

**WHOSE HISTORY AND MEMORY IS IT?
REFLECTING ON REPRESENTATIONS OF NEW BRIGHTON'S PAST**

By

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Abstract

In 2003 New Brighton township in Port Elizabeth celebrates its centenary. The official (his)story of these hundred years privileges the experiences of political activists over those of ordinary people under segregation/ apartheid. The stories of their everyday lives have been subsumed by the triumphalism of the master narrative of the liberation struggle. So New Brighton is remembered as a "site of resistance" and a "stronghold of the ANC". This is typified not only in local newspaper accounts which lionize deceased "heroes of the struggle" who happened to have lived in the township, but in the brochure which was commissioned to call for architectural designs for a historical precinct and apartheid museum envisaged in New Brighton's Red Location.

But the struggle for liberation was not the peoples' only defining experience. Werbner (1998) holds that the "right of recountability" entitles citizens to have their memories made known and acknowledged in the public sphere. This serves as a valuable reminder that public memories have been and continue to be refashioned by the hegemonic discourse. Moreover, the way in which the official historical narrative is constructed can profoundly shape the memory and identity of a community such as New Brighton. This paper will seek to show that the voices of New Brighton's people have been heard only insofar as they conform to the narrative constructed by academic and public historians. When oral testimonies, memoirs, photographs, and even works of art tell different stories, they are airbrushed out of the story. Once out of the public eye these stories exit the collective and/or social memory. The New Brighton centenary provides a moment to ponder whose past it is, how it has been represented, and how it should be remembered.

Introduction

The recasting of history and public memory in post-apartheid South Africa is an explicitly political project. Since 1994 the shift in political power has been accompanied by attempts to renegotiate the meaning of our past. Previously dominant perspectives have been challenged and new narratives are being constructed in order to realign collective memory with a new national identity. For whenever and wherever national identity seems to be in question, memory provides the key in reconfiguring the past. Whereas the Truth & Reconciliation Committee (TRC) sought to rewrite a collective, national memory for the sake of reconciliation, President Mbeki's "Peoples' History" project seeks to assign a rather different meaning to the past; specifically to construct a version which would make the liberation struggle the master narrative of our national history. Right now we appear to be in an interregnum, a moment when old versions of the past are either redundant or unacceptable, and new histories and collective memories have yet to take hold. There exists no consensus.

In the absence of a consensual view of the past, the heritage industry has positioned itself to contribute to the nation-building process. Heritage projects such as Egazini in Grahamstown or the proposed Freedom Park outside of Pretoria seek to promote a common history which glosses over struggles of our conflict-ridden past. They seek to promote national reconciliation in our fledgling and fragile democracy. As well intentioned as such projects might be, the idea of a past that all South Africans can share is illusory. Guy asserts that "the heritage industry invokes a sentimentalized past which makes bearable a sordid and painful present".ⁱ

Museums are institutions of heritage and not simply repositories of artefacts. They are part of civil society and provide spaces where members of society can explore and make sense of their past. Museums give material form to authorized versions of the past, which in time become institutionalized as public memory. In this way, museums invariably anchor official memory.ⁱⁱ If historians serve as midwives to the birth of a new South African history, the heritage sector - in conjunction with the state and the tourism industry - are bearers of and have a vested interest in public memory. Many historians have remained suspicious of memory, not just because of methodological reservations but also because studying memory was implicitly equated with conferring legitimacy on politically dubious memories.ⁱⁱⁱ I share such concerns where heritage projects conflate history and memory, and construct a simplistic, sanitized versions of the past which amount to mythicization. Historical inquiries can serve as correctives of memory, provided we recognise that history itself is contested. But more importantly, historians should seek to understand the place of memory in our society.

In this paper I shall attempt to interrogate the purpose of the proposed Red Location Cultural Museum in the century-old New Brighton township of Port Elizabeth. I shall argue that this project is likely to be framed by public memory which is shaped by the media, education, public discourse and the state - both

local authorities and central government. It is equally likely to ignore personal memory which is based on an individual's lived experience. Whereas personal memory fades with the passage of time, the authority of public memory increases for it becomes the more widely accepted version of the past.^{iv} The public memory of New Brighton's past privileges the experiences of political activists over those of ordinary people. The stories of their everyday lives have been subsumed by the triumphalism of the liberation struggle. As the liberation struggle becomes the dominant narrative of our national history, the stories of smaller communities are subordinated to this metanarrative. So New Brighton is remembered as a "centre of resistance" and a "stronghold of the African National Congress". In short, New Brighton has become identified as a site of struggle. This is typified in reminiscences published in books, journals, web sites and local newspaper which lionize both living and deceased "heroes of the struggle" who happened to have lived in the township. And this will, no doubt, provide the template for the fashioning New Brighton's history in the Red Location Cultural Museum.

