Dear HASSers,

This is a shortened draft version of the final chapter of my dissertation, entitled: 'Apartheid Modern: Sasol and the Making of a South African company town'. It is rather more ethnographic than the rest of the dissertation, and I'd like to think that it will eventually help bring aspects of the larger thesis full circle through a kind of sociology of young lives in contemporary Zamdela township – in the aftermath of the decline of employment and paternalism -- and my attempted exploration of the "work" of history in the present. Preceding chapters will deal in somewhat more conventionally historical terms with the establishment of the SASOL project, the role of SASOL in the making of whiteness and anti-apartheid techno-imaginations; modernist town planning; civic culture, consumption, battles over industrial and domestic labour, black modernisms in Zamdela township and hostels, the meanings of work & paternalism etc etc. I've tagged an epilogue on the end of the chapter which throws fresh material gathered on my last research trip to Sasolburg into the mix. I'd greatly appreciate your help with thinking through how to bring the two parts together…your comments & suggestions are most welcome!

Many thanks.

'...their cultures were not well invested in them': Cultural Entrepreneurship and the Production of History in Zamdela township, Sasolburg

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When I first visited Zamdela as part of my PhD research I intended seeking out older residents who, in the traditions of recuperative social history and Africanist oral history, would help illuminate their experiences living in the shadow of SASOL, apartheid South Africa's prestige project to convert coal into oil. I spent much of my time in Zamdela interviewing such elder residents: men who worked in SASOL's coal mines or factory and women who worked as domestic workers in nearby Sasolburg, the whites-only company town planned to accommodate SASOL's white managers, workers and their families. But the people I spent the most amount of time with during my fieldwork were a small group of young men, most around my age – who make up the core of the Patriots Theater Group, a Zamdela based arts organization established by its members in 2008. Through both structured interviews, informal conversations and itinerant ethnographic observation, I gained some of my greatest insights into the history of Zamdela through time spent with Styx, Fanyane and Khosi. Reflecting on my field notes and turning over my memories of my time with them, I have been struck by their astute engagement with the past and by the ways in which they are active producers of historical knowledge (Cohen, 1994), both in everyday discourse and, most obviously, in the rich text of their play, 'Here and Now'. These young people have engaged creatively with post-apartheid discourses and programs emanating from national government which are explicitly targeted at 'youth development' and 'youth empowerment' and which promote a model of cultural entrepreneurship more generally. These young people are hardly the heroic figures of counter-hegemonic resistance to be found in widely read literature on neo-liberalism in South Africa (Bond, 2005; Desai, 2002) and elsewhere in Africa (Diouf, 1996; 2003) nor the zombies of millennial despair and 'occult economies' (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2001.) But they are perhaps all the more interesting for it.

This chapter charts the efforts of these young men towards making sense of the relationship between the past and the present in South Africa, between the alienations associated with apartheid's migrant labor system and the promise of personal triumph in the present. The Patriots play 'Here and Now' embodies these imaginative labors in its insistence that despite the failure of its key protagonist to fulfill his fatherly responsibilities and secure orderly cultural reproduction, young poor black South Africans can still attain the personal triumph after which they long. While the play narrates its protagonist's inability to escape from history, it is ultimately an assertion of the ability of young poor black South Africans to transcend history, to succeed as self-actualizing individuals in spite of the weight of an apparently insurmountable past. The Patriots for their part have adopted prevailing capitalist metaphors in terms of their deployment of the languages of investment and of personal triumph, through their conceptualization of themselves as cultural entrepreneurs, and their adoption of disciplining modes of self-governance (Foucault 1988, Rose, 1996). The young men who are the focus of this chapter worry greatly about their ability to secure their reproduction as properly 'traditional' subjects and men. The *Investing in Culture* program conceives chiefly of young black South Africans as the inheritors of essentialized African tradition. In fact, in asserting that the Patriots are *bricoleurs*, the chapter suggests that their subjectivities are far more complicated than the *Investing in Culture* program and even some their own discourses often allow. I argue that the material presented here suggests an ontological shift, whereby perceived failures in terms of notions of personal achievement in the present are imagined to be tied to failures in terms of putatively 'traditional' modes of creating persons in the

past. Ironically, contemporary socio-economic conditions, particularly the high rate of unemployment and accelerating commodification, are making it more difficult for these young men to secure their own social and cultural reproduction. The overarching pedagogical message of the Patriots play may be that poor black South African youth can succeed in spite of a history – and childhoods – marked by absentee fathers and improperly consummated cultural identities, but the disintegration of the theater group charted at the end of the chapter, suggests that the Patriots repeated insistence that they live in a 'dog eat puppy' world may prove to be sadly accurate.

The stage and its actors

There is only one access route to the township from Sasolburg, along the aforementioned Eric Louw Weg. Residents of Zamdela who do not have the use of private cars can catch mini-bus taxis from the taxi rank in downtown Sasolburg to the township, but many residents walk or bicycle the route because taxi fares have increased steeply in recent years with rising fuel costs. On its Northern stretches the road cuts through Sasolburg's leafy oak tree lined suburbs with their manicured gardens, neighborhoods reserved until recently for white residents only. The road is dotted with several neo-Calvinist Dutch Reformed Churches catering to the predominantly Afrikaans speaking local white communities. A little further south, in the direction of Zamdela and the original SASOL factory, is Zio Cash 'n Carry, a wholesale store; a seedy bottle store and a take-out, all popular spots with Zamdela residents and some of Sasolburg's poorer local white residents. Then the SASOL factory comes into view, with its metallic labyrinth of pipes and hissing, belching stacks. Concrete-slab security walls, guard towers and barbed wire surround the plant, a result of attacks launched by the African National Congress' armed wing *Umkontho we Sizwe* during apartheid. Opposite the factory, on the other side of the road are the massive Sigma coal mine dumps, monuments to the ultra-exploited labor of the black migrant laborers that SASOL housed in Zamdela. These days, little human or motorized traffic passes beneath the massive steel arch made from mining jacks with the Sigma insignia splayed across it. As Eric Louw Weg curves to the left, Zamdela's northern entrance is on the right, marked by the customary advertising billboards which mark the entrance to every South African township: a large 'Love Life' HIV-AIDS prevention sign, the obligatory adverts for various soaps and laundry detergents, and an advert for Black Label beer featuring an image of a black industrial worker wearing the unmistakable blue overalls of the South African working class, quenching himself with an ice cold beer as sweat drips off his rippling chest. Tembelethu hostel is situated directly opposite the south facing end of the SASOL I factory, next to the township cemetery which has exponentially grown in recent years; something made plain by the row upon row of simple, identical wooden crosses marking the mounds of red earth in the newer section. Thembelethu hostel was built by AECI (African Explosives and Industries) a chemical company which set up a factory in the vicinity of Sasolburg in the 1960s. The hostel was built at a slightly later stage and was designed to house both single male workers, and married workers and their families. AECI managed the hostel until it sold the property in the early 1990s. Today, the hostel has fallen into disrepair, owned by a local African National Congress councilor on the city council who contracts a security company to control access to the hostel at its main entrance, but otherwise appears to do little in the way of maintenance. The hostel grounds include a soccer field where residents complain the grass is rarely cut, the buildings exterior is in dire need of a paint job. There are many broken windows.

A scribble on the visitors sign-in sheet at the entrance, and I make my way through the grounds of the hostel. I phone Styx, telling him I've arrived. A couple of minutes pass, before I hear a voice calling out 'Steve!' After brief introductions Styx shows me to the room he calls 'our place'. We walk down a dark corridor in the hostel block adjacent to the soccer field, where he shows me into a room which was clearly not designed to be used for accommodation purposes. On the wall directly opposite the doorway

there are a bank of metal lockers with stickers warning of possible electric shock. We are in a store room which also contains the power mains for the hostel block. The room is full of young men and is a scene of youthful, relaxed homo-sociality. Two men are sitting on upturned plastic beer crates scattered around the room, another two are lying on the bed on the left as we enter the room, their bodies casually intertwined. A young muscular man with a gleaming, shaved head is sitting on a stool at a table with two desktop computers and keyboards placed on it, and a printer underneath. As we enter, the man at the computer, introduced to me as Khosi, stops the playback of what I recognize as the recent Hollywood hip-hop dance movie, *Stomp the Yard*. Styx introduces me to Fanyane, who he describes as his 'sidekick', Msiga, 'the baby of the group' at nineteen, the towering Paul, and Thabo, Paul's younger brother. The young people assembled in the room are what remained at this time of the Patriots Theater Group, a local theater group established in 2008 which at its height, and its first and (to date) only public performance in June 2009, numbered twelve people, including four young women. These women were all gone by now, as were all but the six young men I met that night.

