name and had decided to call myself Daisy like the girl I’d met that first time who’d introduced me to the job. So a lot of people came looking for Daisy in the club where by this time I was working”.

4.7 Hospital.

It was another unexpected event: getting pregnant, that led Anne to leave the game in which she had become involved. Returning to “normal life” would not be without its consequences, and she was to undergo a transformation as part of this process. Anne and I decided to go to the hospital where she had heard the news that she was pregnant and she remembered these moments when she realised her life was changing.

“I knew that probably I was pregnant but until I had seen the medical results I would not believe it. When they gave me the test with the results I was shocked. It is said that the moment before a person dies he sees the sequence of his life images like in a movie. The same thing happened to me. I was walking in the corridor of the hospital and the images of my life started flowing in my mind: my meeting with Daisy, the nights in the club, the jail, the drugs. I think a part of my self died that day. I called my brother whom I hadn’t seen for years and told him everything. He took me to his house and imposed three rules on me: no cigarettes, no drugs, no prostitution; otherwise I’d have to leave. That was perhaps the most difficult period, I was plagued with paranoia and physically ill”.
Anne decided to return to a “normal life”, and in order to do so, she returned to the environment from which she came (a middle-class family), adopting once more its rules and behaviours. To do so, Anne returned metaphorically to the road she had left when she reached Cape Town. In fact, it is thanks to her brother that she has followed in her father’s footsteps and has become a professional gambler, using some of her winnings to buy herself a house. Anne told me that her brother had won a lot of bets on the horses thanks to her tips. And thanks to the winnings he was able to buy a house in central Cape Town. This fact led Anne to “distance herself” progressively from her past life and to perceive her past self as someone “other” than herself. Anne applies a type of censorship between her adult self which is “reconciled” with her social environment and the young Anne: the “prostitute and drug user” and “the person in contact with the suburbs of the city”.

We decided to go to her house and Anne remembered the day when she went there for the first time:

“That was an unexpected present. Going inside the house it seemed to me a sign of fate. The trees, the garden, the flowers, everything created a serene atmosphere. It was what I needed. In some ways this house reminded me of Durban. I think my brother knew that and that he chose this house for that
reason. When I got in I started touching the walls, the doors and the kitchen. I could see my future life with my son and I knew that I would never go back to my previous life”.

4.9 Ibraim the Actor.

In Wolfram von Eschenbach’s (1882) romance *Parsifal*, the real road along which the main character Munsalwasche travels becomes inadvertently a “metaphor for the road”, of the journey of life, the journey of the soul “which sometimes moves closer to God, and sometimes moves away from him” (Bakhtin 1974:391). This way of understanding the road or street corresponds to the way in which Ibraim gives meaning to Long Street. After a series of ups and downs he finally found in Long Street the place where he could be himself; where he could “stop acting”. Ibraim understands Long Street as the product of a vexing choice after living through a lengthy period of trials and tribulations. As for Munsalwasche, the street is the “metaphor for his road”: it represents the result of a choice and the conclusion of a long inner conflict.

Ibraim started working at the Kick Ass two years ago. He used to live and work in a township (Langa) in a shop managed by Somalis. “Leaving the Somali community wasn’t easy” he explains “it offers you protection and security”. On the other hand, leaving the community and going to work on Long Street has meant that Ibraim can “stop acting” and live openly as a homosexual. The fiction or the “act”, as he defines it, was a constant feature of his life.

He tells me of a difficult childhood spent in Somalia “where I couldn’t reveal who I was and where I had to conduct every intimate relationship in secret”. In spite of the fact that these relationships were clandestine, Ibraim fell in love with a married man in Somalia with whom he is still in contact. At the age of 16, he decided to go to South Africa: “the only place I knew of on this continent where homosexuals could live in freedom”. He dreamed of going to Europe, but it proved too difficult to travel there. So, he decided to go to Cape Town, a journey which took three years. Long Street is understood as the terminus for his journey, the place in which he can finally be himself.
4.10 Finally Freedom.

I started my urban pathway with Ibraim in Long Street: “the place where finally I could feel free”. We stopped in front of the place where he works and he remembered the day when he arrived in Cape Town:

“I’ve found this work thanks to a friend. A foreigner guy who had many contacts in the gay environment of Cape Town. When he told me that I had a job, I could not believe that. When I cross the door of the club it was like passing the finishing line of a long walk that I did for years. Here things have changed completely. I’ve started dressing and speaking as I like. Acting and pretending are what had characterised my whole life. Acting, playing a part was a pleasant feeling, because I could maintain a secret identity, I could cherish it and protect it. In a certain sense, acting gave me the freedom to be myself in the purest sense, because the mask I put on protected me. Coming here brought about a transformation in my life and in a certain sense I’ve stopped acting. When I started working here, I discovered another part of myself. It was like I was hiding all over again”.
4.11 The End of the World.

A key place was the apartment where he lives near Long Street. When he showed me his house he remembered the day when he found his first stable accommodation during his journey.

He had spent years travelling before he reached South Africa and he had finally found someone who had helped him get work and a roof over his head. Certainly, this solution was far from ideal, he slept in a shack which was a shop by day and “his home” by night; but compared with what he had experienced on his journey, it seemed ideal. It was the period in which xenophobia was starting to break out in South Africa and the Somali community was becoming even more inward-looking and self-protective than before.

In order to be accepted by the Somali community, Ibraim had had to conceal his identity as a homosexual, but he felt this small sacrifice was acceptable given the possibility he had of getting to Cape Town. He was still alive in spite of everything. He had left Somalia with no money and had managed to get across the South African border illegally. Now he had a job and would finally be in a position to tell his family of his success. Everything seemed so perfect that he could never have imagined that the initial meeting with the young Somali man, who had been so kind and helpful, would lead to the worst experience in his life.
“One day” Ibraim tells me “some young South African men came into the shop to buy a phone card. They spent a long time asking lots of questions without deciding to buy anything. It was clear that they were up to no good”. When his boss (the Somali who had given him work and somewhere to live) told them to leave, they became aggressive.

“One put his hand in his pocket where he had a pistol, but my boss was faster in pulling out his gun and killed him. The others ran off and we managed to convince the police that he had fired in self defence. After a few weeks I’d almost forgotten what had happened, when one evening I went to phone my mother to tell her that I’d decided to leave Pretoria and that I would soon be going to Cape Town. I was happy because I knew that I was taking a load off my mind. I neither could, nor wanted to, tell my mother everything, so as not to worry her, but she seemed pleased with my decision. I had just hung up and was heading home again when a car drew up beside me. Inside were two of the men (the same ones who had come into the shop) who had come up to me the time before, along with another four.

They dragged me into the car and headed for a house in the township. There they started hitting me and insulting me; they stripped me and took turns to rape me repeatedly. At that moment I was hoping they were going to hit me on the head and kill me. I hoped it was all going to come to an end; it went on for a long time, like it was never going to end. Images kept passing through my mind; I saw my mother and other things. Once they had finished they dragged me into the car again, stopped next to a precipice and dumped me there.

The next day I woke up in hospital. I remember being woken by a white light and I couldn’t work out if it was a dream or what; it was the light of a lamp. They’d killed me; it felt like everything had stopped inside me. It was the end of the world”.

Ibraim’s meeting with his benefactor led him into the Somali community which protected and nourished him. On the other hand it placed him within a system of rules which he had to obey (not revealing his homosexuality). Before joining the
Somali community Ibraim did not have any sense of social belonging. His life story seems to exist outside the temporalities through which he passed. His pathway from Somalia to South Africa consists of places, but also of his private temporality. He was too fixed on his aim of reaching South Africa to pay much attention to the environments he was passing through as he went along. When he finally reached Pretoria his private story intersected with “fatal” consequences with the “general” history of a country that was undergoing a period of xenophobia. It was as if the ghost of Apartheid had reappeared in South Africa. Ibraim’s rape represents an interruption to his personal story: “from that day on I’ll never be the same”, he says. Mamelodi was the space in which he was to transform himself; the illusion of making his personal story coincide with his plan was destroyed by the meeting which was to change his destiny.

4.12 Ibraim reawakens.

Ibraim did not speak about what happened in Pretoria for a long time. One day we were in Green Point near by the gay village, and he decided to talk about the day when he woke up in hospital. He explained to me that was the day he decided to come out.

“I was in hospital for more than two weeks. The doctor told me it was a miracle I was still alive; he told me someone up there had saved me. I was in pain all over my body. I had a dislocated shoulder and I had a broken arm. They had kicked me out of the car while it was moving and it was incredible that no-one had run over me. I had also hit my head hard, but there was no head injury. Inside I was dead; what they had done to me had wiped me out.

I started to pray and asked God why he had done this to me? Perhaps it was because I had left Somalia and because I had made my own choice about how to live my life? Perhaps I should have left myself to the fate chosen for me, to live in my own country? Then I thought that he had done this to me because I was pretending and play-acting; because I had placed myself in situations in which I couldn’t be myself. If I had been myself none of this would have happened; I wouldn’t have been in that township in Pretoria. I wouldn’t have been in that shop and none of what had happened would have happened to me. I needed to change my life, to be myself. When they discharged me
from hospital, I waited a few days and then set out again, this time for Cape Town.

It’s strange, but that incident gave me my freedom. I understood that life is short, that anything can happen from one moment to the next and change everything. I needed to be free to be happy day after day. I had left my country because I wanted to stop acting, but I had continued to do it in order to be accepted by the Somali communities I came across.