In what follows, I shall touch on (but not necessarily answer) a plethora of issues in relation to the representations of New Brighton's past: How is the history of a community and/or place remembered? How is the narrative which constitutes the dominant public memory of its past constructed? Are there counter-memories which represent the experiences of people without access to political power? Or is public memory invariably subordinated to political agendas or expediency? Are the caretakers of memory necessarily the same as the custodians of the past? Who, in fact, are the custodians of the past? Or is the notion of 'custodians of the past' problematical? Can the past belong to any one (group) in particular? Or does it belong to everyone and no one? I shall start by examining the relationship between history, memory and counter-memory.

History, Memory and Counter-Memory

Memory, like history, is a representation of the past. Obviously, though, history and memory are not synonymous. Nora holds that memory is in a permanent state of flux, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, whereas history is a representation of the past, a critical discourse which is suspicious of memory.^v In other words, history and memory are in a fundamental state of tension. In Sturken's view history and memory are "*entangled* rather than [necessarily] oppositional"^{vi}. History and memory are often in contestation but they need not be. Indeed, there exists an overlap or elision between history and memory. So history and memory is something of a false dichotomy to start with. What we are actually interested in is memory *in* history, the role of the past in history or, for that matter, in contemporary politics, and what Habermas once called 'the public uses of history'.^{vii}

The emphasis in some of the works in the growing corpus of literature called 'memory studies' has been on the social construction of memory, particularly on efforts by the state and powerful political groups to

forge historical traditions that could serve their interests. According to Foucault, historical memories are constantly refashioned to suit present purposes.^{viii} Memory is not built incrementally but is continually crafted and recrafted as material from the past is reencountered and reinterpreted. The dominant memory emerges after a struggle between conflicting interpretations of historical events and comes to act as a bulwark for the establishment. The past becomes an excuse for the present, justifying the social or political order on the grounds that it was ordained by history. The dominant memory claims that the status quo exists because the past wills it. In doing so, it sets out what should be remembered (as well as how it should be remembered) and what should be forgotten.

Counter-memory can exist in opposition to the official (hi)story. Individuals who do not subscribe to the dominant memory, who refuse to forget or remember what it prescribes, become part of society's counter-hegemony. Their memories exist in private spaces and individual minds. They are driven underground, to exist as a potentially threatening undercurrent to the social order. Their ability to survive depends on what resources and power the group is able to marshal. But even in totalitarian societies, the state does not control individual or group memory completely. Agents of civil society can play an active role in strategies of remembrance; sometimes in collaboration with the state, sometimes against it. Still, Foucault expresses concern that historical writing tends to celebrate the oppressions of the past and present as necessary and inevitable. In addition, he fears that teleological thinking demands closure, that it requires disciplining the uncertainties of the present to conform to some a priori vision of the future.^{ix}

Lipsitz's understanding of counter-memory differs somewhat from that of Foucault. In his view, counter-memory is a way of remembering and forgetting that starts with the local, the immediate and the personal.^x Unlike historical narratives that begin with the totality of human existence and then locate specific actions and events within that locality, counter-memory starts with the particular and the specific and then builds onward toward a total history. Counter-memory looks to the past for the hidden histories excluded from dominant narratives. But unlike myths which seek to detach events and actions from the fabric of any larger history, counter-memory forces revision of existing histories by supplying new perspectives about the past. Counter-memory embodies aspects of myth and aspects of history, but it retains an enduring suspicion of both categories. Counter-memory focuses on localized experiences with oppression, using them to reframe and refocus dominant narratives purporting to represent universal experience. Thus, counter-memory is not a rejection of history, but a reconstitution of it.^{xi}

Because those with the power to control the representations of the past have the means to shape memory, it is necessary to identify the carriers and sites of personal and public, dominant and counter- memories. Otherwise, memory studies are in danger of deteriorating into a mere enumeration of free-floating representations of the past which might or might not have relevance for politics.^{xii} Müller's admonition will inform my discussion of the representations of New Brighton's past.