Most of the young men were approximately my age, in their late twenties to early thirties. The Patriots had appropriated the Thembalethu hostel store room as their 'organizational base.' They paid no rent and as yet no-one had asked them to. In the right hand corner of the room there was a collection of drums, next to a table housing an unplugged fax machine, a CD-player, a kettle, some utensils and enamel plates and mugs. On the floor beneath the table were a series of buckets and food containers, a hot plate, some dish-washing liquid, a cooking pot and an iron. Against the opposite wall, next to the bed, there was a white-board leaning against the wall, a white briefcase and a filling cabinet with a family photograph appended to the top draw. In the corner, a shopping cart packed with clothes, shoes and a suit-case. On one wall were posted images of Bob Marley and Haile Selassie I; on another wall a piece of paper with the Patriots rehearsal and training timetable printed on it, and a motivational quotation: “If it leads, it bleeds”. On the opposite wall, a similarly inspirational page extracted from the Sasolburg municipality newsletter, featuring a story titled 'Business and Development: Women on the Move', about a Mrs Modise, a resident from nearby Deneysville who started a upholstery business for herself in 1994 after the sewing factory she worked at closed.

That first night, the members of the group spoke excitedly to me about their group – named as a statement of patriotism, their play, and about their township, Zamdela. Styx had summonsed the group to its headquarters to meet with this researcher. As I would came to understand over the coming months, Styx was the *de facto* leader of the group, who took such summonsing powers for granted; he also took it upon himself to hire and fire members at will. But what had brought this group of young people together in the first place? They certainly had a shared passion for dramatic performance. But what other solidarities tied them together? Comprising a number of first language seSotho speakers and isiZulu speakers, they are a typical multi-lingual and multi-ethnic group of modern South African township dwellers. They enjoy pretty much unimpeded mutual linguistic intelligibility and what ethno-linguistic differences do exist appear mostly inconsequential to shared everyday intimacies. Ethno-linguistic joking is common, and occurs at everyone's expense, although like many other Zamdela residents their most unsympathetic discourses are directed at older migrant laborer men (many former miners) who live in apartheid era single-sex hostels, not far from Thembalethu, who they speak of as 'backward' and 'stubborn'.

They also have a shared phenomenological sense of the township as a space, or what they call the 'loxion', a youthful linguistic reworking of bureaucratic nomenclature. They identify themselves as part of 'the youth', that most clichéd category of official and popular discourse in South Africa. In their everyday talk the 'youth' category is invoked as an encompassing term incorporating themselves, but in their folk sociology, the category comes apart. For instance, they think of themselves as separate from the self-consciously machismo *Pantsula* street sub-culture which has become immensely popular

among male adolescents and young men in Zamdela, and other post-apartheid townships.

A significant part of the grounds for the Patriots positioning in contrast to the dominant *amapantsula* sub-culture, is their own performance of Rastafarian stylings. When they are in each others company, or that of those otherwise assumed to share their sensibility, their speech and gestures contain frequent references to *Rastarafi* culture. They greet each other with 'Fiah!' (fire), a reference to the smoking of marijuana, but also an offer of encouragement, affirmation and solidarity. When group members part ways, the greeting 'more fiah!' or 'one love!' (the Bob Marley song) is commonly exchanged. When the members smoke marijuana they speak of 'burning up Babylon'. The music of Bob Marley and other reggae artists are played often on the organization's computers at Thembalethu. Their performance of *rasta* stylings do not extend to growing their hair in dreadlocks, or to clothing (beyond an occasionally rasta hat or Marley t-shirt) or the sorts of dietary prohibitions typically followed by strict adherents to Rastafarianism. Nonetheless, the *rasta* idiom is clearly an important aspect of the construction of their identities and of the group's shared subcultural stylings. Hip-hop culture is also important to the construction of their imaginative worlds. Hollywood's visions of American hip-hop culture provides the soundtrack and symbolics to much of their homosociality at Thembalethu. Of course, South African *kwaito* also features prominently and is as much a soundtrack to their lives as Bob Marley. Kwaito, hip hop and Rastafarianism each model affirmative, effervescent black identities, and offer the imaginative possibilities of global fantasy. (Weiss, 2009)

But how do these imaginings relate to the Patriots frequent invocation of 'African tradition' in conversations and interviews – and in the narrative of their play? Certainly, their sense of themselves as *isiZulu* or *seSotho* cultural subjects is central to the construction of their subjectivities. They share a serious concern about the obstacles to their becoming proper cultural subjects. These concerns relate both to the space of Zamdela township itself, imagined as generally inhospitable to the ancestors and to the proper performance of key rituals, and to their sense of how contemporary conditions of joblessness and apparently accelerated commodification are inhibiting the very rites of passage (bride-wealth payments and initiation) which they speak of as central to marking the 'proper' coming-into-being of *isiZulu* and *seSotho* cultural subjects. They are in many ways classic *bricoleurs* (Levi-Strauss, 1966; Derrida, 1966), their complicated subjectivities reflect their engagement with the diverse imaginaries of not only Rastafarianism and hip-hop, but 'loxion culture', of Christianity in its various vernacular forms, even, in Styx's case, of Islam; with the fluid realm of socialized 'traditions' which they gloss in everyday talk as 'African culture', and with capitalism and its discourses.

While the Patriots – like many other township residents -- construct themselves in part in opposition to the traditionalist hostel dwellers who they describe as 'backward' and 'stubborn', they nonetheless feel the burden of fashioning themselves in the (reified) image of cultural 'tradition'. Their sense of themselves as 'African' cultural subjects clearly does not preclude their identifying with hip hop and *rasta* subcultures but they worry deeply about their ability to properly consecrate marital, ancestral and other social relations in cultural terms. A significant part of this anxiety relates specifically to their ability to properly become men (*indoda*: isiZulu; monna: seSotho). Their sensitive rendering of the ontological dilemmas and familial strife facing the isiZulu migrant laborer who is the central character in their play, is as much a reflection on their own lives and kin histories as on the history of Zamdela *per se*. It is a production of history (Cohen, 1994) that is necessarily, deeply personal – i.e. related to personhood. Their appropriation of the 'Investing in Culture' government program can be understood as a creative response to the generally inhospitable conditions of life in a company town where the work which their fathers and grandfathers relied upon is now so hard to come by. Indeed, their attempt at gaining traction in the world, but also a response to history.

Styx was born and spent most of his adolescence in Qwa Qwa, a former apartheid era Bantustan in the Eastern Free State. He often came to Zamdela during school vacations because his mother, and

maternal grandparents lived in the township, as did his father, who died two years ago, and who first worked in Sasolburg as a gardener in the white suburbs. When Styx completed the final year of high school in 1999 he decided to relocate to Zamdela because of its proximity to Johannesburg, and the presence of some of his family members. Fanyane was born in nearby Sebokeng, one of the largest black townships in the Vaal Triangle region, which is attached to Vanderbijlpark, another industrial town, established in the 1940s to house workers of the former Iron and Steel Corporation of South Africa (ISCOR), like SASOL, another of the South African state's major industrial projects. Sebokeng became infamous during the mid to late 1980s as the site of violent clashes between local residents engaging in rent and service boycotts and apartheid security forces. Fanyane came to live in Zamdela with his grandmother, in 1988, when he began his schooling.

The Zamdela Performing Arts Center (ZAPAC) first brought Styx, Fanyane and Khosi together. Established in the mid 1990s, as part of the post-apartheid government's drive to build arts and cultural centers in poor urban and rural communities, the center was initially financed by Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) funds and has since also received support from the Finish government's Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. Styx first saw Fanyane on television, delivering an electrifying gum-boot dance performance at the South African National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, as part of a performance troupe from ZAPAC. The center has been directed since its establishment by Tony Campbell, a Jamaican-Canadian and self-described “repatriated African”. Until their partings of ways with Campbell, Styx and Fanyane were able to use the center and its director's connections to South African and international performing arts networks to extend their talents beyond Zamdela. Through performers passing through the center, Styx learned about bursaries which could support studying the performing arts at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He applied for a bursary from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). Applicants were required to provide proof of financial eligibility, but he was not able to get hold of a pay slip from his father because, in Styx's words “by that time I couldn't know where my father is. You know, family crisis and all those things.”

At ZAPAC, Styx also heard about bursaries at Johannesburg's legendary performing arts institution, the Market Theatre, situated in the New Town district in downtown Johannesburg, one of the key sites of the political protest theater movement during apartheid. Having successfully auditioned for admission to the theater's 'Laboratory' drama school program, Styx applied for and received a bursary. He also received funding support from the Sasolburg municipality after writing a letter asking for funding support to make up the cost of tuition at the theatre. He has participated in a number of international arts exchange programmes which have taken him to Europe and North America.

'Its dog eat puppy here'

In 1999, Fanyane successfully auditioned to be a dancer in the opening ceremony of the 1999 All-Africa Games in Johannesburg. He throughly enjoyed the experience, especially the opportunity it afforded him to learn about dance choreography, but he bitterly recalls the moment he received his minuscule wages for his efforts. A sense of subjugation is a major theme in Fanyane's narration of his experiences in the arts, and his life as a whole:

> Ever since then [the All Africa Games] my life has been bad. I am sick of South Africa. I want to go overseas, I want to do this overseas, in New York. I can make even $500 and invest it here in South Africa. I don't want to live here, I want to invest here. I think I can get a good job on that side. Its dog eat puppy here.

The 'dog eats puppy' metaphor used by Fanyane was a constant refrain in conversations during my time in Zamdela. Meant by its users to capture the Darwinian logics of everyday life in Zamdela, I take it to

be a suggestive theory of life in contemporary South Africa, more broadly. Among the Patriots it has also become something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Styx might be said to have turned the 'dog eats puppy' logic against other group members whom he regards as insufficiently self-disciplined with respect to what he regards as their responsibilities to the group.