This violent event made me understand that I had to set myself free, I had touched rock bottom, but God had allowed me to live; I ought to be happy. Thinking about what happened today I still don’t understand whether those people ruined my life forever or whether they set me free. Part of me died; I left it in that place. On the other hand I feel freer. I no longer fear anything; I understand that being happy means surviving”.

Ibraim no longer described the rape episode in detail in our later meetings. He explained that even the memory caused him to feel poorly. However, he often referred to it as the key event of his life that led him to certain conclusions. Sometimes he considered it a misfortune and other times as an event that saved him and let him change his life.

4.13 Paul, Invictus and Umlungu.

“El Jardin de senderos que se bifurcan” (1941) (The Garden of Forking Paths), by Jorge Louis Borges is a novel which can be read on multiple levels. It may be compared to a maze. “Every one imagined two works; to no-one did it occur that the book and the maze were one and the same thing... the confusion of the novel suggested to me that it was the maze” (Borges 1941:36). Borges’ text may be read through different approaches and each of these does not exclude the others. You may choose to unfold all possibilities. You "create, in this way, diverse futures, diverse times which themselves also proliferate and fork" (Borges 1941:33). The urban pathway that I took with Paul could be compared to Borges’ El Jardin de senderos que se bifurcan.
Starting from different places, I discovered the different life experiences of my interviewee. It was like he had lived two life stories that intertwined and linked together. Paul had spent part of his life with blacks, trying to understand them and help them. Paul was also a racist, capable of violence and erecting psychological and ideological barriers between himself and the world of blacks. Like Borges, I decided to read and interpret his life story through different approaches and different views, developing several pathways that did not exclude one another.

4.14 Return to Philippi

When I met Paul, it was many years since he had last been to Philippi which is one of the city’s poorest townships. Five years before we had had an experience which was of significance for both of us. We had spent a night in the township and joined in a celebration organised in our honour by the community. At that time, Paul was working in the townships where he took tourists to show them the “results” of the Apartheid policy. This initiative had led to a relative improvement in the economy of the community, which had become better organised, arranging informal markets for the tourists and improvised tours with local guides.

The death of Patrick, Paul’s main contact in the community, had led him to interrupt his business dealings with the inhabitants of Philippi and gradually also his other less formal relationships. My presence in Cape Town convinced Paul to decide to return to the township to visit the community.
When he entered Philippi, Paul was surprised at conditions in the township and above all, those of the premises of a local NGO which Paul had helped develop in order to encourage employment in the area. However, the greatest surprise came when we headed to the area occupied by the community where he used to take the tourists. I remembered this place indistinctly, but then my attention was more focused on Paul’s expression, he seemed dumbfounded at the distressing scene he found before him. When we had gone to Philippi five years before, I remember that the sight of Paul’s bus caused such excitement that many came out of their houses to wave at it and little children would run towards it.

Paul had been one of the first white men to enter this area, and the children would call all white men “Paul”, identifying the whole universe of the whites, about which they knew nothing, with this one man. Paul was a guest, a visitor but also the benefactor of their community; and in many ways he was responsible for establishing a precedent for “dialogue” between a closed, inward-centred social group, scourged by poverty and illness, and the outside world of well-being, organisation and the capacity to generate wealth. This time however, no-one came out of their houses to greet us; indeed we saw young people looking at us with suspicion and hostility. Paul kept looking at the street and said nothing; gripping the steering wheel more tightly, it looked like he wanted to try to keep control of a situation which was getting out of hand.

At a certain point, he stopped the bus and we got out where a group of young men had formed and were watching us from the other side of the street. When
Paul knocked at the door of a shack, a woman came out. When she saw him, her expression betrayed a combination of surprise, incredulity and terror. Her first reaction was to look at the group of young men which was getting larger all the time, and literally pulled us into the shack, shouting in desperation what we were doing in Philippi and telling us that it was very dangerous for two white men to be there. I didn’t remember Pumza immediately, but it was her attitude and behaviour that made me recall her. Five years before, she was the one who had been most concerned about our status as guests. From time to time, she would appear with tea or something sweet and would ask me how I was, sometimes speaking into my ear, reassuring me that if anyone present did not treat me well, I would be able to turn to her for help. In the townships, as I was to discover, people age very quickly; and Pumza, although she was under forty, looked at least fifteen years older. Patrick’s death had plunged the community into a state of neglect which had allowed gangsters to take control of the territory.

Every day – she explained – there was a gunfight and the list of those killed in recent years was getting longer; meanwhile Paul, sitting on a ramshackle sofa, listened petrified with fear. Many of his friends and acquaintances were among the dead and I could see from his reaction how he was trying to hold back the pain he was suffering. Pumza explained that those who had not been killed had run off or returned to the Eastern Cape, abandoning once and for all the dream of a better life in the city. She had been left on her own without a husband to look after her nieces and nephews who were studying at university. This state of stress and suffering had tried and tested her to such an extent that even her body had been affected, making her unrecognisable as the person I had met five years previously.

After she had told us of her experiences, she was almost seized by panic when she remembered the danger in which we found ourselves and, interrupting her account, she started going in and out of the house and calling different people on the phone. She was speaking in Xhosa, so I wasn’t able to understand what she was saying, but I could see how worried she was and heard the tone of urgency in her voice. When Paul told her that he wanted to go out into the street, she stood in front of him with a serious expression on her face and told us we couldn’t go out until it was safe to do so. I never found out what was really going on; I didn’t know who was outside and what the purpose of her calls was.
Pumza did not speak to me. From time to time she shot a pitiful glance at me; as one does with someone who is in a mess about which they can do nothing and does not even realise it. At a certain point, Pumza told us that we had to leave the shack at once. I grabbed the bag with my cameras in it, which I had not been able to use, and jumped into the bus. There was no-one on the street anymore. Pumza stayed on the bus with us until we had left the unsurfaced streets of Philippi. Once we were outside the township she jumped down from the bus and, with the satisfied expression of someone who has accomplished their mission, waved us off from outside.

Paul drove along the roads which separated Philippi from Nianga and Cross Road. After a few minutes he started to cry. I had never seen him in such a state; he was a giant of a man, almost two metres tall and always cheerful. After this, he decided to tell me that the disaster that had befallen Philippi was his fault. After Patrick’s death, he had abandoned these people. We stopped at a bar in Guguletu “Nzoli”, and Paul told me about his meeting with Patrick.

“I had just started my career as a tour operator. Not very many people worked in the township at the time. I had some experience because I had worked at an NGO in Philippi. I decided to go to Philippi and talk with the people in the community to see if they would be willing to host tourists for their visits. The person with whom I was immediately put in contact was Patrick, a middle-aged man who was considered the community’s leader”.

Though Patrick held no official role, he was a moral guide for Philippi’s small community. His intelligence and strong character made him a spontaneous leader to whom people turned.

"Meeting Patrick was decisive for me. Until then I had never had personal relationships with blacks. The government propaganda and the climate of terror in which we lived made us see blacks as enemies, terrorists, and murderers. Coming into contact with this man of extraordinary intelligence sparked a crisis in me. Going to the township, I expected to find people who would make themselves available so they could scrape together a few coins. But with Patrick I began a deep dialogue. Though he hadn’t been to school, he perfectly understood the economic problems of his community and tried
to find a solution to them. We began a dialogue on Philippi’s problems and their possible solutions. After meeting and talking with Patrick, I felt full of life. Talking with him meant coming into another world, a world that no whites had known because of Apartheid”.

For Paul, meeting Patrick meant looking at his life experience differently and the positions he had taken during the years of Apartheid.

"After meeting Patrick, I started to be confused. I started to think that the government had lied to us. I had served my people and my country in military service and fought against blacks. After getting to know them through the words and stories of this man, I felt that I'd been deceived. I felt like they had controlled my mind and thoughts”.

After Patrick’s death, Paul told how part of him was gone forever and that his dialogue with the Philippi community ended forever.

“\nWhen they called me to tell me that Patrick had died, a part of me also died forever. Patrick had allowed me to change. It seemed that together we could truly change Philippi and not just there. Talking with him and helping those people made me feel different. Everything changed after Patrick died. Those people started to become foreign again. I could only perceive their distance and their distrust. I went back to being a foreigner like in the times of Apartheid”.

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4.15 Tear Gas in Guguletu.

One day I went with Paul to the township of Guguletu to buy some tyres for his bus. Going through the main street in which the market is held, we saw a woman cooking in a large pot. When she lifted the lid, a thick, white steam came out. The sight of the steam made Paul remember an episode that happened when he was in East London. Paul and his fellow soldiers were surrounded in a school. The radio gave the news that all of the other schools in the city had been burned. Then he heard the sound of rocks that were being thrown against the building and saw a flame of fire from outside the window. He and his fellow soldiers started to shoot tear gas to disperse the crowd.

“They started throwing stones at us and we responded with tear gas. People started screaming and running away in desperation in all directions. There were women and children as well as young guys. I was scared, but I was also thrilled and pumped full of adrenaline, like I’d been taking drugs. I can still remember the smell of the tear gas we had fired; the scene shrouded in mist and people fleeing in every direction. I didn’t shoot; I didn’t hit anyone; I froze; but I was ready to kill if the situation had required it. I’ve dreamt about that raid many times and I used to wake up during the night. Above all, I remember the screams and the acrid smell of the tear gas”.