Representing New Brighton's Past

In this section I shall examine ways in which New Brighton has been represented through its century of existence. Recurring tropes are to be found in official discourses, extracts from imaginative literature, first-hand accounts and memoirs, as well as in visual images such as paintings and photographs. I have identified six tropes in the representations of New Brighton's past. During its first fifty years or so, the authorities and Port Elizabeth's publicists took great pride in fêting New Brighton as a 'model' location or township. Coupled to this was the local authority's bid to project the image of New Brighton as a law-abiding community so as to make the case for the success of its 'progressive' policies. These first two tropes represent the official version of story of the township created and perpetuated by the Port Elizabeth City Council (PECC) and its PRs prior to 1952. Thereafter, New Brighton was regarded by the authorities, and especially the Nationalist Government, as an ANC stronghold and a site of opposition. In the post-apartheid political dispensation, this meaning has been reconfigured so that New Brighton is now regarded as a site of struggle, a trope which represents the new official version of the history of the township. These official (hi)stories have co-existed with private narratives in which New Brighton has been represented as a close-knit community in the memoirs and paintings of erstwhile residents. In my own personal experience New Brighton - especially the Red Location - is a place of poverty. This perception, as much as the tropes of official discourse and public memory, has undoubtedly framed my own history of New Brighton.^{xiii}

New Brighton was established as a 'model' location by the Cape Colonial Government in 1903. In fact, the oldest section of New Brighton known as the Red Location comprised corrugated iron dwellings sourced from a concentration/refugee camp established in Uitenhage during the South African War. A description of a Native Location by a retired Resident Magistrate of Port Elizabeth (1908-1914) did not square with the official discourse. W.C. Scully's account of the trials and tribulations of the fictional but true-to-life African protagonist, *Daniel Vananda*, has him resident in

The Native Location [which] stood on a bleak hill-side. The winds - and Port Elizabeth is one of the windiest places in South Africa - swept through it day and night. The huts, often built of tin, were as a rule wretchedly small.... [They] were draughty, and within a space of a few hours the temperature would often alternate between that of Cathay and that of a northern winter.... Old paraffin cans were an important feature in the architecture. These were opened out, beaten flat and tacked to poles. It is to be doubted whether any more squalid, sordid and uncomfortable set of dwellings could have been found in South Africa.^{xiv}

Although not identified as New Brighton, it is clearly not an entirely imaginary landscape. The description published in 1923 offered not only unfavourable comparisons between Port Elizabeth's

weather and that elsewhere in the country, but also commented negatively on the appropriateness of the corrugated iron constructions for the city's own climate. New Brighton was represented as an inhospitable living environment, totally unsuited to the purpose for which the government had established it, namely, to house the city's African population. Far from being a 'model' location, the writer considered New Brighton amongst the most "squalid, sordid and uncomfortable" housing in the country.

When the Port Elizabeth City Council assumed responsibility for New Brighton in 1923, it sought to demolish slum dwellings in Korsten and relocate its African residents to the township. The Municipality attempted to expand New Brighton and refurbish its reputation as a 'model' location with the addition of a sub-economic scheme in the late 1930s. Named in honour of the then Location Superintendent, McNamee Village had facilities such as running water, street lighting and water-borne sewerage. An anonymous contributor to *The South African Outlook* who paid a series of visits to McNamee Village as it neared completion, described the semi-detached houses as being of uniform construction but with sufficient diversity and variety so as to not to give a monotonous appearance. Each house had a closed-in front garden in which residents grew grass lawns and flowers or cultivated vegetables, and was fenced in by trim hedges. There was every indication of "a wholesome house pride" and a "self-respect and standard of living that were almost unbelievable". The writer witnessed no drunkenness or rowdiness during a Sunday afternoon stroll through the streets, but testified instead to a general atmosphere of contentment and friendliness. Providing a clue as to what s/he regarded as idyllic, the writer commented that "one could imagine oneself in an English country town".^{xv} A water-colour painting of McNamee Village dated 1944 by the artist George Pemba [Illustration 1] depicts a scene which bears a striking resemblance to the one described in *The South African Outlook*. It foregrounds foliage rather than the people and buildings and its muted colours impart a sense of serenity. The picturesque image was used to illustrate an article published in *Optima* in 1953. The accompanying caption calls it "[a] Native's impression of the model Native township"..."[which] "is a spontaneous tribute to the European authorities who have provided comfortable and attractive housing for Natives as a substitute for their former primitive accommodation"^{xvi} This would have readers believe that those rehoused in McNamee Village believed the PECC's propaganda that it was a model township.