One summer's evening, Fanyane and I were hanging out at Tembelethu. Styx had gone to Qwa Qwa for the week to join his family in marking the one year anniversary of his father's death. Fanyane started preparing *pap en wors* for our dinner, and I asked him to tell me why he was so hostile towards Tony Campbell, the director of ZAPAC. As he spoke his brow furrowed and his voice grew strained:

> Tony -- he used me a lot. As I'm talking now, I'm not supposed to be here. I'm supposed to be overseas doing my stuff. I made lot of money for them [ZAPAC]. Every time I was the best performer award. I promoted his organization a lot. Locally, provincially, nationally, internationally. Check? I thought, this guy is trying to use me. I would have ended up...I would have ended up dying poor.

It was the thwarted opportunity to go on an arts exchange program to Canada which was the ultimate, bitter source of Fanyane's disenchantment with ZAPAC and with the charismatic personality of its director:

> I heard about Canada at the center. I ask Tony about it and he said, 'yes you can go'. I was very much excited. Then I ask him about it, because time was going. He said 'no this is not for you. Canada only pay the plane ticket, you have to pay for accommodation and food. This is not for you.' But he was lying! And I know he was lying because I was in his car one day and he went into the shop. And there were papers on the seat. And one of them was from Canada and it had all the information. And it said everything is paid. It said that, man! I know he lied! [pointing his index finger angrily to the ground]. I know!

Such bitter disappointments, compounded by the deception and sense of betrayal which they entailed, prompted Fanyane to break with ZAPAC and found his own "organization" which he dubbed SKF (Success Kingdom for Freedom) Productions– a nomenclature redolent of the rhetoric of prosperity gospel Christianity. There is a proliferation of such shoestring organizations in Zamdela, many fueled by similar couplings of religious preoccupations and aspiration. During its first, brief incarnation, SKF incorporated a handful of younger local school children, but depended mainly on his own charismatic personality and passionate labors. Fanyane would visit local businesses in Sasolburg, such as furniture stores and clothing stores, asking store managers if they would be prepared to pay SKF a small fee in exchange for the group doing 'promo' dance performances outside store premises in an effort to attract passing customers. Few store managers responded enthusiastically to these efforts. The predominantly white, Afrikaans speaking store managers and owners he encountered tended to treat his overtures dismissively or regard him with the suspicion typical of a notoriously racist town. As Fanyane remembered: "I go to a shop and ask a lady for funding. White people say to me I must go to my president and ask funding." SKF in its first incarnation did not last long. Fanyane had originally intended the organization to undertake "community development programs", which in practice involved offering dance workshops and performances to local schools, for a fee. Zamdela school principals did not respond very enthusiastically to Fanyane's pitches.

Investing in Culture

In 2005 the South African government's national department of Arts and Culture established a program called *Investing in Culture*, which was designed, “to provide empowerment opportunities for unemployed people through skills development, training, and job creation” through its particular focus on arts, culture and heritage. The program provides 'seed' funding (and skills training through workshops) to support the start-up of community development and entrepreneurial projects, such as bead-work co-operatives or similar small, medium and micro enterprises (SMME's) in poor rural and urban communities. In a 2009 parliamentary speech, the Minister of Arts and Culture, Lulu Xingwana, explained the purpose behind the program thus:

> We need to invest in such a way that our investment results in thriving communities who ultimately can stand on their own and grow. Culture must be rooted in the realities of our people, in their daily lives, struggles and victories. Creative industries are critical for our country and for nation-building. They create critical opportunities to uplift and empower our people, especially the youth.[1]

Especially the youth. This emphasis and the implicit sense of the pressing need for interventions to act upon 'the youth' as a problematic demographic is a persistent feature of elite political discourse in contemporary South Africa. It is also a common topic of concern and debate in popular discourse, especially, though not exclusively, among older generations. “The youth” as an overdetermined category of incessant discourse has become a Janus-faced, global signifier of the peril and promise entailed in generational reproduction in a period when jobs are scare. (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2005; 2006) In South Africa there is much breathless talk of intractable crises surrounding “the youth” who are invariably coded as black; of a generation apparently lacking moral and vocational purpose, imperiled by sexual proximity in the age of HIV-AIDS; of young black men thrown into criminal activities because of unemployment. The young men that I spent time with in Zamdela share many of these concerns about the fate of their generational cohort and about their own lives. Some of their comments echo the tone of the more alarmist discourses:

> Fanyane: The one thing I experienced about Sasol [the common colloquial shortening of Sasolburg] is its an industrial environment. Its more populated, more youth. But scarce activities to keep them busy than things like squatter camps, drugs...there's lack of entertainment.

Styx first learnt of the *Investing in Culture* program being offered by the Department of Arts and Culture from a poster pinned to the signboard at ZAPAC in early 2008**.** He decided that he would work towards constituting a group of fellow arts enthusiasts from Zamdela so that they could apply for a grant from the program. Fanyane's organization, Success Kingdom for Freedom, was moribund, having limped along unconvincingly for a short while. Styx had recently returned to Zamdela from his latest spell at the Market Theatre. He knew Fanyane from ZAPAC. Khosi, a first language isiZulu speaker born in Zamdela, had also participated in programs at ZAPAC during periods when he was not away from Zamdela doing contract work as a fork-lift truck driver at a glass factory in Witbank. Styx persuaded Khosi and Fanyane that together they should form the core of a theater group and apply for an *Investing in Culture* grant. The Investing in Culture “project proposal” form which they filled out and submitted to the Department of Arts and Culture required that they identify a 'project manager' and

1 http://www.polity.org.za/article/sa-xingwana-speech-by-the-minister-of-arts-and-culture-at-the-state-of-the-nation-debate-in-parliament-04062009-2009-06-04

describe “what products/services” they would “produce/render”. Styx's role in initiating the application appears to have made him the obvious choice as “project manager”.

When I first asked Styx to tell me about the grant, he began by reeling off a succession of policy acronyms: “the whole idea is Black Economic Empowerment, it’s accelerated, short income, its ASGISA. It’s all these laws. GEAR and all these things.” These comments accurately placed the *Investing in Culture* program in its broader national policy context. Styx explained that after hearing that the Patriots grant application had been successful, he and Fanyane were invited to Bloemfontein, to attend a training workshop hosted by the Free State Department of Arts and Culture, along with the other grant winners. The workshop had apparently begun with the regional *Investing in Culture* program director ponderously explicating some policy background. The workshop had programmatically outlined the various phases which the Department of Arts and Culture expected “program beneficiaries” to move through. The end goal of these phases was to make beneficiary projects “marketable, self sustaining, community driven” and of “direct benefit to the community in terms of job creation and skills development.”[2] The workshop was conducted in the top-down manner rather typical of post-apartheid citizen-pedagogy, with government officials seeing their task as imparting skills to citizens constructed as unskilled, empty vessels. An important component of the workshop involved teaching participants budgeting skills, including crash-courses in using Microsoft Office software to compile project budgets. The grant was disbursed in the form of stipends to individual members of the group. The total grant amount was the not inconsiderable amount of R200, 000. Styx as the project manager received the largest amount, Fanyane the next largest, with the remaining amount distributed in equal proportions among the other eight people who were members of the group at the time the stipends were disbursed.

For all the gestures towards “community”, with its emphasis on budgetary discipline and “beneficiaries” making themselves “marketable”, by “producing” and “rendering” “products and services”, the program promotes a neoliberal model of citizens as entrepreneurial subjects. (Foucault, 2008) The South African government has represented the program as it's investment in the cultural heritage of the nation. The expectation is that the 'beneficiaries' of the program will themselves become investors in culture and marketers of culture; that they will treat culture, including their own identities as commodities; that they will become cultural entrepreneurs in the strictest sense. (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2009)

'Making Moves'

During my time in Zamdela the greatest amount of Fanyane, Styx and Khosi's Patiots related labors were given over to just such cultural entrepreneurship, selling the group's talents to local businesses in Sasolburg, as Styx explained:

> We must always come up with new ideas and see who can buy these ideas and give us money. Its so we can get something like an income into the organization. We ask for a performance or a donation from enterprises in town. If we've never spoken to people we agreed we don't want to print letters – it will be our loss – we will lose paper and lose ink. So we need to go and understand which people are interested. These furniture shops – these private sectors. We request maybe something from them. Like a donation. Then we come and perform for them live in front of the shop then people pop maybe R1, R5. But we've already agreed to an amount. This one is just a boost. It gets people to come to the shop. We are promoting the shop. Maybe when they've got discount or whatever, instead

2 Investing in Culture Brochure. Add full cite.

> of them having someone who has to sit there with a mic we call them with drums and singing. The person will come as if he or she is going to watch us. Then she might be interested in something else and then buy it.

