

Making histories

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It was with a sense of defying the conventions of historiography that in 1999 we, together with our colleague Gary Minkley, asserted that a ‘historiographical rupture’ had occurred in South Africa in the 1990s. We referred to a ‘break with the positivist methods, hierarchical knowledge sequences and narrative forms of academic history’, and that the ‘landscape of history’ had shifted ‘from bringing the agency and experiences of the underclasses into the purview of the academy - so much the terrain of social historians - to making visible and visual the representations of productions in public domains’.¹ Early signs of this shift had been apparent at the ‘Future of the Past’ conference held at UWC in 1996. Amidst a conference that was fraught with tensions, heated debate and sharp disagreements some commentators argued for ‘putting representation at the centre of concern’, interrogating ‘the very categories of analysis’, analyzing ‘the agencies of image making and memory production’ and rethinking ‘assumptions about the objectivity and superiority of the history produced in the academies’.²

If, however, one reads a recent edited collection of essays from a workshop, held at the Centre of African Studies at the University of Copenhagen under the auspices of the Nordic Africa Institute, then this movement in South African history in the 1990s and beyond seems to have been completely overlooked. Although some of the papers signal otherwise, the dominant assertion is that there has been a crisis in South African history since the 1990s. The numbers of students enrolling for history at school and university has declined and, despite the dramatic political changes and expectations to the contrary, there have been few new historians and little fresh historical writing emerging. An always lurking spectre of what is somewhat arbitrarily labeled as ‘post-modernism’, emphasis on present concerns, and the demand to provide history that would offer a new nationalist narrative are all cited as roots of an historiographical crisis which harks back, with longing and some sense of desperation, to the issues and debates of the 1970s and ‘80s, when South African history was supposedly flourishing.³

1 Leslie Witz, Ciraj Rassool and Gary Minkley, ‘Who speaks for South African pasts’, paper presented at the South African Historical Society Conference, ‘Secrets, Lies and History’, University of the Western Cape, July 1999. Some of the key papers from this conference were published in a special issue of *History and Theory*, Issue 39, December 2000.

2 Ran Greenstein, ‘The future of the South African past’, paper presented at the ‘Future of the Past Conference’, UWC, July 1996, published in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20 (2), 1996, 331; Ciraj Rassool, Gary Minkley and Leslie Witz, ‘Thresholds, gateways and spectacles: Journeying through South African hidden pasts and histories in the last decade of the twentieth century’, paper presented at the ‘Future of the Past Conference’, UWC, July 1996, 2; Carolyn Hamilton, ‘The future of the past: New trajectories’, *South African Historical Journal*, 35, November, 1996, 148.

3 Hans Erik Stolten, ed., *History Making and Present Day Politics: The Meaning of Collective Memory in South Africa* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2007); see also Cynthia Kros and Christopher Saunders, ‘Conversations with historians’, *South African Historical Journal*, 51, 2004, 1-23.

This pessimistic outlook is based upon a notion of a hierarchy of historical production, with something called ‘real history’ at the apex. Although in its claim to theoretical underpinnings it is defiant of history as ‘speaking for itself’, this conceptualization of history is firmly located in the academy, and is constituted by skills and methodologies of ‘assessment of the balance of evidence’,⁴ a search for truths, and the ability to construct (rather than reconstruct) a sense of meaning that approaches ‘what happened’.⁵ Countering this, and to varying degrees lower down the scale, are recollections, memories and heritage. These are presented, at best, as sources that need to be made into proper history through the intervention of the professional historian, and, at worst, as malleable, and subject to manipulation and amnesia. By and large what is not considered is how admitting the latter into the ambit of history can begin to alter the conceptualization of the profession.