The PECC proclaimed McNamee Village to be without peer in South Africa. It was actually one of many townships in the country to be termed a 'model'. Others included Lamont Village near Durban, Langa Township near Cape Town, Waaihoek near Bloemfontein, and Sharpeville in the Vaal Triangle. The vastly different living conditions in these 'model' locations would seem to suggest that local authorities used their own arbitrary criteria for laying claim to such an epithet. Their motives were not wholly altruistic but neither were they entirely self-serving. The good publicity garnered by such PRO exercises accorded the PECC an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the well-being of its African populations. The PECC received many accolades for its sub-economic housing scheme from visiting dignitaries. In July 1941 the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Native Affairs described Port

Elizabeth's "gigantic social achievement" as "the closest approach to a municipal miracle I have seen".^{xvii} And during a ceremony the following month to mark the erection of the 3 000th house of the scheme, the Minister of the Interior and Public Health had pronounced it "a model for the whole country".^{xviii}

The occasion of the 1947 Royal Visit to Port Elizabeth afforded the PECC another opportunity to showcase New Brighton as a 'model' township. Township residents lined a specially constructed road to greet the party which was escorted through New Brighton. City Councillors selected only the most presentable parts of New Brighton as tour sights. The itinerary excluded the squalid, corrugated iron structures in the Red Location, as well as the single men's quarters where people lived in abject conditions.^{xix} The travel journalist, R.A. Reynolds, who visited Port Elizabeth in 1953, was informed by war-time mayor and long-serving Councillor, Adolf Schauder, that New Brighton as "the finest township in the Union", had made "an ideal shop window of African urban life" during the Royal Visit.^{xx} Schauder was Port Elizabeth's self-appointed ambassador and publicist. He was also the prime mover behind the city's sub-economic housing schemes. He was known as the 'Father of Housing' and given the honorific title of *Sonceba* ('man of mercy') by the city's African community. He gave guided tours of New Brighton and Korsten to many VIPs who visited the city. This allowed him to demonstrate the Council's efforts to provide social upliftment for the city's slum dwellers, as well showcase the part he personally played in promoting his vision for Port Elizabeth. This is reflected in Schauder's reported remark that:

Port Elizabeth prided itself on its fair and honourable treatment of Natives and on being the first town in the Union to undertake a genuine slum elimination scheme.^{xxi}

He went to considerable lengths to publicise Port Elizabeth's achievements in respect of the provision of housing and in the propagation of its 'progressive' reputation.

When the well-known travel writer John Gunther visited Port Elizabeth in 1953, he was not impressed by Schauder's promotional tour. In fact, in his subsequent work *Inside Africa* (1955) he was rather dismissive of the PEM's achievements in providing housing for the city's African population. He dubbed the newly-established extension to New Brighton of Kwaford, named as such because dwellings were constructed from the wooden crates that were used by the American motor company to import CKD kits for assembly, 'package town'. He reckoned that Kwaford was the "most startling slum" in Africa.^{xxii} Schauder took exception to Gunther's remarks. In an attempt to rebut this adverse publicity, he published a series of articles in which he celebrated Port Elizabeth's achievements in eliminating slums and rehousing their occupants in decent, affordable housing.^{xxiii} Schauder also featured in Jamie Uys's propaganda film, *The Urgent Queue* (1958), which portrayed him as the driving force behind the PECC's efforts at rehousing Africans in new housing projects and site-and-service schemes.^{xxiv} But such efforts at damage control or preserving Port Elizabeth's reputation as a provider of 'model' housing were too little too late.

Notwithstanding the increasing incidence of criminal activity in the post-war years, the claim that New Brighton was a law-abiding community was often repeated in the late 1940s.^{xxv} For instance, Margaret Ballinger reckoned that "Port Elizabeth has the most law-abiding community in its New Brighton township of any community in the country".^{xxvi} The absence of pass laws in Port Elizabeth, regarded as a contributory factor in the criminalization of Africans in other centres, undoubtedly meant that fewer New Brighton residents were forced to spend spells behind bars. Similarly, it was believed that provision for domestic beer brewing meant that residents of New Brighton need not break the law in order to observe their traditional social drinking habits. Yet, a considerable number of women were regularly prosecuted, fined and sometimes jailed for abusing the permit system and for brewing excessive quantities of beer. Then, other residents were brought to court for contravention of Location regulations, as well as the failure to pay rents or poll-tax. There can be no doubt that New Brighton's reputation as a law-abiding community was cultivated by the local authorities to make a case for connecting their housing programme, social upliftment and respect for the (white man's) law. But the hollowness of this contrived perception was exposed by the tragic events of the riots of 18 October 1952.