The steam in Guguletu evoked for Paul the confused images of that day of guerrilla warfare in East London. "For me, those people were the enemy. There was no
way out. Either they’d kill us or we’d kill them. Now we’re here and we are buying things in their markets, talking with them and we know each other, but there’s still a distance.

After I had been in the field for two months Paul invited me to spend a weekend in his holiday house on Cape Aghullas: the place where the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans meet. Paul had warned me that there was “nothing to do there” and that we would spend our time watching rugby matches, grilling sausages and fishing. Paul comes from an Afrikaner family and rugby is his passion. Like many South African rugby fans he liked to recall the South African team’s victory in the 1995 World Cup. He told me in great detail about that game, even though he had only watched it on television. For him it was “one of the best moments in my life”. He also explained to me that, in addition to its importance from a sporting point of view, the 1995 victory had also been significant from a political point of view. Rugby was traditionally considered the whites’ sport, unlike football which was followed in the main by blacks. After the African National Congress won the 1994 elections the Afrikaner community found itself living in fear of reprisals by those who had suffered violence during the Apartheid years. The process of transition had been characterised by a climate of heightened tension. During the election period there was a terrorist campaign by political and paramilitary movements who opposed political negotiations, which aimed to bring the democritisation of the country to a stop.

In spite of the fact that the leadership of the largest parties (A.N.C. and N.P.) appeared determined to follow the path of reconciliation, other extra-parliamentary factions and paramilitary groups were against the idea of negotiation and were threatening to start a civil war. Mandela’s concept of reconciliation was seen by many as suspect and people were afraid that declarations of this type were part of “a strategy designed to play for time and target us”. At the Rugby Final, Mandela surprised everyone by coming down onto the pitch wearing the South African team cap and strip to show his support for the players who were representing his country. “At that moment” Paul told me, “we understood that he really was the Father of the Nation … Mandela’s gesture convinced many people that a new period had begun and that reconciliation really was possible”. With that symbolic gesture Mandela won the respect of many white citizens, including Paul. On one of the days we spent at Cape Aghullas, Paul got so worked up about the episode at the Final that he decided to go and rent a film which told
of the event. The film in question was Invictus (2009), one of the latest masterpieces directed by Clint Eastwood.

*Invictus* tells of the difficult path to national reconciliation through the meeting of Nelson Mandela and the captain of the rugby team. Their meeting recalls the confrontation between the Afrikaner community and the blacks; but also between the temporal categories of past and future. The future is symbolised by the ageing leader who dreams of a reconciled society thus far no-one has managed to see, and the past, embodied by the young rugby captain J. Pienaar, who is “imprisoned” by the fears and resistance of the environment in which he lives.

In the film Mandela seems to be a man alone. The leader is crushed between the pressure from his own people to assert their rights on the one hand, and his former enemies’ fear of reprisals on the other. Even his closest colleagues and his family do not seem to understand his choices. On the other side is the captain of the rugby team. J. Pienaar, who is living through the sensitive moment of transition from a situation in which he represents the Afrikaner community (the people to whom he is linked by tradition) and another in which he represents an entire nation (to which he is linked by the name of a project). The captain’s crisis marks the transition from *what was to what the future can be*. At the start he suffers under the burden of a past laden with isolation and feelings of guilt. Just as the President of the country lives isolated by the fact of being projected into the future, the captain is imprisoned in a past from which he is unable to free himself. In this initial phase past and future appear to be two isolated self-enclosed worlds. They exist in opposition, unable to understand each other.

During the film, the two characters become progressively closer, as do the two communities. In the course of preparations for the World Cup, the rugby team visits the townships to spend a day with local young people. Territory which for years had been considered hostile is now discovered and “experienced”. In the last shot before the coach leaves the township, we see a sign with the wording “one team, one nation”; the territory of the township is no longer enemy territory, but an integral part of the nation. The fusion of the two spaces is also present during the Final which is followed assiduously in the different areas of the city. The images cut from the townships to the houses where the whites live, all now united by in their involvement in the event.
Here the concept of the Rainbow Nation begins to emerge. In the Final we see the joining of the two communities in the stadium. While on the field the team suffers to win the battle for the title, the spectators in the stands and on the terraces start singing a traditional African song to inspire and encourage their team. There are no longer any barriers between the two communities; the dream of the elderly visionary has come true.

4.16 Umlungu

Watching the film, Paul relived the emotions of those days; but the film also triggered a feeling of frustration in him which he put down to the fact that the climate of reconciliation had waned and that Mandela’s message had been – according to him – betrayed by his successors in the African National Congress. After watching the film, we both headed to the rocks to watch the dramatic spectacle of the waves at the point where the oceans meet. In the bay the crashing of the waves formed the white foam which is dashed against the rocks. Paul explained to me that in the Xhosa language the white foam which comes from the sea is called Umlungu. The same word is used to mean a white man. As well as having the same colour as the foam, the white man also came from the sea and imposed his presence with the same violence as a storm at sea. Hence Umlungu is “the white thing that comes from the sea”.

As he explained the meaning of the term Umlungu to me, Paul recalled his feelings when, three years earlier, in the offices of the Cape Tourism Centre, he
was informed that he could no longer work with schools and that his agreement had been cancelled. The reason the agreement had been cancelled was because Paul was white. Following the Black Economic Empowerment programme, blacks and coloureds were to be given precedence to carry out this type of work:

“I simply couldn’t believe my ears, I felt humiliated, and I had been dismissed simply because I was an Afrikaner. I left the Cape Tourism offices feeling quite numb. I wanted to tell my family the news, but I was ashamed to. I’d often been judged by European tourists who came on holiday to Cape Town and who never failed to remind me of all the terrible things we Afrikaners had done to the blacks. I had always put up with this type of humiliation in silence, but this time it was different; I had been discriminated against by people from my own country. It was my country that had decided that there was no longer a place for my people. We were no longer Afrikaners, we were Umlungu, white foam from the sea, and they would have been only too happy to throw us back into the sea as soon as they could”.

Paul had linked his memory of the days surrounding the Rugby Final with his memory of being dismissed. The images of people celebrating in the stadium, the singing of the black spectators who were supporting the national team, the roaring of the waves at Cape Aghullas, and the Cape Tourism Office, were being superimposed in a narrative reconstruction.

**Conclusion.**

Two works by Edward Casey *Getting Back into Place* (1993) and *The Fate of Place* (1997) can be read from a single perspective, through which the author explores the co-existence of space-time dimensions in places. While in the former book, Casey defines place against time, in the second, place is defined against space. The result, Thomas Brockelman notes, is the description of a battle between these two dimensions: “’Time’ in the earlier text and ‘space’ in the later one mark scenes of struggle, since each in turn is taken to be the dominant field within modernity, but, in each case, place turns out to be heterogeneous to this battlefield” (Brockelman 2003:38). In both texts, Casey seems to use the same strategy to explain how place can only be understood in the light of its dual space-time dimension.
In this chapter, the city was defined as a chronotope in order to underscore this dual dimension. Cape Town is not just its urban spaces, it is also the temporality of its inhabitants. Each place in the city could be seen as having meaning only in light of the conjunction of these two dimensions. Identifying this dual dimension is not, however, enough to understand the process of signifying the city. We need to explore how these dimensions interact with each other. The metaphor of the battle that Brockelman uses about this is particularly apt. It references a dynamic process of constant changes, twists of fate, and about faces. The places can reveal hidden temporalities, or it can conceal them so that they show only some aspects and obscure others. The N2 was an anonymous place for Anne until it was discovered as the place of arrival to the city. Paul discovers a place of remorse in Philippi, only returning there after many years. The meaning of a place is not intrinsic to it. It requires an action. Henri Lefebvre stated, in his now classic The Production of Space, that social space is both a "field of action" and "a basis of action" (Lefebvre 1999:191). No space has an intrinsic meaning, given once and for all. The meaning of a place is, in fact, transitory.

The process of signifying the city can be compared to a battle of meanings in which different temporalities cross, merge, emerge, and disappear in the same space. It is a particular, contingent action that reveals one particular temporality instead of another. In these terms, the interviews conducted with the different inhabitants of Cape Town can be understood not merely as a process of data mining, but as a process of provoking this data. The action of urban movement is connected with the particular projection of a memory on a certain space and therefore its attribution of a meaning. As such, we cannot conceive of the chronotope only based on the two dimensions that make it up. We must also include the action that connects them. If, in the literary chronotope, this action is writing, in the ethnographic chronotope, the action may be presence on a territory in a specific moment or (as in this case) urban movement. It is through movement that space-time fusions take on form.

This aspect comes out clearly in Paul's interview in which the township takes on different meanings in relationship to the particular conditions in which the interview takes place. The township is the first place of memory and of the friendship made with Patrick. It is the place of remorse (when we are forced to
escape), the place of the enemy during the years of Apartheid. While it is true that space can change the perception of temporality, the opposite is also true: a temporal change changes the space. For Anne the N2 is the road of hope during her youth and of remorse during her adulthood. This perception is emphasised by the position taken during the interview. Arriving in the city, Anne looked at the city center from the highway; during the interview, she looked at the highway from the city center.