They refer to these approaches to businesses as 'making moves', a revealing phrase suggestive of their attempts at gaining traction in the world, but also implying a deliberate, strategic purposefulness. Styx, Fanyane and Khosi were constantly 'making moves', talking about 'making moves', about different tactics for ‘making moves’ and which businesses to approach. In any week they often went out on as many as four of the days, making their way through the Sasolburg business district, knocking on doors, often having doors slammed in their faces, and only occasionally glimpsing hope: a manager who tells them to 'come back tomorrow'. By the end of my time in Zamdela, it appeared increasingly unlikely that these efforts were going to turn the group into the 'sustainable business' which the *Investing in Culture* program envisioned. After one of many days spent knocking on doors, Styx looked dejectedly at the floor as he told me: “It's very difficult. It's a struggle.” Fanyane concurred: “it's a struggle.”

The Patriots vocabulary for talking about what they imagine their purpose to be closely echoes the language of the *Investing in Culture* program:

> Styx: What we were supposed to do was invite beneficiaries. Those people must be people who are not doing anything but they do have love for the performance of arts...they are unskilled...we give them the skill.

After the completion of the “skills development” phase, the Patriots moved on to work-shopping and rehearsing the play. In their funding proposal, under the section asking how the project would contribute to 'community development', the Patriots had indicated that they planned to perform their play at local schools. They envisioned the play being about:

> ….information dissemination on careers or opportunities that are available for youth of South Africa from the government, private sectors and all those things. When we were applying [for the grant] we had a primary target group, it was high school students. Then our secondary target group was youth out of school. And the tertiary target group was private sector, people who have information. But there's a breakdown in between and the youth can't access the information, so we become the mediator.

When I first started spending time with the Patriots, they had recently completed their first, and to date, only public performance of the play. Over the coming months they tried in vain to secure performances at local schools.

The play's broad thematic emphasis may appear to have the ring of national government pedagogy but Styx insisted it was no imposition:

> The theme came out of us. We thought, what can we do? Shall we do a play and go and teach them...about drugs or Aids? [sarcastic] Okay, we're not ignoring those issues, but what is is that can make them feel that there is a need to watch this play so we can make income? I said no, what if we do it for career-wise. that we show them how everyone struggles and then how it becomes at the end of the day that no matter what comes in your way – but if that's what you want to achieve, there will be uphill, downhill movements, but one thing for sure – if you keep on going you'll achieve your goal.

Such language, with its promise of ultimate personal triumph is a central element of the play's message, and of their everyday talk about their own fates.

'...their cultures were not well invested in them'.

While the play incorporates the themes of 'information dissemination' and 'career opportunities' and perhaps bares the imprint of post-apartheid citizen pedagogy in these ways, it is also a richly textured portrayal of Zamdela's history. The play places Zamdela firmly in the context of South Africa's migrant labor system. The play's main protagonist is a black male migrant laborer living in an urban township who takes up with "township girlfriends", rarely returning to his nominal rural 'home' and family, until eventually he stops remitting wages 'home'. The play's subject matter clearly resonates with the Patriots personal biographies and familial histories.

> Styx: when you look at Zamdela, most of the people here are like me. We were not born and bred and buttered here. I come from wherever I come from, my father used to work here. And then there was a problem of family. My father was not going back home, he was not sending money because now there's this girlfriend in here. [Zamdela] We realized that most of us even in this project, we're living with single parents. Its either they're divorced, but mostly you find the youth in Zamdela, they are living with single parents – but they are still surviving both parents, but they are no longer staying together. Maybe their mother is back *emakhaya* at rural area or she came to this side but she's staying in Protema [the oldest neighborhood of Zamdela] and the father is staying in Chris Hani [another section of Zamdela] with the other women. You understand? So there's a lot of polygamy, but its illegal because it was not done according to African culture, but everything was done like that. [snapping fingers together twice, suggesting improper partnering]

Styx's claim about the prevalence of improperly contracted polygamous marriages, "not done according to African culture", reflects a more widely held view among many residents in Zamdela of the township as a space of cultural transgression. While these sentiments might be expected among older residents, I found that my young interlocutors express similar concerns about the difficulty of cultural reproduction, while they nonetheless also express ambivalence, even ridicule towards the older isiZulu-speaking men in Zamdela's hostels who are treated as metonymyic of a stubborn ethnic chauvinism. The tenor of my interlocutors discourse about the obstacles to orderly cultural reproduction, and the consequences believed to follow from such failure are nicely captured in Styx's excavation of what he believes are the root causes of the fate of Zamdela's youth:

> Styx: You find that there's lot of primary schools in this township but there's little of high schools which means education starts and ends at primary level immediately when people need to go to tertiary – I mean to high school level, they can't – based on one thing: its an industrial area. They are hungry for money. Because there's poverty in house they just go and look for piece jobs. The other thing is most of the people in this township they are from the farm so when they arrive here in the township and when they get a little bit of money they don't see the necessity of going to school. I don't have shoes but at least theres a contract that can give me R150 or R200 a week. At least I'll be able to drink every week, date my girlfriend; lay-by some clothes; have some airtime; lay-by a phone. And the other thing is crime rate and drugs and alcohol in this area and HIV and AIDS. That's the top list for youth of this township. So we said no there must be a problem why the majority of

youth don't realize that this is one of the economically rich area in Free State province and they have to use that opportunity – that I must go to school and study science and maths and complete it and go to SASOL firm and get this Skilltech[3] whatever and become somebody in this world. Or I can do commercial subject and have a good passing rate and apply for bursaries? Because there are certain students they are studying all over the world with the bursaries that they got from SASOL. Some are the CA's [Charted Accountants]. So we said, no we must look at it and we must juxtapose it with this program that funded us, *Investing in Culture*. What's the whole meaning of Investing in Culture? It means the whole of the majority of the youth here in our township – that's why they've got this unfinished businesses in their careers. There is a possibility that their cultures were not well invested in them. Or their traditions. Because we Africans, we know that when your child is born there are certain ceremonies that has to happen and we believe that if certain things were not done correctly it might cause havoc in your life.

SS: Do you think so?

Yes, it has, it has -- it has side effects and psychological effects. For instance, let's say I did my traditions. Because my father married my mum. And they did our Basotho traditions that when we were a young baby they are supposed to cut your hair and put *letsoku*[4]The other thing about Zamdela – I think in the whole of South Africa, its one of the township that has lot of these initiation schools. We believe initiation schools are for villages [rural villages], but it happens here in the township. You find that a person is a Xhosa and he's supposed to go to the initiation school of Xhosa's but he comes to Basotho's because of peer pressure, wanting to belong to this gang or whatever. It does have some effects in his life. Another thing is there are people from this mountain[5] and people from that mountain coming back to the township and they know each other from that and they form gangs and they see someone from the other mountain wearing these different colored beads around their neck and they rip them out. Or they fight over a girlfriend. This is how us young people practice culture in Zamdela now. Initiation is a journey to manhood, learning how to be *Mosotho*, how to be *monna* [sesotho: man]. Learning your traditions. As a black man you are learning where you originated, as your forefathers before you. You white people, you might go to hospital for circumcision for your tradition, we go to initiation school. The witch doctors, people who know our culture and tradition teach us. But culture changes. Its a business now. You pay to go to initiation school, and you go to the police station and you get a stamp. You can go here, on a farm nearby but that is more expensive than going far away in the rural areas. Here you pay R400, R500. there you pay R200, R300. You can do it in Qwa Qwa or Lesotho for much cheaper. Because people think there is lots of money here. You don't do the initiation here in the township. Its not allowed. It must be far away where there are no women who can see and others who haven't been through this.

There is much to comment on here. First, there is Styx's delineation of the brutal logics of an industrial town and the pressing poverty which drive young people in their adolescence into piece work, perhaps best captured in the phrase: "they are hungry for money". His depiction of the newly arrived rural

3 A skills development partnership between SASOL and the local Flavius Maleka Further Education and Training College, the former SASOL artisan training college

4 Sesotho: a reddish-brown clay ointment smeared on the body.

5 Basotho initiation schools are colloquially known by the name of the mountain where they are located.

migrant to the township from "the farm" who "don't see the necessity of going to school" is a withering caricature, typical of the kind of folk social Darwinianism with which I became very familiar from conversations with Styx. But with its references to the widespread dependence on lay-by credit, sex and alcohol, it also quite accurately sketches the rough sociological outlines of a culture of shoestring leisure activity and consumption among young men in Zamdela which is most visible in the high traffic in customers at low-end cell phone and clothing stores in Sasolburg's CBD and in the ebullience of street and shebeen sociability on weekends. But it is Styx's explanation for the predicament of Zamdela's youth – the "unfinished businesses in their careers" – that is perhaps most striking. The implication is that young people in Zamdela are unemployed, or stuck doing poorly paid, itinerant piece-work or generally 'fail', in the language of personal achievement and self-fulfillment – to "become somebody in this world", because they are imperfectly consummated cultural subjects. The language used by Styx to describe this failing warrants special attention: "their cultures were not well *invested* in them."