Challenging the conventions of sites, genres and producers of history as well as seeking to understand the ways they are constituted, has been at forefront of much of the exciting and innovative work in South African historiography. In 1999 we deliberately cited extracts from a description of early revisionist history in South Africa in the 1970s as a parallel case to the point we were making about how these challenges were beginning to make their mark. Wright’s words about the 1970s revisionist research could just as easily have been describing the tentative and fledgling historiographical turns in the 1990s: ‘[t]heir work to date has been primarily on specific and limited topics ... and has been issued usually in periodicals or in unpublished but fairly widely circulated papers’.⁶ Although one could not ‘at this early stage... discuss [these historians] collectively, ... by drawing characteristic examples on a given subject from a broad range of authors and their work’ one can begin to ‘discuss a few papers individually and attempt to draw out conclusions from the qualities they share’.⁷

At the time we recognized four broad trends. Firstly, and perhaps most significantly, we argued that historical methodologies, in particular the manner in which historians approach the archive ‘as a repository of primary evidence about the past’, had been subjected to intense critique. What new histories were pointing to was that sources contain within themselves pre-existing historiographies. Oral histories, for instance, were increasingly not merely being regarded as sources of information, but as sites of literary production, translation and performance that needed to be understood and analyzed. In a similar vein we acknowledged the major strides being made in the area of visual history where the visual was no longer being considered as merely illustrative. Circuits of production, appearance, observation, collection, storage, display, dissemination, and archiving were all being considered as fundamental components in the making and re-making of historical

4 Elaine Unterhalter, ‘Truth rather than justice?: Historical narratives, gender, and public education in South Africa’, in Stolten, ed., *History Making*, 113.

5 This distinction between ‘reconstructing’ and ‘constructing’ history is drawn from Keith Jenkins and Alun Munslow, *The Pursuit of History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2007).

6 Harrison Wright, *The Burden of the Present* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1977), 13.

7 Wright, *The Burden*, 62–3. Here, of course, we make it clear that we do not share the premises from which Wright understood those historiographical developments.

knowledge.⁸ We also noted how ‘the territory of the academic historian, formerly confined to the literate and oral archive, had extended beyond these professional research spaces’ into the public domain. In these public spaces and institutions ‘the neat hierarchies of knowledge formation’, with the historian as the bearer of expertise, were subverted. Different sets of knowledge constantly contested the authority of the academic as the research expert. Finally, there were new types of histories being written that experimented with the boundaries of the historian’s genre. In visualising new pasts for historical narratives, the boundaries between fiction and history were becoming blurred, thereby ‘bringing histories into sharper focus’.⁹ Citing once again from the description of 1970s revisionist historiography, we asserted that the new histories of the 1990s were ‘extremely valuable for the study of South African history’. They had ‘undercut and shaken loose a number of established, even stereotypical generalisations of older schools of thought’.¹⁰

Almost some ten years on many of these challenges which we identified have been conceptually sharpened, analyses extended and case studies elaborated upon. It is this ongoing trend that we want to signal in this special issue of *Kronos* by grouping some of these exciting and innovative works together under the heading of ‘making histories’. The conception of ‘making histories’ emerges out of the contestations that took place in South Africa from more or less the time of Nelson Mandela’s release from prison in 1990. Making history refers in everyday understandings to events and personages granted an epochal significance that is derived in and of themselves, and without any process of selection or deliberate emphasis. Indeed, one of the pieces included in this collection seems to fit into this pattern: Cecyl Esau’s statement from the dock when he, along with 14 others, were tried and convicted under the Internal Security Act in 1987, memories of his imprisonment on Robben Island, and a series of photographs taken by himself and Benny Gool when he was released in 1991 together with commentaries.

Superficially, these all appear as documenting a series of momentous events in a national narrative from resistance to liberation: a trial record providing the motivation for struggle, written memoirs of confinement and photographs emblematic of the dawning of freedom. Yet throughout these documents there is a making of history in a very different manner that is attuned to the methodologies and the genre. In the court room Esau deliberately makes history within the convention of the ‘statement from the dock’ and frames his biography to culminate in the embarkation on and execution of certain political acts. The many political trials which have preceded this one, consultation with fellow activists and with lawyers are all

8 Patricia Hayes, Jeremy Silvester and Wolfram Hartman, ‘Photographs, history and memory’, in Patricia Hayes, Jeremy Silvester and Wolfram Hartman, eds., *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1998), 7. See also Michael Godby, ‘Images of //Kabbo’; Paul Landau, ‘With camera and gun in Southern Africa: Inventing the image of Bushmen c.1880 to 1935’; Martin Hall, ‘The proximity of Dr Bleek’s Bushman’ all in Pippa Skotnes, ed., *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen*, (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1996); Ciraj Rassool and Patricia Hayes, ‘Science and the spectacle: /Khanako’s South Africa, 1936-7’, in Wendy Woodward, Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley, eds., *Deep Histories: Gender and Colonialism in Africa* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002); Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool, ‘Photography with a difference: Leon Levson’s camera studies and photographic exhibitions of native life in South Africa, 1947-1950’, *Kronos*, 31, 2005; see also the special issue of *Kronos* on visual history, *Kronos*, 27, 2001.