The chronotope does not pertain only to the temporal category of the past. We saw during the interviews how Long Street, for many of the interviewees, took on a meaning of hope. Walley tries to return home; Kay escapes from Worcester. For Ibraim, Long Street is the objective and the place of liberation. It is the utopia that comes true. Perhaps “heterotopia”, the term coined by Foucault (1967), is more apt here. This is a multi-place determined by different desires, hopes, and imaginations which are projected onto it, each in turn. As Foucault says, “where utopias console, heterotopias disturb” (Foucault 1967:14). The city can be understood as an urban chronotope if we consider the transitory, disturbing dynamic through which the space-time dimensions face each other. Or we could use a more elegant metaphor, suggested by Bakhtin’s analysis of the chronotope in writing a novel, in which the writer chooses, changes, and shifts the meanings of his text.
CHAPTER FIVE

And what if?

Summary

In 1993, Alain Resnais adapted the play *Intimate Exchanges* (1983) by Alan Ayckbourn. The result is a double film whose structure is governed primarily by the narrative crossroads: "Smoking/No smoking" (1993). The two films begin the same: in a wealthy estate in Yorkshire, Mrs. Teasdale comes out to the garden. In "Smoking", she lights a cigarette. In "No smoking", she doesn't. From that moment on, the story branches into two different directions. Like a chess game, if you make one move, you go in a certain direction, but if you start again and make another move the direction of the story changes. Continuing along the different bifurcations, we come to six different endings. The film’s basic idea is to show how a little gesture (smoking or not smoking) can change the fate of all of its characters. *Smoking/No Smoking* leaves viewers before an open reading of the text that can be interpreted differently depending on the narrative trajectory chosen. The art critic Daniele Dottorini sums up the structures of Resnais’s work in two words: "Ou bien?" (Or what if?) (Dottorini 2012:1).

Inspired by Resnais’s work, I decided to create a map of the city made of five different maps each for different urban pathways. This lets us observe Cape Town following different representations of the city created by its people. The goal of this project is to trigger doubt in the observer that a representation can replicate the observed object absolutely. Each representation that considers itself all-encompassing will only grasp a small part of the object it seeks to represent.

No scientific and artistic representation or an ethnographic one will ever coincide with the actual object. No text (whether visual or written) will ever coincide with the territory it represents, but will merely transfigure it. Massimo Canevacci writes: “(Any) interpretation is a transfiguration. The figures shift and change from the code of the urban territory, ritual or whatever else to the written or visual text. They shift towards a class of different, altered concepts and codes. The passage from the territory to the map is this flow of transfiguration (Canevacci 2010:140).
Cities have such multiple facets of meaning that they could never be bound in a single, unified language. This is why no map of the city will correspond exactly to its territory. Yet we can envision creating a map of the city that does not limit itself to representing the urban territory through a single viewpoint, adopting instead a multiple, varied viewpoint. In this project, each pathway corresponds to a different vantage point on the city and is divided into seven stops that correspond to the most important moments of the interviews.

The urban stops are represented through three elements:

a) Territorial stages
b) Photographs
c) Texts

The territorial stages are the places where the interviews were conducted. They are intended as mnemonic and emotional areas of the city that encourage the interviewees to take a particular view on the city. For example, during my interviews, I discovered that when Paul observed the city from its townships, he felt a sense of guilt for his time in the ranks of the army during Apartheid. But in the city centre he felt the hardship of being part of an ethnic and political minority. The photographs show the places that evoked a particular memory, thought or reflection in the interviewee. The photographed places show "other" situations, far away both in time and space. This is why they were connected with the texts that tie the interpretation of the photographs to the particular meaning given them by the interviewees. Following these different urban pathways, we can reconstruct the different meanings that Cape Town's inhabitants attribute to its urban places. Nonetheless, the urban stops are not a single, contiguous entity. They are separated by empty spaces that suggest the possibility of creating infinite new pathways and new interpretations.

5.1 Territorial stages.

On June 11, 1954, at the Gallerie du Passage in Paris, a show opened called: 66 *metagraphies influentielles*. On that day the first true psychogeographic Situationist map was presented: *La Guide Psychogeographique de Paris* (1955) by Guy Debord. On
Debord’s map, Paris is a city broken into pieces whose unity is completely lost. We can only recognise in it fragments of the city floating in an empty space.

The observer is invited to follow arrows that connect the space's units: homogenous zones determined based on psychogeographic reliefs. The Situationist view countered the unconscious, dream-like city of the Surrealists with a playful, spontaneous city (Careri 2006:74). While maintaining an inclination to seek the city's remove, the Situationists replaced Surrealist wanderings with a construction of the rules of play. Inspired by Situationist works my decision was to delineate territorial stages on the map that marked the places where my interviews took place in order to explore the meaning they gave to these places. As on Debord’s maps, Cape Town's different places are intended as wandering emotional terrains that mutually attract and repel one another. Each territorial stage signifies a series of the inhabitants’ memories, emotions, and hopes. Resembling a game, the different stages are connected to each other by vectors that show the urban movements made by my interviewees. The observer can follow these pathways or can decide to break the rules of the game and create new, personal interpretive pathways. Recalling The Naked City (1958) by Guy Debord, the city is a psychological landscape built of holes. Entire parts are forgotten or erased to build entire possible cities in the empty space. The model is the archipelago, a series of islands surrounded by an empty sea cut through by wanderings. The empty space that separates the territorial stages underscores the possibility of taking new urban pathways and developing new interpretations. The map is simultaneously an invitation to take the pathways already marked and an invitation to get lost between its different ethnographic landscapes.

The territorial stages do not aim to faithfully represent the city. This is why I decided to depict the different areas of Cape Town by drawings that I made myself. Nelson Goodman writes: “The routes of reference are quite independent from the roots of reference” (Goodman 1968:33). The symbolic transfiguration of the territory is a work of fiction which highlights the distance between the observing subject and the observed subject. In my project as well, the city’s representation does not seek to be realistic; instead, it accepts the "distortion" that comes from the author’s subjective perception.
5.2 Photographs

Photography is the second mode chosen to mark the stops on the urban pathways. On the urban pathways, while my interviewees told me about their experiences, memories, and hopes, I photographed the city’s places. Often the places evoked situations that had already happened or had yet to happen. In all cases, they told of absences. Roland Barthes emphasised how taking a photograph does not mean only representing what appears in the photograph’s frame, but it means, above all, evoking what is not in it: “It is what they add to the photograph and what is nonetheless already there; what is more often remembered about a photograph is that which is actually seen in its presence” (Barthes 1980:67). Inspired by Barthes’ idea, I decided to tell the life stories of my interviewees through the images of empty spaces that evoked situations that were distant in time and space.

An important model for this was the work of the American photographer, Joel Sternfeld’s On This site: Landscape in Memoriam (1997). The photographer describes his project as the “list of places [he] cannot forget because of the tragedies that identify them” (Sternfeld 1997:18). The project is a series of photographs that portray places in which a tragedy happened. The first photograph by Sternfeld is an image of the crab apple tree in Central Park under which Jennifer Levin’s body was found on the morning of August 26, 1986. Sternfeld says he “went to Central Park to find the place behind the Metropolitan Museum of Art where Jennifer Levin had been killed. It was bewildering to find a scene so beautiful…to see the same sunlight pour down indifferently on the earth” (Sternfeld 1997:12). There is a sharp contrast between the calm evoked by Sternfeld’s photography and the trauma of what had happened in the same places.

Like Sternfeld, I also photographed empty spaces that seemed to have no relationship with the events that they evoked in my interviewees. For example, by the lighted sign of Long Street Cafe Anne told me that it was in this place that she had met Daisy and it was there that her life changed. It was then that she decided to change her name and take on a new identity. There was no obvious relationship between the Long Street Cafe sign and her choice. Yet the places of Cape Town held memories that the immediacy of the view could not reveal in itself.
In other cases, my photographs evoked situations that were distant in time and space. For example, on the day I went with Paul to Guguletu, one of the city's largest townships, he lingered over the sight of the steam coming out of a pot and started to tell me about a military operation when he was surrounded and tear gas was shot. In this case, unlike in Sternfeld's photos, the photographed place did not coincide with the place where memory was evoked. Yet, as in Sternfeld's photographs, my photographs spoke of absences, of past situations or ones yet to become, that the city's places could evoke.

5.3 The texts

The photographs, taken with these criteria, show how city's places can evoke quite different thoughts, memories, and emotions in its citizens. The city's places do not have a single meaning, but rather infinite meanings that are attributed by citizens. It is because of this semantic infinitude of the city that I decided to connect the photographs with texts taken from the interviews in order to orient the viewpoint of those who decided to observe my map. The choice to combine texts and photographs was inspired by two sources:

a) The District Six Museum.
b) Sebald's novels

In many ways, the District Six Museum can be considered one of a kind. Other Cape Town museums that focus on historic memory (such as Robben Island) put themselves in an antithetical position to the ideology of Apartheid “by adopting uniform, cohesive historic interpretations” (Coombes 2003:103). For example, the Robben Island's museum highlights the heroism of fighters for liberation. Those who were seen as terrorists during the regime are described and represented as heroes ready to sacrifice their very lives for their country's liberation. In this example, the uniform interpretation that distinguished the propaganda of Apartheid's ideas is replaced by an equally uniform interpretation, inspired by different political values and guided by different ideological tendencies.

In contrast, the District Six Museum replaces Apartheid's monologic perspective with a dizzying multitude of different voices. The museum doesn't speak through a single authorial voice. It speaks through the different voices of the district's ex-
residents. The homogenous, internally cohesive, Apartheid ideology is replaced by the heterogeneous collection of its citizens' thoughts, reflections, doubts, and hopes. We can follow the museum's trajectory only by taking on the different viewpoints, thoughts, and memories of the ex residents reconstructed through a series of installations, objects, and writings spread throughout the museum. Visiting the District Six Museum, visitors are invited to lose themselves amidst the viewpoints of the district's ex-residents and to take on a multiple, differentiated viewpoint.