In the minds of the critics of the PECC's policies, especially in government circles, there existed the perception that the New Brighton riots were inextricably linked to the fact that the African National Congress was active in the township. The organisation was involved in the mobilisation of residents against successive rent increases in 1945 and 1951, as well as in the 1949 bus boycott. Then it had recruited volunteers from its ranks in New Brighton to join the Defiance Campaign in Port Elizabeth. New Brighton railway station was chosen as the site for the first act of defiance in the city on 26 June 1952. It is estimated that during the campaign the membership of the ANC branch in New Brighton swelled from 2 700 to 13 000 within the space of less than a month.^{xxvii} New Brighton was regarded as an ANC stronghold and for this reason was chosen as a site for the launch of the M-Plan. New Brighton remained a 'hotbed' of ANC activity beyond the 1950s and generations of political activists have cut their teeth in the ranks of the organisation even after it was forced to go underground. For these reasons New Brighton is regarded as site of opposition to government policies; a place where people could be mobilized against the strictures of apartheid.

Although George Pemba produced many images which captured aspects of the struggle during the 1970s, his true oeuvre proved to be the township scene. Indeed, he has been recognized as the 'father of township art'.^{xxviii} During his career he produced numerous works of his surroundings in New Brighton. Soon after he had changed to the medium of oils, he produced *Trees and Houses, New Brighton* (1946) [Illustration 2] which is a painting of the street in which he himself resided. Huddlestone comments that "Pemba manages to inject an aspect of the picturesque into this township scene via his composition and deft rendering of a small copse of trees".^{xxix} Perhaps his most accomplished township painting was executed soon after the Soweto riots. In 1977 he produced an oil painting entitled *New Brighton* [Illustration 3]. Fox describes it as follows:

We see people at leisure in the streets, children cavorting, women talking, young men playing soccer, and donkey carts passing...Pemba uses a bright palette, flat planes of colour to soften the harsh realities of brick and corrugated iron, and introduces plenty of foliage. It is a colourful, lively street scene with animated figures which masks the disturbance and dangers that such streets held. Despite the activity there is a calmness and an iconic element to the figures, the artist trying to monumentalize the characters and the streetscape, thereby celebrating the human spirit in a condition of adversity.^{xxx}

He adds that "Pemba's paintings of township scenes reveal an attempt to find humanity in the harsh and regimented streets of Port Elizabeth's... 'locations'. Notwithstanding Pemba's reputation for realism, this bustling street scene with its convivial atmosphere comes close to idealizing life in New Brighton. The image certainly conveys the ebullience of New Brighton residents which is matched in Jimmy Matyu's colourful stories in his *Shadows of the Past*.^{xxxii}

In his account of his memories of life in Jabavu Road in McNamee Village, journalist Matyu depicts a strong sense of community. He describes the neighbourhood as 'a close-knit unit'.^{xxxiii} He recalls the residents' suspicions of 'outsiders', especially from *eGoli* (Johannesburg). At the same time, these residents had an intimate knowledge of one another's private lives. The use of nicknames was commonplace and most of these names revealed something personal about the bearer. For instance, a Mr Rabakgoba was given the nickname *Simumu* as it was believed that he was hen-pecked and a cuckold because he was bewitched by his wife. Such stories were the meat and drink of the street's gossip mongers and busybodies. A Mrs Williams was nicknamed the "New Brighton Times", while a Mrs Sala was known as the "Jabavu Times" on account of their ability to keep abreast with and spread the latest salacious gossip. Sexual escapades and illicit affairs were recounted with some relish (and probably some embroidery) by these women. Some of the men engaged in street politics. Impromptu *indabas* (meetings) were held regularly on street corners and under street lamps after dark where groups gathered to hear speakers sound off on all sorts of subjects.^{xxxiiii} Indeed, much of the neighbourhood's interaction appeared to have taken place in open spaces rather than the confines of the resident's homes. Such gregariousness has been attributed to a cultural predisposition for communal living, but it is equally likely that it had something to do with the spatial organisation of McNamee Village which allowed little room for privacy.