The deployment of the investment metaphor to characterize the making of cultural identities is certainly jarring. If the South African government imagines that its investments in 'culture' will ultimately secure profitable returns, whether in the shape of protecting the nation's cultural heritage or producing self-sufficient citizen-entrepreneurs, the logic of Styx's statement implies that through an apparent failure of socialization, and the failure to perform important rituals, elders, parents and other kin have failed to 'invest' in the new-born child; that they have failed to inscribe culture into their person. This failure, in the terms of the capitalist logic implicit in Styx's framing, results in greatly diminished value or 'returns': young people who have no employment, no hope of becoming, in Styx's words, "somebody in this world". There is some startling ontological footwork here: a generalized lack among the youth of Zamdela in terms of cultural discourses of individual personhood is ascribed to a perceived lack in that realm of cultural practices reified in everyday discourse as 'tradition': the rites of passage (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1969) which have been central to the constitution of seSotho personhood (Mauss, 1979; Taylor, 1985) at least since Mosheoshoe sought to make such practices the glue binding the Basotho in the nineteenth century. (Guma, 1965) Here, then, we have an emblematic irony: the putatively 'traditional' rites and routes to becoming and personhood, such as *lebollo* (seSotho: initiation), which Styx characterized as "a journey to manhood, learning how to be a *Mosotho* man" – are pressed into the service of explaining reputed failures of personal achievement: "becoming somebody in this world".

There is also some sense here, of the township as a transgressive space, regarded as an inappropriate space for the performance of initiation, in part because such rituals are understood to conventionally require the seclusion of male adolescents, but also because the urban is both gendered female, or constructed as a space which, in contrast to the rural, is marked by the uncontrolled presence of women, and because the rural is understood as the space of tradition, and the urban as the space of its violation. Similar transgression is suggested in Styx's reference to Xhosa's attending *lebollo* (Basotho initiation schools) "out of peer pressure", in an apparent effort to join the youth gangs cohering around particular *lebollo* or "mountains"; and the suggestion, again, that such persons ethnic/cultural mis-placement "have some effects in his life". As I argue below, such mis-placement is a central theme in the Patriots play. While Styx has lived in urban townships such as Zamdela and Alexandra for much of the last decade, and his diverse cosmological itinerary and *bricoleur* practices appear radically different to those of 'traditionalists' that he and many other Zamdela residents characterize as 'backward' and 'stubborn', he nonetheless thinks of his family's rural homestead in QwaQwa as his home, as the space where his ancestors reside:

> My home is at Qwa Qwa. That's where my forefathers are. That's why my father was living

> and then he had to come to this side and when he was working he just met with my mum – my mum was working at a certain somewhere. They start making us and they start marrying each other. My roots are in QwaQwa, that's my homeland. Thats where my spirits are. Sasolburg will never be my home – unless I can have a family here. I can have a family here for time being. But I've told myself I cannot survive here because I don't want my kids to have what I experience here.

It is important to recognize that while Styx may have acquired his sense of seSotho 'tradition' through the socialization of kin, while growing up in QwaQwa, and age cohort (during initiation), his particular cultural vision is not the result of an unreflexive cultural embeddedness. Styx has instead moved through a varied and complicated imaginative itinerary, and like a *bricoleur* (Levi-Strauss, 1966; Derrida, 1966) has fashioned his patchwork quilt out of the diverse array of imaginative materials at hand. Styx has come to first objectify, and later revalorize, his received 'traditions', augmenting them with infusions from elsewhere. Islam, Rastafarianism, Pan-Africanism and black consciousness are all important passage points through which Styx has fashioned his subjectivity. Listening to him describe the shifting topography of his thinking, the 'Africanism' which he now lists as his 'religious views' on Facebook comes slowly, idiosyncratically, into view. Finding a safe space for the ancestors and ancestral rituals appears to have served as a lodestar for his evaluation of the suitability of different cosmologies, coupled with a critique of the relationship between colonization and Christianity.

Sacrifice

The name Zamdela was sometimes described to me by residents as derived from the *isiZulu* '*ukuthela*', glossed as meaning “we have given up hope”. Other residents suggest that the name is a reference to ‘sacrifice’. Both meanings are, in their own, indexical of the politics of domestic affect within the apartheid era migrant labor system, and related to the apparent failure of male kin to return to rural homesteads from migrant labor work at SASOL. The ascription of blame in the “we have given up hope” rendering appears most likely to be directed at male migrant workers from the perspective of their kin living in rural homesteads. But there is room for ambiguity here. The phrase may just as likely describe the disappointment of male migrants themselves at their inability to return home, though this may be less likely. ‘Sacrifice’ is similarly ambiguous in terms of attribution. The precise etymology is unclear but its seems fair to conclude, on the basis of these two most common strands offered by residents that the dislocations entailed in apartheid's migrant labor system are inscribed in Zamdela's very name:

> Styx: Most of the people in Zamdela are from outside, they came here for mines and other industries. If you are in the rural area and your daddy is leaving to come to this side, these old parents will say he will never come back. Either he will die because of the mines or he will get married. Most of the fathers here are stepfathers, they're not the originals of those kids or whatever. Most of them get married on this side.

This complicated affective terrain lies at the heart of the Patriots play. I started my research in Zamdela a couple months after the play was first performed at a local community hall. I watched a DVD copy of the video of the performance with Styx and Fanyane on a bitterly cold Sunday afternoon during the 2009 South African winter. They had just moved from their Thembalethu base to a room in a house in the Chris Hani section of Zamdela. They told me the winter had become unbearable at Thembalethu. The house belonged to Ma Moeketsi, the mother of Paul and Thabo, two of the few remaining

members of the Patriots group. The home was made entirely of concrete; there were no carpets, and only one small filament heater, in the room next to the one Styx and Fanyane had moved into. By the end of the night, Paul and Thabo's mother had come home to discover her new house guests, ordering her sons to get them to leave. But before such drama, Styx and Fanyane were determined that I should watch the play in their presence, so they could make sure I got, in Fanyane's words, “the true story of what we were trying to do”.

The video camera, held by one of the Patriots friends, panned shakily across a community hall. There is a very small audience present to watch this, the first, (and to date only) performance of 'Here and Now'. The sparse audience are seated in blue plastic chairs, and the overwhelmingly concrete setting means there is a large echo which reverberates around the room with every delivered line. The audience include a small group of friends and family of some of the Patriots group members; two policemen, attending as invited representatives from the local police station, a couple of representatives from local businesses in Sasolburg who the group hoped would sponsor their future activities, and a representative from the Investing in Culture program. Every time the camera sweeps in their direction, the two policemen are slouching in their chairs, asleep.

The play begins with the Patriots ensemble of twelve performers reciting the lines to a poem. The words belong to the main protagonist, Baba Gumede, an *isiZulu* migrant laborer, working on the mines in Sasolburg. Gumede is the “father of two families”, the one at his *umuzi* (isiZulu: homestead) in Mahlabathini in rural KwaZulu-Natal, and the other in Zamdela township. It quickly emerges that he has died a miserable, lonely death. Over the course of the play it becomes clear that he was a broken man, ruined by his inability to reproduce himself as a cultural subject and as a man. The lines are delivered with suitable weight.

> Life.
> I can't sleep when I think about it,
> I scream when I dream about it.
> My heart bleeds when I speak about it.
> I've tried to escape it but I'm stuck in it.
> This life.

What was 'this life'? What prompted Baba Gumede’s decent into existential crisis? The rough outlines provided in the script of 'Here and Now' are as follows: Gumede leaves his rural home in Mahlabathini in KwaZulu-Natal in his early twenties, and comes to Zamdela as a migrant laborer, to work in SASOL's coal mines in the not too distant past. He had recently married his sweetheart. During the first two years working in Sasolburg, Gumede, returns home every six months to Mahlabathini for short leave, and during one such visit, Ma Gumede, his wife, conceives their daughter, Joy. Time passes and Baba Gumede stops returning home, and he stops remitting his wages to his wife and family. He begins a love affair with a *seSotho* speaking women, Mamatobo Matobo, who came to Zamdela from QwaQwa when she was eighteen years old. Their relationship results in a baby boy, Thabo. For reasons which will become clear, Gumede stops visiting Mamatobo and baby. He becomes increasingly bitter and afraid of visiting either his Zamdela family, or returning to his family in Mahlabathini.

'Here and Now' does more than simply underline the alienating effects of migrant labor on black familial and affective orders. The Patriots go further to insist that South Africa's poor black youths can transcend this particular history; that they can succeed in spite of history. This much is clear from Styx's discussion of an early scene in the play in which Gumede's daughter in KwaZulu-Natal, Joy, complains to Ma Gumede about her father's absence from her life. When she was growing up she used

to go to the nearest town to Mahlabathini with her mum at end of the month. Her mum would buy sweets and ice cream, but they had since stopped going to town altogether because her mother had told Joy that “your daddy is no longer sending money back home.” Styx stopped the playback:

> We believe every province in South Africa has a father who is a migrant laborer in Zamdela, either working in SASOL or under the ground. But the children they leave behind in their rural homes still end up being mechanical engineers, civil engineers, doctors, even if they no longer support them and their mothers had to struggle. We're saying, let’s leave the past for the past. That never impeded her to become what she wanted to be. That’s basically what we're trying to portray with that character.