In the District Six Museum, thoughts, poetry and reflections of its ex-residents are shown to visitors in various installations, and are handwritten directly by their authors. Since the museum’s opening (in December 2000) cloths have been exhibited with over six thousand signatures and writings by the residents. “The texts are witty, poignant, or simply a state of being” (Coombes 2003:112).

For example:
“Happy days
District six
Living was cheap
Life precious
Now in Hannover Park
Living’s expensive and
Life is cheap
29 De Korte Straat
Distrik Ses
Ronnie Cloete.”

The way of presenting the writings has the result of forming a direct relationship between the museum visitors and the writings. Coombes writes, “By so doing, they actively reconstruct District Six” (Coombes 2003:104). The action of writing by the ex residents of District Six has been compared to De Certeau's walkers in The Practice of Everyday Life “who reclaim the city space simply by walking through it in ways that disrupt the intended logic of the urban planners”. (Coombes 2003:104) Likewise, showing the texts extrapolated from the interviews with the people of Cape Town, I sought to establish a connection between the
map's observers and my interviewees. The city could be observed through the meanings attributed to it by its inhabitants.

B) Sebald called himself a bricoleur. His works come out of the juxtaposition and overlapping of images and writings from different sources. In some cases, he produced the texts and images himself, “In other cases, he borrowed the works of other artists and just composed the two languages” (Mc Culloh 2003:23). For example, in his prose fiction *Schwindel Gefhulle*, the texts are from greats of literature like Franz Kafka, H.M.B. Stendhal, and Vladimir Nabokov, and visual artists like Ernst Herbeck and literary visual artists like Konrad Bayer. In this juxtaposition of images, the two communicative forms prove hybrid and able to borrow fragments of communication from each other. Mark Anderson noted how Sebald’s written texts aspired to take on a visual form and his photographs were intended as a form of writing.

Sebald noted himself that photography inspired his texts, “While writing, you see ways of departing from the images or entering into them to tell your story, to use them instead of a textual passage” (Scholz 2000:51). He said in an interview, “Facts are troublesome. The idea is to make it seem factual, though some of it might be invented” (Sebald in Scholz 2000:64). In other words, photography seems to serve as an anchor that connects the pursuit of the past to factualness. Harris notes that Sebald includes visual images in his work “not because they underscore the written narrative but because they present the reader with that which the text alone cannot” (Scholz 2000:64).

In my map too, the combination between photography and text serves to anchor viewers to a particular meaning without forcing them into a single type of interpretation. By juxtaposing the writings and Cape Town's places, I can show the meaning that the places took on for the interviewee. However, the juxtaposition of the visual and written texts does not aim to constrain observers to a single interpretive process rather it is only to orient them in the exploration of the city.

By combining the three constituent elements of the map, the map drawings, photographs and written texts, I’m seeking to create a multi perspectival
representation of the city. Cape Town's multi-map is a made up of different forms of communication whose interaction creates a hybrid, multi-dimensional representative form. The drawn maps, the written text and the visual images are not meant here as an illustrative support for each other, but as complementary, integral parts of one expressive, interpretive flow. In this sense, the representation of Cape Town is multiple, both because the city is told through different voices and because it is also represented through different languages. The combination of different languages helps to reveal the object's multi-dimensional nature. The map is multiple both in the object to which it refers and in the method that it uses.
Map number 1 Anne

1) N2
2) Long Street
3) Harbour
4) Loop Street
5) Pollsmor
6) Strand Street
7) Sea Point
Against the Flow.

We were going along the road from the airport to the city. I saw that the cars were all coming in the opposite direction to us.

I thought: this car is like me, I’m going in the opposite direction too! Today I think my life has always gone in the opposite direction; that this is my destiny and I’ve stayed that way.
A Meeting with Fate.

I was sitting at a table, it was evening and I had just come back from work. A very pretty girl with a black eye caught my eye. She was sitting near me and I spoke to her. I felt a strange sensation inside me as we were approaching the club which told me it would be better not to go there, however, another part of me wanted to go, so I decided to carry on.
The Harbour
The Grey Area.

When we arrived at the club which was near the port I sat at a table and waited for my friend’s performance to begin. While I was waiting I felt that the men in the club were staring at me, almost all of whom were foreigners. Part of me understood that that club was “different”, but another part of me was in denial. Maybe I was being hypocritical with myself and didn’t want to admit I found that situation terribly exciting.
Loop Street
The first time

I remember that my first client was an ugly man: a white man, he was huge, old, bald and repulsive. That evening he took me from behind, I felt his flabby stomach against me while he was screwing me and felt great pleasure in having punished myself in this way, and he even smelt revolting.
Pollsmor
In prison I came into contact with people from very unusual backgrounds. Most were coloureds, but there were also a lot of blacks and three whites including me. In prison the colour of your skin doesn’t count for much, because you form new types of affiliations and bonds.
Strand Street
Paradise

I couldn’t believe it was true. I’d gone from prison to a five star hotel, but my life was like that. It was fate: I went from hell to paradise, while the others were condemned to their monotonous and repetitive existence. When I walked into the hotel I was sure my life would change forever, that I would never end up in that situation again. Finally, I was free; no-one could stop me now.
Sea Point
Nightmare in Sea Point

I had moved to Sea Point and was sharing a house there with a girl who worked with me at the club. One evening I found out there was a guy who would give you crack on credit and you didn’t have to pay him immediately. After giving me crack for a week he told that I’d have to pay him. I told him I didn’t have the money and he told me I’d have to pay in any case.

Then he put his hand between my legs and started removing my clothes. I froze, I wasn’t able to move. There was nothing I could do, because it was true, I had to give him something and he was taking it. That man did whatever he wanted with my body. My head was somewhere else and it was as if I was looking on from the outside, and as if he was doing that thing to someone else.
Map number 2 Ibraim

1) Somali community (Khayelitsha)

2) Langa shop

3) Telephone (Green Point)

4) Station

5) Guguletu

6) Long Street

7) Ibraim room (Woodstock)
Khayelitsha
Like home

Sometimes I come here and it feels like I’m in Somalia. I don’t do anything in particular; I just walk around, listen to the people or take in the smells. I can spend the whole morning like that, strolling about and drifting around. It’s a cheap way of “going back home”; in fact, it’s the only way, as I don’t have a passport.
Langa
The incident

I had found work in a shop run by a Somali guy. One day two South Africans came in to buy a top-up for their mobile. You could tell they were bad news, another two of their friends were waiting outside. They started asking question, asking us where we came from and making comments about the fact that some Somalis had been attacked and that we should be careful.

My friend cut them short and told them that if they wanted to buy the top-up, that was fine, but he wasn’t interested in talking about those things. They left, but came back in a few minutes later. One of the men pulled out a pistol, but my friend was standing near him and managed to grab hold of it, took out his own pistol and killed both of them. I surveyed the scene, paralyzed with fear, I couldn’t speak and I was shaking. One night I was walking home from the shop when the two men who were with the two who were killed came up to me and told me: “you’re on the agenda”.

Green Point
One evening I went to phone my mother to tell her that I’d decided to leave Pretoria and that I would soon be going to Cape Town. I was happy because I knew that I was taking a load off my mind. I neither could nor wanted to tell my mother everything, so as not to worry her, but she seemed pleased with my decision. I had just hung up and was heading home again when a car drew up next to me. Inside were the two men who had come up to me the time before, along with another four. They dragged me into the car and headed for a house in the township. There they started hitting me and insulting me, they stripped me and took turns to rape me repeatedly. At that moment I was hoping they were going to hit me on the head and kill me. I hoped it was all going to come to an end; it went on for a long time, like it was never going to end.
Station
This time for Cape Town.

If I had been myself none of this would have happened, I wouldn’t have been in that township in Pretoria, I wouldn’t have been in that shop and none of what happened would have happened to me. I needed to change my life, to be myself. When they discharged me from hospital, I waited a few days and then set out again, this time for Cape Town.
Guguletu
When I finally arrived in Cape Town the only contact I had was the name of a Somali man who lived in Langa. He gave me a warm welcome; he gave me a job in a shop and somewhere to live. I was financially secure. It was the first time since I had left Somalia that I didn’t need to worry about anything in material terms any more. I could hardly believe it. I had my salary, I had my own house, and I was protected and no longer needed to fear anything. It was at this very time that I started to feel a strange sense of malaise, a deep-seated sense of unease.

At first, I didn’t understand what it was. I told myself: you have everything; what more do you want? But perhaps the very fact of having everything, of no longer having the pressing need to earn money or to have to find a place to sleep, was making me reflect on the other aspects of my life. I felt like I was in prison because I couldn’t show myself to be the person I was. I was still pretending and play-acting; I couldn’t say openly that I was gay, because the community wouldn’t have tolerated it.
Long Street
Stop acting

Here things have changed completely. I’ve started dressing and speaking as I like. Acting and pretending are what had characterized my whole life. I always had to play-act with my family, with the community, with everyone and I got it down to a fine art. When I started working here, I discovered another part of myself. It was like I was hiding all over again.
Woodstock
Coming to live here on my own completely changed my life. Having a flat in town in expensive, but it’s definitely worth every penny. When I lived in Langa I was always under supervision to some extent. Everyone knew what you were doing, and when, your habits, everything. Here, you might not even know your neighbours.