If the streets of McNamee Village was the site of much social intercourse, those of the Red Location were the locus of much of the delinquent and criminal activities in New Brighton. In the oldest part of New Brighton, rooms and even floor space was rented out to lodgers. Not only was there acute overcrowding but many migrants were forced to sleep in the streets. It was also the only part of the Location where beer drinking was allowed. Despite the Administration's efforts to exert strict control of brewing, there was no way to put a stop to shebeens or prostitution. Given the inadequate street lighting, *tsotsis* operated under

cover of darkness and rendered the Location unsafe at night. They operated in specific territories which were 'no go' areas for the rivals from other areas. Their home turfs were sometimes a single street or a block. Matyu recalls that a certain Mabuli exercised a 'reign of terror' in Jabavu Road during the late 1940s. He was a knife-wielding thug who left a trail of dead bodies which ended with his own death in a fight with an adversary. Mabuli exacted 'protection money' and favours from the neighbourhood youngsters whom he terrorised. There existed a kind of fraternity amongst the shanty boys who loitered on street corners and near the shops and trading stores situated in the Red Location. These *kwedini* (young boys) invoked the name of Mabuli for protection when threatened by rival gang members or *tsotsis* from other areas. Not all *tsotsis* operated in gangs. Matyu describes another thug known as 'Bra Sixteen' as a "sort of one-man gang machinery" whose weapon of choice, like the character 'Butcher' in Athol Fugard's novel *Tsotsi* (1980), was a bicycle spok.^{xxxiv} Many *tsotsis* literally and figuratively carved out reputations by their proficiency with knives and similar weapons. Because even horrific stories are recounted with a degree of nostalgia, Matyu's selective sentimentality tends to re-invent New Brighton as a close-knit community.

Unlike Matyu's lived experience, my own memory of New Brighton is based on fleeting visits made while researching my book. I chose to illustrate the cover with a colour photograph of an indigent family posing outside of their corrugated iron shack in the Red Location [Illustration 4].^{xxxv} As with Dorethea Lange's portrait *Migrant Mother* which has become iconic of the American Dust Bowl during the Depression, this image seemed to capture my overriding impression of New Brighton; namely, that it was a place of poverty. The photograph was probably taken [should that be made?] in the 1950s but nothing much had changed for the inhabitants of the Red Location by the 1990s. This seems to be borne out by contemporary photographic images which show the squalor and abject poverty amongst the unsightly dwellings of the Red Location [Illustrations 5 & 6]. However, these images are not unmediated. Rob Duker's camera work capture scenes which reflect a fidelity to the artists own vision rather than to reality.^{xxxvi} Like works of art, photographs represent a singular moment lifted from its historical context with meaning imposed upon it by the viewer. In these instances, I have imposed my own meaning upon these visual images which resonate with previous impressions of New Brighton as a place of poverty. Still, it provides a reading of New Brighton's past which is at variance with that of official history.

Port Elizabeth's local authority - previously the City Council and now the Nelson Mandela Metropole - has a long-standing commitment to upgrade the Red Location which is the oldest part of the New Brighton township. It was envisaged that the first phase of the project would entail the erection of a Freedom Struggle Museum and the restoration of corrugated iron houses from which the Red Location derives its name. The project was launched in June 1998 with an architectural competition designed to solicit a suitable design for a cultural complex which is to include an art gallery, a creative art centre, a market, a library, a hall, conference centre and visitors' accommodation.^{xxxvii} On 1 April 2003, the Mandela Metropole's Executive Mayor Nceba Faku performed the sod-turning at a ceremony to mark the

commencement of what was now to be called the Red Location Cultural Museum. The Metropole's communications manager, Roland Williams, said that the project "formed part of the council's strategy of upgrading previously disadvantaged communities". He added that the Red Location had "major political significance".^{xxxviii} The project has been inextricably connected to a political vision of why New Brighton's past should be remembered; a version of New Brighton's history which invokes the history of the struggle against apartheid and commemorates it as a 'site of resistance'. This vision that New Brighton be remembered as a site of struggle was first articulated by certain (former) Councillors.^{xxxix}