Baba Gumede, it seems, could not “leave the past for the past.” The play depicts him still living in an old mining hostel right up to his death, surviving off his SASOL pension funds – incarcerated by history. Styx continued: “there are fathers like that in Zamdela, remember the father of Khosi about the Witdoek stories?” Khosi's father, Baba Ngubane, worked for SASOL until he and a couple thousand of other workers went on strike in 1987. SASOL fired the striking workers and deployed a vigilante gang known as the '*Witdoeke*' (Afrikaans: white hats) created by apartheid security forces, to intimidate other workers into not joining the strike. I had hoped to speak to Baba Ngubane, but despite Khosi's earnest mediation – he wouldn't speak to me for fear of jeopardizing the class action law suit which he and other workers were pursuing in American courts under the Khulumani Support Group.

> Styx: Baba Ngubane didn't want to tell you anything. Its something from 1987 that happened but still even today they are still having meetings. You can just imagine, someone who was retrenched from that period. How does he survive? Where do they live? Like this hostel next to Tembalethu. Number 1. You see these old men there. They are always there. You don't know how they survive. What about their family, do they go home to them in the rural areas? From January to December they are still there.
>
> SS: You don't think they send money from their pensions?
>
> No, they drink it. But you may find that some of them send it but you know as Africans we've got a belief that its not only about you [the father] supporting us [the family]. Its all about me waking up and knowing that my dad is in here, going out and then I come and I say to my friend this is my dad, this is my dad. And the neighbors say 'oh the father of this house is here.' That is one of our cultures. That’s what we've got. To sit with your father, even if maybe the life will change in the house. So we're questioning a lot of things about the present life in our township and no one is doing anything about it.

To sit with your father. There is a sense of profound loss, beyond the absence of fatherly financial support, here. And it is undoubtedly a very personal sense of loss for Styx. Baba Gumede can be read as a stand in for Styx's own absentee father, who came to Zamdela from QwaQwa in the 1980s, and who, like Baba Gumede, failed to return home to his wife and kin in QwaQwa after a period of time. In Styx's rendering: “there were family problems and my mum took this maintenance.” For Styx, the fact that he could not locate his father to get hold of a copy of one of his pay slips meant that he could not study at university. But if Baba Gumede – and perhaps even Styx – is unable to escape the hold of history, the play's pedagogical point is to convince its youthful audience – the sons and daughters of many Baba Gumede's – that they shouldn't allow the fact of their fathers absence from their lives, or the

fact that their mothers were 'township girlfriends', or indeed the perils believed to follow from failed cultural reproduction, prevent them from 'becoming somebody in this world'.

The mine scene

A group of black miners are working on shift in SASOL's coal mine. Its shortly before lunch, and their white supervisor is not within earshot. The miners start to talk among themselves.

> Miner A: The boss is giving the other guy extra money.
> Gumede: Don't speak to me about money, I'm busy working. I don't want to hear that someone else has been given more money while I'm working.
> Miner A: you call that work? [gesturing towards Gumede] Let me show you what work is!

Miner A, played by Fanyane, starts a gum-boot dance. Gumede responds in kind. They engage in a competitive display of gum-boot showmanship. The gum-boot dance suggests a playful competitiveness among the miners, but the reference to unequal pay is meant to highlight the difficulties faced by migrant workers working for SASOL, as Styx explains:

> We're saying even while they are working there is politics. Its not like life for them as our fathers was like there's nothing happening. There is certain things that are happening that breaks their soul but no-body knows about it. Even underground, the *mlungu* is giving the others big money because there's always competition.

But Styx almost immediately undercut the apparent humanizing logic behind the scene, insisting that the pedagogical point of this scene – directed at the young audience – was rather more Darwinian:

> Styx: We're instilling that again to society, you must know that there's somebody who is always better than you -- there's somebody who is always worse than you. Competition will always be there.
> SS: is that a bad thing?
> Styx: No thats not a bad thing. Its just the way it is.

Miner A continues with a fresh burst of gum-boot virtuosity:

> Miner A: That's work! If you are working you must use your POWER! [the word explodes from his lips] You just can't work for the sake of work. How's that power? [commenting on his performance]
> Miner B: HOT! That's the work that we want.

The siren goes off. Its lunchtime. Only one of the miners has food, which he shares with the others. Gumede is eating alone, slightly to the side of the group of other miners. They start talking about food – musing on the comparative cooking abilities of their female companions. The shift from food to sex is quick and effortless. Gumede's interest is piqued and he explains that his 'roll on' or secret township girlfriend provides the 'comforts of home' (White, 1990) in the absence of his rural wife – apparently cooking as well as his wife in Mahlabathini, while conforming to a long-standing view of township women as more sexually adventurous and adept than rural women:

> Gumede: My 'roll on', the one that survives here, she's the best cooker! She reminds me of my real wife back at home. But *abafazi* (isiZulu – women, here denoting women in the township) they can give you better than the one at home!
>
> Miner C: I have a problem, I'm no longer giving my wife the way I'm supposed to.
> Miner D: you see those pipes [pointing to the pipes leading from the mine to SASOL's factory] they have a very negative effect towards our bodies. They are killing us slowly, slowly.
>
> Miner B: uGumede, when was the last time you went back home?
> Miner D: Madoda [isiZulu: man], you must go home, you mustn't forget you have family at home.

The other miners evidently know that Gumede hadn't been home for a long time. He doesn't respond well to the criticism. His comment presents apartheid's coercive infrastructures of control over black workers bodies as an impediment to the consummation of affective relations – to love.

> Gumede: Fifteen years not being in public transport, only company transport, going under ground and coming back to the compound. But now we speak of love?

The play provides a generally sympathetic reading of Gumede's predicament, constructing him mostly as a victim of circumstances; of history. As Styx told me: “It’s not like he was not having a moment when he feels that I must go home. But he couldn't. It’s not like he's not remembering back at home.”

Mahlabathini Flashback Scene

Through a flashback, Gumede remembers when he and Ma Gumede were newly married. Ma Gumede and her friend are cleaning clothes in the river at Mahlabathini. The river – and their domestic labor – are used to mark a pastoral, traditionalist rurality and gendered order. Mahlabathini is constructed as Gumede's real home – as the space of tradition and of culture. It is also gendered as the space where his wife waits passively and obediently for the male migrant's return, and for his wage remittances. Gumede was working in Sasolburg by this stage. Ma Gumede's friend asks her: “do you trust a person who works at the mines?” Ma Gumede responds sentimentally to her friend’s probing: “you don't know what he's writing in the letters”.

Back in the mine, Baba Gumede also fondly recalls this period when he and Ma Gumede, like many other black South African women and men (Breckenridge, 2000), used love-letters to bridge the gap between town and countryside. Such reminiscing is then suddenly disturbed by the miner's white supervisor bursting onto the scene – speaking Afrikaans – ordering them to get back to work. The miners jump back to feverish work, with a sarcastic call of 'SASOL today, SASOL forever' (the tagline of a famous post-apartheid SASOL advertisement). There's a quick segue-way into an isiZulu worker song: “We are working very hard under the ground but working for peanuts”, before a parallel song, this time about the play itself; a tipping of the hat to the *Investing in Culture* program and its watching representative: “we as the Patriot Theater Production we are working together and we will do it together from here until the Parliament.”

A burst of further gum-boot dancing follows and against this backdrop, Styx's narrator figure links

the miner’s effervescence with the bright prospects for 'the youth' in the post-apartheid era:

> That’s the beauty, even though they were miners underground, they still have life, they still enjoyed what they're doing. And that joy comes back down to us. This is the New South Africa, you just have to stand up and do it for yourself because the government at the national level has created many structures for you. But youth of today we are not aware, we want our mothers to do everything for us. Here and now, here and now, there are a lot of things for us.

Again, it is striking how laudatory the language about the enabling role of the post-apartheid government is, as is its coupling with rhetoric emphasizing individualistic striving and denigrating dependence on others in gendered terms. The repetition of the play’s title, ‘here and now’ underlines the Patriots insistence that their pasts are surmountable. The next scene centers on the birth of Joy, Baba Gumede and Ma Gumede's daughter in KwaZulu-Natal. Shortly after her birth, Gumede went back to Mahlabathini to assist in performing the rituals involved in marking the birth of the baby and inaugurating a new isiZulu cultural subject. In Styx's words:

> He went home because he was a cultural activist and as a cultural activist you always feel that there is a need that you must implement your own culture within your children.

'Zamdela started to be alive'

After assisting with these rituals, Gumede returned to Zamdela, and in Styx's words, “after a certain period”, the township “started to be alive” – an under-described allusion to the appeal which township life could hold for black South African migrants to towns during the twentieth century. While ‘Here and Now’ presents a generally dystopian vision of the effects of migrant labor on black familial life and kinship, the notion of a township that “started to be alive” echoes my efforts elsewhere in this thesis, and in other scholarship (Coplan, 1985; Dlamini, 2010) towards offering a corrective to liberal and Marxist narratives which conceive of townships as uniformly unwelcoming spaces. There is no question that the historians and anthropologists who bequeathed us this view produced such narratives in partnership with informants, and many Zamdela residents, including the Patriots themselves to some extent, see the township as an inhospitable space for the work of reproducing relations with the ancestors, and to other aspects of cultural reproduction. But this does not mean that South Africa's townships, and urban settings more broadly haven't also had their appeals and seductions, that they haven't also been sites of desire and imagination. (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2004; Burke 2009).