9 Witz et al ‘Who speaks’, 24-6.

10 Wright, *The Burden*, 62.

involved in authoring what appears to us as statement by ‘Accused No. 11 Cecil Esau - Cape High Court, June 1987’. In a significant footnote Esau tells us how it was that the court made him into Cecil and not Cecyl, as his birth-certificate indicated. And this identity made in court, and also in the school room, comes to stick as a student residence at the University of the Western Cape is later named after him as ‘Cecil Esau’. Most explicitly, Esau’s commentaries on the photographs take us into the ways that his release is constructed visually, showing how the angles, the excisions and the captioning make history in a very particular manner. These ‘documents’ then are not to be treated as primary sources of history but as visual and textual narratives about pasts with a range of changing authors which are modified, circulated, archived and re-presented to make histories.

In using the term ‘making histories’ we then want take up several of the intonations in Esau’s work, and in our earlier formulations, to imply the elimination of a distinction between source and history, often expressed as ‘primary and secondary evidence’, with the latter appearing only to have a interpretative quality while the former presents itself as an original, genuine essence (i.e. as pre-history).¹¹ We want to maintain that breaking down this distinction not only inevitably broadens the field of history and historians, but it also allows for much more complex and nuanced understandings of the circulation of different historical meanings and interpretations. This is no more evident than in the ways that the articles that William Gqoba wrote in *Isigidimi samaXhosa* in 1888 about what he called ‘Isizatu sokuxelwa kwe nkomo ngo Nongqause’ (‘The reason for cattle-slaughter by Non-gqawuse and her followers’) have been appropriated as primary sources to narrate and interpret ‘causes’ of the events of 1856-7. In this edition of *Kronos*, Bradford and Qotole in their annotated translation of late 19th century Xhosa orthography and their introduction to the debates that emerged around Gqoba’s articles, are insistent that instead of using Gqoba as a source we must regard him as an historian who is entering into major historiographical debates with his contemporaries. In these debates the methodologies employed evoke history as verifiable proof, asserting, to an imagined isiXhosa readership, the correctness of their interpretations through evidence. At dispute in the debates around Gqoba’s article are sources, their location, meaning, status, the modes of narration and the differing claims to knowledge and authority. Emphatically and explicitly the writers are making history. To make them into primary sources strips away the intentions and meanings of these contending historiographical interventions in the 1880s.

By treating sources as histories, rather than as data to be mined, we are drawing upon the work of David William Cohen and his sometimes collaborations with E.S. Atieno Odhiambo.¹² Their work has questioned boundaries between history

11 Keith Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History* (London: Routledge, 1991), 147.

12 David William Cohen, *The Combing of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); David Cohen and E.S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Siaya: Historical Anthropology* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989); David Cohen and E.S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Burying SM* (Westport: Henemann, 1992) David Cohen and E.S. Atieno Odhiambo, *The Risks of Knowledge* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004)

and anthropology through opening up issues of practice, particularly around the area of field work. A major concern of theirs is to think through relationships between processes of historicising and the field, as it comes to be constituted in both history and anthropology. The field, for them, are sites where different histories in a range of genres are produced, circulated and contested. In these ‘multiple locations of historical knowledge’ one can begin to examine how these different histories generate ‘representations and attribute value’.¹³ The power of their work lies in its attempts to comprehend the politics of a society, such as Kenya, around the different versions of history that were generated, where those histories circulated and for whom they mattered. Similarly, Luise White’s book on the murder of Herbert Chitepo delineates the intricate politics at stake in Zimbabwe in the contending claims being made around the identities of the assassin.¹⁴ In South African historiography Carolyn Hamilton, Leslie Witz and Sifiso Ndlovu have respectively sought to understand how it was that the iconic figures of Shaka, Jan van Riebeeck and Dingane altered their meanings within contemporary politics and the contested and differing narrations of their lives.¹⁵ Using similar methods, Sibongiseni Mkhize, Jabulani Sithole and Nsizwa Dlamini, have respectively studied memorialisation and public historical contestations in relation to Albert Luthuli and the battle of Ncome.¹⁶ For all these writers it is not so much the acquisition of information about ‘what happened’ that is of importance but how, why and which stories, in which forms, did or did not gain currency at certain instances and at specific places.