The launch of the Red Location Cultural Museum project, which coincides with the centenary of the establishment of the township, has been promoted by the Mandela Metropole and the heritage tourism industry in Port Elizabeth. The project has taken some five years to get off the ground even though the central government promised to match the funding budgeted by the Metropole. While the authorities claimed to have consulted with residents to ascertain how the money should be spent, they ignored the express wishes of Red Location residents who have insisted that priority be accorded to the development of infrastructure and the provision of essential services rather than the cultural/historical precinct. Nonetheless, the Metro has proceeded with the project. Irrespective of the motives of its initiators and planners, the project represents a real danger that outsiders might impose their vision of what New Brighton's past should mean for those who have lived there. The struggle for liberation was not the residents of New Brighton's only defining experience. Werbner holds that the "right of recountability" entitles citizens to have their memories made known and acknowledged in the public sphere.^{xl} Insofar as they have been heard - as with the TRC hearings - the voices of New Brighton residents have been framed by the metanarrative constructed by public memory and/or official history. Dissenting voices tend to go unheard in the public sphere. Once out of the public eye these stories exist as counter-memories. Although this need not necessarily mean that they are forgotten, they most certainly are marginalised. For when memory is repressed or de-politicised, it is deprived of its claims on political resources and state power.^{xli}

Conclusion

The quality of South Africa's transformation to democracy can be improved through dealing openly with the past. Conversely, forced silence and forgetting might derail the process. We should avoid repeating the mistakes of the past when the poor and oppressed were generally excluded from or confined to the margins of dominant historical narratives by apartheid which legitimated white supremacy. The marginalised had to construct their identities in counter-memories which existed outside the authority of official history. Their stories have, belatedly and to some extent, been recovered through heritage projects, oral history, memoirs and some academic history. But now in the post-apartheid era there is every likelihood that the new official historical narrative which is under construction will once again marginalise the poor and oppressed by manipulating public memory and subverting the peoples' past for

political ends.

The recovery and recognition of the memories of poor and oppressed groups will provide a corrective to the reification of the official version of South Africa's past; perhaps even constitute a true peoples' history. However, it cannot be taken for granted that counter-memory is automatically liberating, or that counter-memory should have legitimacy per se. Counter-memory might contribute towards preserving another version of the past, but it does not necessarily follow that it is the truth. Rather, we should accept that contested, conflicting and competing memories are an inevitable part of the transition to democracy, and that this is to be welcomed.^{xlii} Memory and history are, after all, able to represent a plurality of voices.

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- ⁱ1. Jeff Guy, 'Battling with Banality', *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 18 (1998), p. 157 cited in C. Bundy, 'New Nation, New History? Constructing the past in post-apartheid South Africa', unpublished paper, p. 4.
 - ⁱⁱ2. Patricia Davison, 'Museums and the reshaping of memory' in S. Nuttall and Carli Coetzee (eds.), *Negotiating the past: The making of memory in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.145. There have been cases, such as the Smithsonian's proposed Enola Gay exhibit in 1995, where museum curators have challenged the meaning of an event in collective memory. In this instance, the commemorative voice prevailed over the historical one and the exhibit in its original form was cancelled.
 - ⁱⁱⁱ3. Jan-Werner Müller, 'Introduction: the power of memory, the memory of power and the power over memory' in Jan-Werner Müller (ed.), *Memory & Power in Post-War Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 18.
 - ^{iv}4. Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 3
 - ^v5. Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de memoire*, *Representations*, 26 (Spring 1989), pp. 8-9.
 - ^{vi}6. Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 5
 - ^{vii}7. Müller, 'The power of memory', pp. 24-25.
 - ^{viii}8. Daniel F. Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Select Essays and Interviews with Michel Foucault* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), p. 144.
 - ^{ix}9. Bourchard, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, p. 150.
 - ^x10. George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: collective memory and American popular culture* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. 213.
 - ^{xi}11. Lipsitz, *Time Passages*, p. 227.
 - ^{xii}12. Müller. 'The power of memory', p. 3.
 - ^{xiii}13. Gary F. Baines, *A History of New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, South Africa 1903-1953: The Detroit of the Union* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002).
 - ^{xiv}14. W.C. Scully, *Daniel Vananda: The Life Story of a Human Being* (Cape Town: Juta, 1923), p. 176.
 - ^{xv}15. Anonymous, 'Impressions of the McNamee Township at New Brighton', *The South African Outlook*, V. LXXI (1 March 1941), pp. 46-48.
 - ^{xvi}16. A. Schauder, 'Generous housing for South Africa's Natives', *Optima*, 3, 4 (1953), p. 2, The painting is owned by the Schauder family but I am not sure whether it was commissioned or not.
 - ^{xvii}17. *Eastern Province Herald (EPH)* 28 July 1941.
 - ^{xviii}18. *EPH* 13 Aug. 1941 ('City Housing of Africans').
 - ^{xix}19. *Raymond Mhlaba's Personal Memoirs: Reminiscing from Rwanda and Uganda* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 2001), p. 48.
 - ^{xx}20. R.A. Reynolds, *Beware of Africans: a pilgrimage from Cairo to Cape* (London, 1955), p. 319.
 - ^{xxi}21. *EPH* 20 May 1948 ('Shanties at Korsten').
 - ^{xxii}22. J. Gunther, *Inside Africa* (London, 1955), p. 486.
 - ^{xxiii}23. See A. Schauder, 'Generous housing for South Africa's Natives' in *Optima*, 3, 4 (1953), pp. 1-7 and *Lantern* (April 1954), pp. 380-390; 'Eliminating South Africa's native slums', *Optima*, 6, 4 (1956), pp. 122-127 and 'New Life for 30,000 Slum-dwellers', *Panorama* (May 1957), pp. 1-8.
 - ^{xxiv}24. Sarah Hudleston, *George Pemba: Against All Odds* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1996); *George Milwa Mnyaluza Pemba: A Retrospective Exhibition* (Bellville: South African National Gallery and Mayibuye Centre, University of the Western Cape, 1996); Barry Feinberg, *George Pemba: painter of the people* (Johannesburg: Viva Books, 2000). For an analysis of the context and text of the film, see my 'Representing the Apartheid City: South African Cinema in