People don’t care who you are. Living here I’ve started to invent another life for myself without any pressure from those around me. I was able to decide who I was, how to dress, who to see, everything I wanted.
Map number 3 Kay

1) Long Street Caffe’ (Upper Long Street)
2) Tatoo shop (Lower Long Street)
3) San remo Hostel (Gardens)
4) Kay house (Sea Point)
5) Call center office (Strand Street)
6) Restaurant (Camps Bay)
Upper Long Street
On Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays we used to go the bars and clubs on Long Street, sometimes to the Zulu Bar, sometimes to the Jo’ burg, and other times to the Snap. Long Street was different then; there wasn’t all this crime; you used to find young guys asking for money or someone who’d mug you out on the street, but once you were inside the bar or club you didn’t have any problems. Now everything has changed and the gangsters have bought the bars and clubs and the pushers and thieves are on the inside.
Lower Long Street
I’d decided to get a tattoo and I felt the Nike slogan’s “Just do it” was the best choice. Things were going well in my life at the time; I used to go out with my group of friends and everything was becoming easier. One afternoon I was walking past here and without a second thought I went in and had my tattoo done. I’ve never regretted it ever. Now I think about it this slogan means a lot in my life, in the sense that it wasn’t just a rush of blood to the head, or rather my life has been a series of rushes of blood to the head, but at least I’ve always been consistent.
San Remo Hotel
(Gardens)
It was the cheapest place in the city and when I arrived here it was the only place I could afford. Most of the clients at the San Remo are pushers and live there on a regular basis. I was the only coloured girl there and know that a lot of people were asking themselves if I was a spy. They found out I wasn’t a spy one night when the police kicked my door in to find out whether I had any drugs on me. I remember I wasn’t asleep, but was in bed hugging a pillow. I couldn’t get to sleep because I was afraid someone could come in and rape me.
Sea Point
For me going to Sea Point was a symbolic victory. When I was little my father used to take us to Sea Point which was considered to be one of the most beautiful places in the city where only rich white people could live. We used to walk on the grass in front of the promenade which faces the sea and look at the houses of the rich white people who used to live there. When I finally arrived in Sea Point to view the house I wanted to rent, I couldn’t believe that I could go to live there. They told me the price and I realized that I could afford it with what I was earning working for Lufthansa.
Strand Street
I remember finding the environment very different from when I used to work as a chambermaid in Worcester where I was the first coloured girl ever to be given a job there. Many white customers refused to be served by me, but not openly, because the anti-discrimination laws introduced after the A.N.C. victory punished this type of behaviour. I felt tired of this. I had friends, but I felt different from the others and I don’t know why. At Lufthansa there were young people from all over. There were whites too, but they were different from the people in Worcester they were more open-minded and more used to being with people from other racial backgrounds.
Camps Bay
I felt fantastic

One night we came here and there was a white waitress serving the tables. When I saw her I felt a sense of triumph. I’d spent many years of my life listening to white customers’ protests and complaints, often while keeping a forced smile on my face. Now I was on the other side of the fence. I went into the restaurant; she greeted me and I didn’t reply and put my arm around my partner: it felt fantastic.
Map number 4 Paul

1) Philippi

2) Cross road (Philippi/Nyanga)

3) Mama Africa (Long Street)

4) Butcher (Guguletu)

5) Langa

6) Cape Tourism office (Market Street)
Philippi
The Enemy

The first thing I remember was the unfamiliar smell when you arrived; it was a strong smell of meat roasting in the sun. The sight of those shacks built from pieces of sheet metal and wood and bits of plastic, and the sight of those people, some of whom were looking at me with curiosity, others with hatred, were changing my life. For them I was the incarnation of the enemy, walking in as if it were the most natural thing on earth, after the war had finished.
Cross Road
Miracles.

We were passing by here on the way back from Patrick’s house. It was about 5 in the evening and still light. I saw a man coming up to the bus with a hat and a jacket who was staring at me. I realized we were in trouble. He pulled out a pistol and fired. The window exploded and I pressed the accelerator and started racing like a lunatic through the streets of the township.

Next to me was a young guy I had recently taken on who was very grateful to me and looked upon me as an older brother. He looked at me and said: “Pieter we are here”.
Mama Africa
(Long Street)
Glad he died.

A short time later, the man who shot at me was killed by the police while trying to escape from a police car in which he was being transferred. I received news of the man’s death while I was in Mama Africa with two tourists. I felt a sort of relief and thought that was the right thing. I felt like I had been freed, but then this sensation left me feeling ill at ease. There were plenty of people in the townships who were willing to kill, and not only there. I don’t know why that guy from the township was like that, or perhaps I did know why, but I was only going there to help them and he wanted to kill me.

In front of Mama Africa there was a tramp asking for money, which is often the case. I pulled out a 50 Rand note and gave it to him. He looked at me in amazement and started to say, “Thank you brother, thank you brother”. I wasn’t a racist either, even if I was glad a man had died.
Guguletu
At that time we were all butchers, every one of us, either directly or indirectly. Butchers of people and not animals, so whoever tells you he wasn’t a butcher is telling you lies. Fighting in a war means protecting your own nation, your own people. In those years the blacks were the enemy and were called terrorists on television, at school, in places where people socialized. Where I was born I’d never seen a black man in the flesh. I’d seen pictures on TV and those pictures often spoke of the violence they were perpetrating against our nation.
Market Street
Umlungu

I just couldn’t believe my ears, I felt humiliated, and I had been dismissed simply because I was an Afrikaner. I left the Cape Tourism offices feeling quite numb. I wanted to tell my family the news, but I was ashamed to. I’d often been judged by European tourists who came on holiday to Cape Town and who never failed to remind me of all the terrible things we Afrikaners had done to the blacks.

I had always put up with this type of humiliation in silence but this time it was different, I had been discriminated against by people from my own country. It was my country that had decided that there was no longer a place for my people. We were no longer Afrikaners, we were Umlungu, white foam from the sea, and they would have been only too happy to throw us back into the sea as soon as they could.
Map number 5 Xolewa

1) Khayelitsha

2) Senator Park (Long Street)

3) Queen Victoria Street

4) Camps Bay

5) Khayelitsha (boyfriend shack)

6) UCT
Khayelitsha
A Township girl

Living between Cape Town and Kayelitsha isn’t easy; it’s like having a double identity, a double life. In Kayelitsha they speak Xhosa, here they speak English; in Kayelitsha people think in a different way; it’s like being on another planet. I’m forced to be two things: a township girl and a young woman about town.
Senator Park
(Long Street)
When I left my aunt’s house and came here it was a windy day; the dust was rising from the unsurfaced streets of the township. I was happy. I knew I was starting a new period in my life and for the first time I felt I had my life under control.

Every time the blacks arrive in a place the whites start to take flight, it’s what they’ve always done and they did it at Senator Park, too. I lived with my aunt in a small flat on the ninth floor. I remember how difficult it was living in close proximity to that woman. When I used to live in the Eastern Cape and the atmosphere got heavy at home, I could go out into the street. Here, in town, that wasn’t possible, that woman wouldn’t allow me to go out and kept me shut inside those four walls.

Sometimes the house would be clean; everything had been washed and ironed and I was having a nap when she would wake me up and make me keep working, even if there was no need. I remember on one occasion the clothes were folded and I unfolded them, then refolded them just so I would look busy and wouldn’t have to put up with that woman’s screaming.
Queen Victoria Street
The Sanctuary.

I created a sanctuary for myself in the city where I could be alone with myself and think about my situation. This was the garden. I used to come here in the afternoons and spend my days there. I think it was here that I invented myself; here I finally became hard. At Senator Park my aunt was always on top of me and harassing me; she didn’t give me room to think.

When I came here everything seemed easy. My thoughts became clean and clear, there was no noise to disturb me. I used to look at the trees and think that they alone were perfect; nature was perfect whereas people were evil and false. The trees weren’t malicious like people; they had beautiful colours and made a gentle sound when it was windy. On the way back to Senator Park from the garden, I would start to hear the sound of people and cars and that meant I was on my way back to hell.
Khayelitsha
(Xolewa boyfriend shack)
Shack and Love.

I know it’s horrible to say it, but one of my fondest memories is of a telephone call to tell me that my stepfather had died. I was in my boyfriend’s shack and we were still sleeping. The phone was ringing, but I didn’t answer the first time, the second time I answered and I was still half asleep. I heard my mother’s voice, she was crying and I was worried. She told me that man had been shot dead in Pretoria. When I was little, I hoped he would die so I could become close to my mother again, but now I was with my boyfriend I didn’t need her any more. I had a man and she didn’t have one anymore. When I hung up my boyfriend asked me what had happened, I didn’t tell him anything and we made love. I was happy and I felt free.
Camps Bay
The colour of your skin.