In Baba Gumede's case Zamdela ‘came alive’ in part through the pleasures of intimacy with Mamatobo Matobo his ‘roll on’ or 'township girlfriend', the women with whom he would have a son named Thabo. The play presents such pleasures receding in the face of the crushing weight of cultural expectations and deception:

> Styx: Ma Matobo was also a cultural activist. But Ma Matabo lied to Baba Gumede. She said there's a ceremony at home back in QwaQwa, saying her sister was getting married. But it was not like that. They were doing a ceremony of Thabo. Thabo is going to fall under his mama's culture and tradition. And then Baba Gumede didn't know about that. That's why Thabo, when he was living here in Zamdela now, nothing was going straight. He will do this, its not coming out. He will do this, its not coming out. It’s because there

> was no implementation of the relevant culture to this man.

The description of both Ma Matobo and Baba Gumede as cultural activists invokes a vision of their respective cultures opposed in competitive relation to each other. Culture is imagined to be a contested terrain that must be defended or aggressively asserted. The gendered ascription of blame in these comments is certainly revealing. Gumede is deceived by Ma Matabo, and the assumption is that Thabo's 'relevant culture' – the 'culture and tradition' he should 'fall under' is his father's *isiZulu* culture and not his mother's *seSotho* culture. Once more there is the notion that the incorrect 'implementation' of culture in the child may have dire consequences. It is apparent that Ma Matobo's deception is presented as crucial to Gumede's ultimate existential collapse. The implication is that the pain associated with Gumede's failure to instill his culture into his son results in a generalized failure of cultural reproduction in his life, but also especially in terms of how Baba Gumede conceives of himself as a man. Because of his inability to shape his son as a cultural subject, Baba Gumede cannot reproduce himself as a cultural subject or as a man, and a deceitful woman is portrayed as responsible for thwarting such efforts. The audience's final sight of Baba Gumede has him crying out in despair: "oh my ancestors, where is our culture? I'm crying now because I couldn't manage to practice our culture and traditions. My ancestors help me!"

But if Gumede cannot escape the consequences of his past, our final encounter with the characters of Thabo and Joy underlines the plays overarching pedagogical point: that these young people can still succeed in the world in spite of the ghosts of their father's past; that they can transcend history. A slightly more sympathetic portrayal of the women in Baba Gumede's life emerges as the play reaches for redemption. Thabo complains to his mother that "nothing is going well." He shouts at his mother, demanding to know "who am I?" His mother answers exasperatedly: "after these many years that I've made you who you are you want to ask me who you are?" Back in Mahlabathini, Ma Gumede is complaining about her daughter's behavior: "you're always frustrated, you're no longer going out to the street, the other kids don't know about you." She senses that her father's absence might be to blame. "It's not my fault that your father left you. I'm trying all my best to see you being someone. Although we're struggling and there's poverty in the house, that won't stop you from being whatever you want to be."

In the final scene, Styx plays a government official from the Department of Arts and Culture who has come to speak to a class of high school students at a local school:

> I'm here to tell you about opportunities. It's very important. At the national level in the Department of Arts and Culture we have decided to invest in our culture. Which is why I'm here today. I want to see what you guys do, so I can take you to see all the theaters. I can take you to companies so that you can entertain them and dance, so you can get paid and do what you do best. You can survive, you only have to believe in what you do. You need to do what you do best guys. Can you show me what you can do?

The Patriots ensemble starts gum-boot dancing and singing with gusto.

As the play finally draws to a close, and we watch the twelve person Patriots ensemble perform the final celebratory dance, I asked Styx what had happened to the rest of the group since the performance we had just watched. Of the twelve performers, I recognized only Fanyane, Styx, Khosi and Msiga – one of the younger members of the group. Even Msiga was no longer around.

> SS: What happened to the rest of the group? I don't see any of these guys around

> anymore. What happened to Msiga?
> Styx: He's not part of us now.
> SS: Why, what happened?
> Styx: He fucked up. All these people, they were fired. Because of the way they represent themselves. They want to be spoon fed. They don't...they fail to accomplish their duties in time and if there's a problem they can't explain to you. They behave like spoilt kids. We don't want these spoilt children.

Styx was watching the dancing on the computer screen with a critical eye. His voice became increasingly angry and dismissive: “they were not fit for this show. It strains them. They were not physically and mentally fit. And they stole the camera, one of them....these...one of them. We don't know which one.” Fanyane echoed Styx: “Yes, they stole the camera”. Pointing at Khosi performing on the screen, his shirt drenched in sweat, Styx continued: “If you're not sweating, you're not working. Look at that man!” Glancing at the women performers in the group, he went on: “look at these bitches, they are dry. Go, fuck! Don't come back.” Such language was as much a feature of everyday discourse about women among the Patriots, as language objectifying women sexually. Styx was now in full flow:

> We used to rehearse for the show every day. I think I've fired more than thirty-five people since the group started. Some people have to be fired because they don't know why they are here. You cannot come late to work and say to your supervisor: ‘no I had certain home-chores.’ Its means you don't really get it, that you're trying to make life here. We're not playing monkey games. This is our life. This is what we can work, this is what we can sleep, this is what we can eat.

As ‘project manager’ Styx clearly believed his position gave him powers analogous to those of a supervisor or boss. He certainly hired and fired group members in this fashion. His unsympathetic response to group members arriving late for rehearsals, his dismissal of the excuse that group members may have legitimately had to help with house chores in their various home settings is certainly striking.

One night, after an afternoon spent hanging out at Thembalethu, Khosi invited me to his family's home on the other side of Zamdela. As we pulled into the drive way in my car, Khosi's wife, Buhle, walked out the gate, passing the front of the car. Khosi called out to her through the open window on his side. She ignored him. 'Eish', he sighed. 'Fighting?' I ask. 'She wanted me to take her to college this morning but I couldn't because I had to do these promotions'. Earlier that morning Khosi and Fanyane had both visited the kitschy Emerald Resort and Casino, just to the north of Sasolburg. Fanyane had told me that he had visited the casino the day before too, and it seems on both days the Emerald staff had sought to rebuff the unwelcome presence of the young men who didn't look like Emerald's clientèle. Earlier that afternoon, when I had arrived at Thembelathu, Khosi and Fanyane were doing some troubleshooting on the organization's desktop computers. Both computers always seemed to be freezing, and no amount of fiddling appeared to get them to work. The one computer clearly had no space left on it, though neither Khosi or Fanyane seemed especially keen to delete the huge amount of video and song files on the hard drive. The other seemed to have a virus problem. The frozen computers were especially problematic that afternoon because they were working on additional proposal letters for promotional performances which they were planning on submitting to other local businesses the next day. After listening to Khosi and Fanyane relate their unsuccessful efforts at Emerald casino, I asked “don't you sometimes feel discouraged?”. Khosi's response was disarmingly

sweet. He grabbed Fanyane tightly across his shoulders and said: “how can I with this guy? He always has hope!” Fanyane smiled broadly. Then Khosi pointed at the pictures of Bob Marley stuck to the wall: “he is giving us strength,” he said, before an affirmative “fire!”, and pumping his chest with a clenched fist.

Khosi was evidently having some difficulty balancing the demands placed on his time and labor by his attempts at helping turn the Patriots into a 'sustainable' proposition and the obligations entailed in his relationship with Buhle. Buhle was studying at a local mining college, finishing her final year of schooling. Khosi had recently finished school too. As we sat outside his house in the car and watched Buhle walking out of sight, he told me that he wants to “put something symbolic” on Buhle's finger. He told me that he is starting to think about “planning financially.” Khosi and his wife are still living in the same small house as his parents. He wants to build a house for his own family. He told me that he paid “a little bit” towards *lobola,* showing a small gap between his index finger and thumb. He had paid R2000, but he still had to pay the rest to pay the cost of the number of cows agreed upon in negotiations between his and Buhle's families. The problem, as many other young men in a similar position complain, is that the price of cattle has skyrocketed in recent years:

> R1400 a cow! I wouldn't pay R4000 for a human! I still have to perform some rituals, which will combine the spirits of our ancestors. She is Xhosa. Her parents were difficult. Like I say, these Xhosa people are so close minded!

Khosi's situation is by no means unique: the vast majority of young men of comparable age in South Africa face similar difficulties in an era where financial opportunities, especially employment, are simply not available for young men in the way that they were say, twenty years ago. (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004; 2006) The consequences are clearly significant, as Khosi's comment above makes clear. What is at stake is the imagined appropriate reproduction of cultural subjects, the proper consummation of relations with living kin, and of relations with the ancestors. If the rituals combining the spirits of Khosi and Buhle's ancestors (including the slaughter of *lobola* and associated rituals) are not performed timeously – or worse, at all – the consequences for both parties and their relationship, are understood to be potentially dire. As we have seen already, the young men in the Patriots group believe that such failures in cultural reproduction can potentially inhibit the ability of the children who might result from such a relationship from 'becoming somebody in this world'. As we got out of the car and headed inside the house, Khosi told me that he would again not be able to give Buhle a lift to college the next door, because he and Fanyane would be going to Emerald for one more try.