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- the 1950s and Jamie Uys's *Urgent Queue*' in M. Shiel & T. Fitzmaurice (eds.), *Cinema & the City* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 185-194.
- ^{xxv}25. *South Africa Outlook* 1 Dec. 1947, p. 188 ('PE and its African Population').
- ^{xxvi}26. *EPH* 6 Feb. 1948 ('Mrs Ballinger on Native Housing').
- ^{xxvii}27. Cory Library, MIC 407 CAMP, Reel 14A, 2:XM 65: 47/4 and 47/7, James to Z.K. Matthews, 5 Aug. and 3 Sept. 1952.
- ^{xxviii}Sarah Hudleston, *George Pemba: Against All Odds* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1996); *George Milwa Mnyaluza Pemba: A Retrospective Exhibition* (Bellville: South African National Gallery and Mayibuyi Centre, University of the Western Cape, 1996); Barry Feinberg, *George Pemba: painter of the people* (Johannesburg, Viva Books, 2000).
- ^{xxix}29. Hudleston, *Against All Odds*, p. 55.
- ^{xxx}30. Justin Fox, 'On the road' in Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael (eds.), *Senses of culture: South African culture studies* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 447.
- ^{xxxi}31. J. Matyu, *Shadows of the past: Memories of Jabavu Road, New Brighton* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 1996). Pemba's painting illustrates the cover.
- ^{xxxii}32. Matyu, *Shadows of the past*, p. 3.
- ^{xxxiii}33. Matyu, *Shadows of the past*, p. 70.
- ^{xxxiv}34. Matyu, *Shadows of the past*, pp. 7, 76.
- ^{xxxv}35. The photographer is not acknowledged in the booklet called *new lives for old: A model Site-and Service scheme: Port Elizabeth's Solution to the Bantu Housing Problem* (Johannesburg: Portland Cement Institute Publication, n.d.)
- ^{xxxvi}36. S. Sontag, *On Photography* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1979), p. 87.
- ^{xxxvii}37. *The Municipality of Port Elizabeth, Competition for the Transformation of Red Location* (Port Elizabeth, 1998), p. 8. This publication was compiled by Albrecht Herold.
- ^{xxxviii}38. *Eastern Province Herald* 2 April 2003, ('Mayor kicks off Red Location museum project').
- ^{xxxix}39. It appears to represent the vision of former Cllrs Rory Riordan and Jennifer Bowler. See *Weekend Post*, 24 June 2000, p. 6 ('Vision of township apartheid museum becoming a reality').
- ^{xl}40. Richard Werbner, 'Beyond Oblivion: Confronting Memory Crisis' in R. Werbner (ed.), *Memory and the Postcolony: African Anthropology and the critique of power* (London: Zed Books, 1998).
- ^{xli}41. Müller, 'The power of memory', p. 32.
- ^{xlii}42. Müller, 'The power of memory', pp. 32-34. 10 July 2003