It was my birthday and my boyfriend had saved to be able to buy a ticket from Cape Town to Mossel Bay. In the evening we’d decided to go to a restaurant so we could celebrate. We went to the seafront, which looks very like where we are now and chose a restaurant. We were just on our way in when a white waitress stopped us from going any further, telling us that the restaurant was for Members Only. We went to a second restaurant: same thing, a guy told us that it was Members Only. The same thing happened at the third. These places have the Right of Admission and there’s nothing you can do if they decide they don’t want to let you in. No-one will admit that the reason for the refusal is the colour of your skin.
U.C.T.
Revenge at UCT

My boyfriend was studying engineering and was beginning to move up the social ladder and I didn’t want to remain in the township forever, commuting between the call centre and Kayelitsha. I couldn’t afford to go to university, but I worked hard I could have studied at the U.C.T. to get a qualification. I worked for more than a year and I’d walk past it with my boyfriend and look at it. For me that place represented an escape from the life I’d had so far. If they accepted me I’d have got my own back on my mother, my aunt and everyone else who wanted things to turn out badly for me. I didn’t think like my mother who looked for a man to latch onto in order to survive, I wanted to do it on my own.
Conclusion

This work can be interpreted as a round-trip journey between the city’s map and territory. During this journey I have attempted to explore the nebulous area that separates the representation from the represented object. The beginning of my fieldwork was defined by a refusal to use any map (or written or visual representation) of the city to orient me in it. I thought that any pre-determined outline, pre-constituted trajectory would over-determine my movements. I had already been to Cape Town and I had read a lot about the city and the country’s history. Rather than considering this as an advantage, I saw it as an obstacle to my fieldwork. I wanted to discover Cape Town through a non-habituated viewpoint, or to use the terminology of Russian formalists: engage in a process of “making strange”. I planned to observe Cape Town as if for the first time so as to establish perception freed from habit. I also realised the distance separating the representation of Cape Town and its territory. I started from the assumption that every representation of an object (and of the city in particular) does not coincide with the object itself, but is only its symbolic transfiguration. Each representation is defined by the reason, emotion, reflections, and expressions of the person who constructed it. Reading an article in a newspaper, we might think that the author’s description is the recounted event, that the news coincides with the fact; or, looking at a photograph of an urban panorama, we could mistake the picture for the city. Yet, doing so, we are confusing two different communication levels. The recounted event will always be different from the news, just as the urban panorama will never coincide with its visual representation. Every description of Cape Town that I had read before, including those that tried to give an objective representation, were shaped by the perspective of the scholar and his or her political orientation, intellectual training, and private history, such as encounters and particular episodes that marked his or her life.

At the start of my research, I ingenuously thought I could avoid falling into the trap of mixing up the map and the territory, in which I considered other authors to have fallen. I decided not to consider the city’s descriptions and delve directly into the urban territory. I let myself go to the city, letting myself be guided only by the attractions and repulsions that the city’s different places aroused in me. I thought that direct contact unmediated by the urban territory, would let me discover it its innermost parts. I thought that by stripping away all conditioning, I could grasp
the city’s essence. I had yet to understand that the rejection of previous representations would not lead me to a true understanding of the city. I later discovered that there is not one all-encompassing viewpoint. Through my rejection of previous representations I could only replace these with a new representation (mine) that would be just as limited and partial. Direct contact with the territory did not meet my initial expectations. However, this experience suggested a new type of observation that I hadn’t considered before. Instead of relying on an intimate interpretation of the city -with a Bergsonian approach in which it is the spirit to grasp the essence of the object- I would overlap my viewpoint with that of the city’s inhabitants. I could build a map of Cape Town made up of the different viewpoints that crossed and overlapped with one another. In this way, I felt I had grasped the spirit of Bateson’s conclusions when he stated that what separated the map from the territory was differences. Discovering that every representation, including my own, cannot be considered as absolute, created an epistemological opening in which every viewpoint and representation is worthy of value. The response was adopting a multiple, decentralised viewpoint, a multi-perspectival viewpoint.

One might object that all anthropological research is inherently multi-perspectival. No ethnographic work is made up only of one voice (that of the author). Every ethnographic study is necessarily polyphonic, as it draws on the contributions of interviewees and other authors in order to define a description or support (or undermine) a working hypothesis or theory. The difference that separates the methodology from those that others have used is in the emphasis placed on the voices of the interviewees compared to that of the author and the theoretical construction used. In other words, the voices of the interviewees, expressed through their life stories, are not subservient to the validation of the underlying theory. They are not intended as subsidiary, complementary material, but as primary material from which to construct a descriptive and interpretative framework.

The total absorption of life stories within a pre-set conceptual framework impoverishes human experience in its intrinsic complexity. The categorisation of lived experiences within the non-temporal framework of abstract conceptualisation means making them lifeless. I have noted how many studies about the post-Apartheid era have had a deterministic, historicising tendency in
which memories and life stories (much used) are seen as material supporting different general interpretations. Nonetheless, there are significant exceptions, in which the memories are the primary material that can problematise established historical truths. The monumental collection of life stories of the T.R.C. and the exhibitions of ex residents of District Six in the District Six Museum are apt examples.

Taking inspiration from these approaches, I tried to give a description of Cape Town without forcing the voices of its people inside a particular preset interpretation. In this sense, my description of the city is close to the precepts of post-modern anthropology and its polyphonic orientation. Tyler noted that post-modern ethnography does not presuppose any harmony between the logical conceptual order of the text and the order of things, and attempts to eliminate the subject-object connection rejecting the possibility that they can be separated or of the dominance of one over the other in the form of a text as the mirror of thought.

“Post-modern ethnography denies the illusion of a self-perfecting discourse. No corrective movements from text to object and back again in the manner of empiricism, and no supplemental self-reflexive movements from flawed to scatheless transcendent mark its course. Each text retains a separate sense within the discourse without being subordinated to a grand evolutionary myth of ultimate perfectibility” (Tyler 1984:138). And “(...) the scientific illusion of reality [is not] congruent with the reality of fantasy in the fantasy reality of the post-modern world. Postmodern ethnography (...) does not move toward abstraction, away from life, but back to experience” (Tyler 1984:134)

I understood this quote of Tyler’s as an invitation to get lost in the city. Not taking the text as a mirror of the thought entails letting go of compulsive control of every fact that emerges from the city. Rather than thinking about the city, we can let ourselves be thought by it, and give in to the voices that emerge from it, even if in an unharmonious and contradictory way. Urban disorientation was taken as an epistemological premise for the discovery of the city’s polyphony. This project went through three separate phases:
1) Solitary exploration and establishing dialogue with the urban territory.
2) Meeting informants and the progressive familiarisation with the city.
3) Data montage.

The first research phase was the solitary exploration of the city in the fieldwork period from March 2011 to May 2011. It was described partly in the introduction and partly in the first chapter (when I talk about the preparations for the Champions League final). I consider this phase to be of fundamental importance as I learned to establish a dialogue first with Long Street and then with the city’s different places. Wandering around Cape Town by myself, I discovered that urban movement generated an introspective process in me. In the introduction, we see how looking at the E billboard sparked memories and feelings in me, as did the solitary walks on Lower Long Street. These experiences made me understand that the city was not only made up of its urban spaces; it was also made up of my temporality and that of its inhabitants. Cape Town contained the memories of people and they were contained in its buildings, streets, squares, and nightclubs. I discovered Cape Town as an urban chronotope. Finding myself isolated in the city let me refine my viewpoint in an unexpected way. While my original goal to have a direct, uncontaminated perception of the city proved an epistemological wrong turn, it was through this error that I discovered the path to observe the city through a multi-perspective viewpoint that aimed to reveal the temporalities contained within the city’s spaces. The city could be seen as a mirror or, more precisely, prism (Bauman 2001) which reflected, in a multiple and differentiated way, the temporalities and inner worlds of its inhabitants.

The preliminary phase was decisive for the next one which involved meeting the interviewees. This phase can be divided into two sub-phases: the first for random encounters and the second for full-fledged interviews. The first part of my project, though it was conducted mainly in a solitary way, did include some encounters. They should be placed within the framework of the preliminary observations and did not follow a systematic, organised methodology. They were the inspirations needed to start my background research. In this project I often use the metaphor of "voice" to describe the life stories of my interviewees. Keeping with that metaphor, these scraps of interviews can be considered as voices of a chorus that make up the background and are different from the voices of the soloists in the front row.
An example of these encounters is that with Shirley (Chapter 1). During a walk on Long Street, she explained to me that it was when she was still a girl that she had started to buy books that were "hard to find during the Apartheid years" that inspired her to embrace the revolutionary cause. This helped me understand how, during Apartheid, Long Street could also take on meanings that did not coincide with what the regime's planners had intended for it. Another meeting of this type was with Jane who worked as a prostitute. I understood through her that for many people Long Street was a place of recreation or a place of work. For some people, it was everything. She lived on Long Street and knew it thoroughly. Her vision of the world was constructed on that street.