Styx expected the other members of the Patriots to display similar self-disciplining priorities, there would be no room for 'spoon-feeding', or 'spoilt children'. To remain in the Patriots and receive a stipend, required one to be a responsible, self-disciplining subject (Foucault, 1988), who keeps to a timetable, draws up a budget to manage your stipend, and internalizes one's *real* priorities as existing not so much in the realm of the reciprocal social relations and obligations of every day life, as in the timetabled rehearsal schedule under the surveillance of the supervisor; in pitching 'promotions' to prospective buyers of your cultural product at a kitschy casino who promptly and rudely turn you away. Dog eat puppy indeed.

On my last day in Zamdela in 2009, when I went to say goodbye to Fanyane and Styx, the later asked me if I could “lend some money”. He explained that the second half of the *Investing in Culture* grant hadn't yet been paid out by the Department of Arts and Culture. The next time I spoke on the telephone with Styx, he told me he was in Bloemfontein, taking a training course in business management at a small business college. He was still waiting for the government to pay out the second

half of the stipend. I asked him how Fanyane was doing, and he told me that 'Fanyane is no longer with me, he's got his own organization'. The signal was terrible and we had to cut the conversation short. When I called Fanyane, he told me he had just completed a dance performance “for the elders” somewhere in Zamdela. He confirmed that he was no longer working with Styx. He told me he had restarted his old organization, Success Kingdom for Freedom. He didn't say why he was no longer working with Styx and there were more signal problems. I assumed that there had been some kind of falling out or that Styx had fired him, since it seemed unlikely that Fanyane would voluntarily forgo the second half of his stipend. I later learn from Khosi that there had been a fight and that Styx and Fanyane were having ‘management problems’. Fanyane had put so much of his time and labor into trying to turn the group into the 'sustainable business' envisioned by the *Investing in Culture* program. No-one had made more 'moves' than Fanyane. The Patriots, it seems, have finally disintegrated.

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epilogue

When I next visited Zamdela in June 2010, I learned that Fanyane was arrested in May for his involvement in a march on the local municipality offices downtown. Since the beginning of 2010, while I was overseas, he had become a key mover in an umbrella community organization dubbed the Zamdela Concerned Youth Residents Consortium (ZCYRC). ZCYRC incorporates a number of local organizations, mostly shoestring bodies like Fanyane’s SKF Productions, which are registered with the Department of Social Development as not-for-profits – being a “registered structure” is a seen as important – but which mostly survive on their founders’ individual energies. Moral concerns about channeling youthful energies into sport and art activities are an important aspect of what seems to unite the young people in the ZCYRC who I spent time with in June. The language in the organizations constitution suggests that theirs is in many ways a redemptive project, longing for “rediscovery and true understanding of potential and purpose for existence, restoration of authentic self, rehabilitation of high level morality and character.”

But the ZCYRC can perhaps also be understood as offering a critique of local government practices, and of the realities of life after the decline of employment and paternalism in a company town. In conversations, at organization meetings and in the ZCYRC’s constitution and memoranda a familiar laundry list of issues is singled out as grievances: corruption, service delivery, poverty, crime and jobs. Their anger towards municipal officials and politicians is chiefly expressed in terms of critiques of the conspicuous display of wealth, of their remoteness – apparently councilors tend to move from Zamdela to nearby upper-middle class suburb Vaal Park – and of their poaching of Zamdela’s beautiful women. They speak in dire terms about the implications of joblessness in Zamdela in terms of the township’s sex-gift economy. Sons, they say, cannot “buy things for their girlfriends”; fathers help their sons meet the costs of gifting in exchange for sexual relations with their son’s girlfriends.

ZCYRC members insist that their quarrel is not with the ANC or national government. Some, like Fanyane’s house-mate Shaun Hadebe, a physically impaired man in his mid thirties from Pinetown, are ANC members. Hadebe has a history of party organizing and activism and claims that he was forced to leave KwaZulu-Natal by persistent ANC-IFP tensions. Over lunch one day in his and Fanyane’s RDP house, he suggests that the ANC Youth League doesn't exist in Zamdela; there are rather “people using the ANC's name for own purposes.” ZCYRC members tell me they are following what they call Jacob Zuma’s “presidential mandate”, or Julius Malema’s calls for the removal corrupt municipal officials

and politicians. Dismissive of suggestions of similar corruption accusations surrounding national ANC leaders, they insist on the disaggregation entailed in the phrase “fake ANC leaders”. Their frustrations with SASOL and other companies center on a perception that what jobs there are in local industries do not go to needy local Zamdela residents who they insist have the necessary skills, but go to residents from other towns; are given in exchange for bribes or sexual favours with ‘our mothers and sisters” or – in a still very Afrikaans company – go to Afrikaner pals and family members. The “outsiders” fingered in this critique are sometimes spoken of as being from other towns nearby, or sometimes from Limpopo and Mpumalanga. In its barest arithmetic the employment grievance is articulated in terms of a critique of SASOL’s profits coupled with a gesture towards an almost Faustian bargain: it is implied that residents would better tolerate the high pollution levels in Sasolburg in exchange for jobs.

In mid April the ZCYRC organized a march through Zamdela and Sasolburg, incorporating memorandum hand-over’s at the SASOL administrative block, the local Karabo Community Radio Station, the Zamdela Arts Centre, finishing at the municipality offices. Students from three local Zamdela high schools were roped into the march. The targeting of the radio station and arts centre (not to be confused with the Zamdela Performing Arts Centre) reflects the fact that the ZCYRC is driven in large part by a number of frustrated young performing artists who believe that neither the radio station or the arts centre are “doing enough for local talent”. Fanyane was arrested during this march.

On May 3rd a group of fifteen ZCYRC members – including Fanyane and Sylvester – snuck past security into the Metsimaholo Mayor Brutus Tshepo Mahlaku’s office, demanding to know why their memoranda hasn’t received the municipality’s attention, insisting that they wouldn’t move out of his office until they received a written response to their concerns. By this stage their demands had boiled down to a handful of specific requests:

1. That the Zamdela swimming pool be handed over to the ZCYRC for management
2. That the municipality provide land for a youth centre
3. That the municipality turns open spaces in Zamdela into parks
4. That the municipality ensure that long grass in the township is cut

The ZCYRC left the mayor’s office with a letter confirming the meeting, requesting that the organization identify vacant open spaces in Zamdela which could be turned into parks; that the municipality would “seek legal opinion” about the swimming pool [which the municipality claims was closed because of repeated cable theft]; a commitment from the municipality that it would provide land for the building of a youth centre, providing the ZCYRC secures developers who could provide financial support for the project.[6] ZCYRC envision SASOL as the source of these funds, and its latest memoranda to the company go beyond the usual requests for funding to cover transport costs to attend youth summits, for t-shirts, laptops and printers, to demanding in increasingly threatening language that it contribute to a ‘youth trust fund’ to provide bursaries to young residents and possibly also the setting up of a “care centre”, including a clinic. SASOL has rejected almost all such requests, though it is considering funding the proposed youth centre.[7]

One morning in June we head south in my car to Iraq section, which sprawls to the south of the SASOL I plant and Natref refinery. The ZCYRC have decided to make an intervention in a construction project where they have heard a contractor is not employing artisans from Zamdela. We drive for some

6 Executive Mayor’s Letter, 3 May, 2010

7 SASOL letter to ZCYRC

distance before we reach the construction site, where a water storage tank farm is being built. Upon arrival, Kopano (a member of the local GroundWork environmental NGO) leads the group of five ZCYRC members over to the entrance to the construction site, in search of the project manager. After listening to Kopano explain the group's grievance, the security guard at the gate tells the group that the manager is not on site. Kopano asks to speak to the 'CO' or communications officer of the project. The guard disappears. Then the project's safety officer, a 20 something year old coloured man, makes his way to the gate, enquiring about the source of their animus. Kopano recapitulates the group's grievance with the construction project's apparent hiring practices. Kopano started building up a head of steam, coupling an assertion of the group's putative respectability and legitimacy – "we are a registered structure" – with more strident language: "We are not patient. We want a new Zamdela. We are tired of the old Zamdela."

The safety officer tried to calm things down, expressing sympathy, even solidarity with their grievances. The safety officer, it turns out – as I had guessed from his accent -- was from Wentworth, near Durban and was familiar with the frustrations associated with hiring in working class communities living in the shadow of petrochemical industries. "I understand where you're coming from. It's the same by us in Wentworth. You have to know people." This drew some of the heat out of the confrontation for a moment, with Kopano commenting: "remember what Malema said about fighting corruption. We will stop the project." After a while longer the CO, a young, smartly dressed black women, returns from lunch to be confronted by the group. Kopano recognises her as having gone to the same high school in Zamdela as him. Grievances are restated. Demands to speak to the project manager are made. After further discussions and not so veiled threats cell phone numbers are exchanged and the CO promises the group that the project manager will phone before the end of the day.

Last week Fanyane told me that the contractor hired a few local residents, but didn't hire any artisans. Fanyane's energies have been taken up by auditions and practicing for the South Africa's Got Talent television show. What he calls his "acrobatic drums" has made it through to the semi-finals, so far. He teaches dance lessons at Leeuspruit Laerskool in Sasolburg once a week. He hasn't been able to attend to ZCYRC matters for the last two weeks, but says from what he's heard meetings are still happening and members are determined to hold the municipality to its word. And they will keep pressing SASOL for funds.

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