It was during the Champions League final episode that I understood how to push my gaze deeper and start to conduct my interviews systematically. The first interview was with Louis. There are many reasons I decided to interview him. With him a process of identification started that let me move my solitary observation to a co-observation of the city because like me, but for different reasons, Louis was in a situation of marginality in the city. I was on the outside as a foreigner and without contacts. He was so because he had distanced himself from his original environment. This dimension of strangeness for both of us proved a significant opportunity to observe the city and to narrate it. In his essay "The Storyteller: Observations on the works of Nikolai Leskov" (1936), Walter Benjamin notes how the distance from the object under observation is of fundamental importance to the narrator: "Viewed from a certain distance, the great, simple outlines which define the storyteller stand out in him, or rather, they become visible in him, just as in a rock a human head or an animal's body may appear to an observer at the proper distance and angle of vision" (1936:143). Like a narrator of the city, Louis used his "distance" and "marginality" to understand the city. This aspect spurred me to two considerations. The first was just epistemological, having to do with the perception of the urban spaces. The second was more political and had to do with my role in relations to the interviewees. With Louis I discovered that the defamiliarised viewpoint was not the exclusive province of a foreigner or anthropologist working on observing the city. The inhabitants of a city could also have a fresh viewpoint on the city by exploring it, guided by their memories. Walking with Louis, I discovered that he "distorted" his habitual perception of Long Street that took on the features of a mother and a stepmother in relationship to the memories of his life.
The second aspect had to do with the opportunity that it gave me to give a voice to those who would not have had one otherwise. Louis could be considered like a poet or an artist without a pen or other means for expressing himself. I could give voice to his voice through my role as a student who was writing. This political role did not have an instrumental use for the life stories of my interviews. Rather it mainly reflected a tendency to express what would have otherwise been left unexpressed. In Chapter 4, I describe my interviewees as novelists who reconstructed their stories. My role in this case was limited to arranging these stories within the chronotopic categories identified by Backhtin (such as meeting, the street, metamorphosis). Like an orchestra conductor, or perhaps a DJ, I gave more or less space to the different voices of my interviewees who appeared and disappeared throughout the text. The data montage through which I intended to present the voices of my interviewees is the last phase of my work.

After spending several months living on and around Long Street I decided that I had to distance myself from it. This decision to take my distance was not due to any feeling of disaffection vis-à-vis my field of work, but on the contrary, to a desire to be able to get closer to it again at a later date. Total immersion in the life of Long Street had made it seem all too familiar to my eyes, and it was this very familiarity which was starting to interfere with my interpretation of it.

During the months I spent on Long Street I had learnt how to socialise with many of its regulars, the people who worked in its bars and clubs and those who lived there. I had got to know its restaurants where I had eaten my meals and spent hours observing the lives of the customers, the night clubs where I had discovered new forms of language, the bars in which I had passed a lot of time chatting with the staff, deliberating and sometimes writing notes over a coffee. After so many months spent in the field walking along Long Street, I associated every part of the street with an event, a meeting or a simple thought or observation. Even places that looked anonymous, such as a bus-stop or a telephone kiosk were linked to a memory or a wish (either my own or relating to one of my interviewees). Sometimes the same building (as in the case of Senator Park) had been “experienced” by my interviewees in different ways and came to represent the point of intersection for life stories which were very different in themselves.
Long Street ended up different; my interviewees’ memories had become mine too; places eventually became familiar to me too, and I belonged to them. But it was this very sense of belonging and the acquisition of this type of familiarity which contributed to my decision to take my distance.

In an interview about the film “Roma” (1972), Federico Fellini revealed that he had become fascinated with the EUR neighbourhood where he was to shoot a significant part of his film. He explained that in order to “understand” it better he decided to go and live in the centre of the ancient city of Rome (located on the opposite side of town). Through this paradox the director explained that “great attraction” presupposed the necessity for “distance” in one’s point of view. Fellini’s assertion that it was necessary to adopt a “distant point of view” can be cross-referenced to Crapanzano’s reflection on the complementary nature of the familiar and the distant in the ethnographic viewpoint. Crapanzano explains how the ethnographer has to work in an ambiguous dimension which is suspended between familiarity with what he knows and the otherness of the unknown. Like Hermes, the messenger of the gods, the ethnographer is suspended between two worlds: that of the familiar and that of otherness. Indeed, the hermeneutic activity consists in the translation of the “foreign” world into the “familiar” and the observation of the arcs revealed through a “distant” viewpoint. In other words, the skill of the ethnographer lies in making the foreign familiar and the familiar distant.

It had taken me a long time to become familiar with Long Street and now I had to move in the opposite direction and acquire a “new distance”. So I decided to go and live in Eastern Rondebosch, a neighbourhood in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town. In many respects Eastern Rondebosch is the antithesis of Long Street in terms of demographics, relationships between people and the relationships between people and places in the city. Whereas Long Street was characterised by the social, economic and racial heterogeneity of the people who frequented it, Rondebosch was inhabited almost exclusively by Cape Town’s white upper class. Doctors, professionals and entrepreneurs of Afrikaner or British origin live in its villas with private swimming pools and gardens which are tended by black gardeners on a daily basis. The houses are protected by high-voltage fences and guard dogs in addition to the constant private security patrols. The rare coloured people who live in this area are those men and women who are employed as
carers, domestics, gardeners and builders. In most cases they spend the day here and then return to their own neighbourhoods once their work is done. In some instances carers and domestics may live permanently with their employers, but this is very much the exception and these people only live in this neighbourhood because of the type of work they are required to do. Anna, a Xhosa woman who has worked for over twenty years as a domestic for an Afrikaner family, explained to me that in spite of the fact that she has lived here for so long, she still considers the Eastern Cape her home; this is where she comes from and where “my people live”.

The second criterion which distinguishes Rondebosch from Long Street concerns the type of relationship between people, above all between those of different races. In the city-centre street these are characterised by their transient and unplanned nature, while in Rondebosch they are governed by a structure which is both rigid and rational which sets down specific roles and hierarchies. Long Street, particularly the upper part, allows for fortuitous encounters to take place at a table in a bar, on the dance floor in a disco or simply walking along the street with people from different backgrounds.

To a large extent living on Long Street means giving up a stable and definitive sense of belonging; one’s own sense of identity is constantly “called into question” by meeting various examples of “otherness”. Going into the Jo’burg on a Friday night, and mixing with its almost exclusively black clientele, I had to take the fact that I was white into consideration; in the bars with billiard and pool halls located at the start of Upper Long Street which are largely frequented by the homeless, I was probably the one with the most money to spend of all the customers there; in the Zula Bar I was a tourist; while in the Picking Bar I was heterosexual. In contrast, in Rondebosch what prevails is the stability of relationships that are regulated by familiarity between neighbours, the hierarchy that establishes different roles and responsibilities, and the factor of residency which demarcates the relationship between those who live there and mere visitors. Walking along the neighbourhood’s tree-lined streets one day when I had decided to go home a different way and had lost my way, I was first followed and then stopped by security guards who had become suspicious as they had seen me wandering around without any obvious goal.
The private security guards wanted to know who I was, where I was headed and who I was looking for, and did not seem convinced by the fact that I was simply observing the neighbourhood. Whereas in Long Street getting lost in the urban territory was not only possible, but also desirable, in Rondebosch getting lost meant trespassing on the undisturbed stability of daily life. Drifting around without a specific aim eluded the functionalist vision of those responsible for maintaining public order and security, according to whom the fact of walking along observing the territory could have only one “practical” value: that of heading towards a given location with intent to do something specific or commit a specific crime.

Rondebosch with its apparent homogeneity, its order, and its predictability yielded up Long Street, which with its heterogeneity, multi-voiced nature and unpredictability embodied its antithesis. In Rondebosch I started to write and to put together the excerpts of life stories and images of the city which I had gathered over the previous months. I consider the activity of writing and of “montage” not as something which follows from observation, but as a fundamental part of observation. Putting together the data, reflecting on it, discovering “new juxtapositions” between the life stories I had listened to and the places I had visited, could not be considered merely a stylistic exercise, it was an integral part of the hermeneutic activity. I had observed Long Street through the multiplicity of its voices. It appeared to me to be like a mosaic in which countless life-paths intersect. Now I had to find an explanatory synthesis which was capable of giving homogeneous form to such heterogeneity. After going through the city in such a random way and having observed it from many different points of view, after having gathered the fragments of the city, I now had to put all these fragments together in a specific order.

Taking my distance from Long Street and observing it from Rondebosch meant acknowledging its otherness and subjectivity. By living there, my representation of the street was starting to coincide with it. Excessive familiarity was giving me the illusion that I could completely possess it. I was confusing the map with the territory. Only by taking my distance, only by ‘betraying’ Long Street with its antithesis “Rondebosch”, would I be able to recognise its “otherness” once more. After starting the “montage” of my data, I became aware that distancing myself from Long Street was not yet enough to be able to understand it. By observing the
images of the city I found an analogy, exalted a specific detail or decided to omit something. The multiple and transient meanings of Long Street are taking form at a writing desk on the opposite side of the city. Long Street is “dying” and “being reborn” in Rondebosch, its “urban antithesis”.

Massimo Canevacci made an interesting analogy between Walter Benjamin’s literary montage and Gregory Bateson’s ethnographic montage. For Benjamin, the discovery of the city follows two phases: the first is that of the flaneurs’ urban movement, wandering in the city without an exact direction, open to the different stimuli it presents to them. These stimuli could include the sight of a building, a meeting with a homeless person, or a cutting from a newspaper. The second phase involves organising these fragments of the city. Benjamin, shut in the library in Paris (his magical circle), composed and recomposed, giving shape to the city through his personal translation, the attribution of a new meaning (the reawakening). In a note on Passegen-Werk he wrote: “The method of this work: literary montage” (1982:595). Likewise, for Gregory Bateson, the method did not express itself as much in the field as in what he did with the data at his desk. “How to string together data is what I mean for interpretations” (1988:264). In this case, through montage, the data take on a their ethnographic meaning. According to Canevacci, the poetics and politics of ethnography “is concentrated in the way in which the data is transcribed on the field” (Canevacci 1996:128). Here, the data montage converged with writing the dissertation and creating the city map. The montage is the last step of a journey that started with leaving the map and ended with returning to it. I had to get lost in the city before I could find a new orientation and I had to become familiar with the territory of Cape Town before I could deeply appreciate the detachment and defamiliarisation that allowed me to represent it.


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