This formulation comes from an appreciation of orality and seeks to understand how issues such as performance, narration, translation, presentation, archiving, and intersections with similar and/or dissimilar accounts all come to constitute ‘voice’.¹⁷ These are not factors that ‘distort’ the oral and its effectiveness as a historical source, as Vansina’s work asserts,¹⁸ but rather are constitutive of different historical meanings. Chrischené Julius’s article on the *Digging Deeper* exhibition at the District Six Museum in this edition of *Kronos* extends these insights, making particular use of the work of Isabel Hofmeyr which interrogates the establishment of boundaries between the literate and the oral,¹⁹ to show how the oral is made

13 Cohen, *Combing*, 23; Henrietta Lidchi, ‘The poetics and politics of exhibiting other cultures’, in Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997), 160

14 Luise White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Text and Politics in Zimbabwe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

15 Carolyn Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1998); Leslie Witz, *Apartheid’s Festival* (Bloomington: Indiana University Pres, 2003); Sifiso Ndlovu, “He did what any other person in his position would have done to fight the forces of invasion and disruption”: Africans, the land and contending images of King Dingane (“the patriot”) in the twentieth century, 1916-1950s’, *South African Historical Journal*, 38, May 1998, 99-143.

16 Jabulani Sithole and Sibongiseni Mkhize, ‘Truth or lies? Selective memories, imagings, and representations of Chief Albert John Luthuli in recent political discourses’, *History and Theory*, Issue 39 (December 2000), 69-85; Nsizwa Dlamini, ‘The Battle of Ncome Project: State memorialisation, discomforting spaces’, *Southern African Humanities*, 13, 2001, 125-138.

17 See for example, Carolyn Hamilton, “Living by Fluidity”: Oral Histories, Material Custodies and the Politics of Archiving’, in Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid and Razia Saleh, eds., *Refiguring the Archive* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 209-227; Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumour and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley: UCLA Press, 2000)

18 Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

19 Isabel Hofmeyr, ‘We Spend Our Years as a Tale That is Told’: *Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chiefdom* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993); Isabel Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of The Pilgrim’s Progress* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2004).

visual through the poetics of display. The aural is made into text, parts are excised, words are transcribed in particular ways, sometimes translated (or not), others are highlighted and displayed in various configurations as the oral simultaneously is given and asserts authority in the histories being exhibited at the District Six Museum.

Probably the article in this issue of *Kronos* which draws most directly on Cohen and Atieno Odhiambo is that of Ciraj Rassool. One of the key ideas around ‘making histories’ is that these different histories are produced in a variety of ways by a multiplicity of authors so that, in David Cohen’s words, ‘in approaching the “production of history” one is also approaching history as production’.²⁰ Doing history therefore involves investigating the different forms, practices, genres, methodologies and social contexts that went into the production of histories. Rassool extends Cohen and Atieno Odhiambo’s approach to present a case for examining processes of biographic production. Through the making of Isaac Bangani Tabata into a leader with a biography he argues that there were different forms of biographical mediation that took place. Tabata’s complex and ongoing relationship with Dora Taylor, combined with the turbulent world of exile politics in the 1960s and 70s as various organizations jostled for recognition, he argues, transformed Tabata from disavowing his own biography as a member of a collective to a position where biography was embraced after a process of individuation had set in. Tracking the genealogy of these productions, their continuities and narrative ruptures, is his main concern as he seeks to understand not the life of Tabata but the making of his biographic lives.

There is, however, a very important difference between the work of Cohen and Atieno Odhiambo and that which we want to bring together under ‘making histories’. While Cohen and Atieno Odhiambo’s concept of the production of history seeks to understand public ways of knowing it does not set out to engage with the public and *their* ways of knowing. In contrast, many of the authors of papers in this edition of *Kronos* are analyzing the ways history is made in the public domain and are also actively involved in ongoing struggles to make different histories. Martin Legassick refers to this as applied history,²¹ but we want to take this further and suggest that what is at stake through these deliberate engagements is a practice that contests and effectively decentres the expertise of historians in the academy. Instead of casting the historian as a consultant who conveys history (usually defined as an empiricist who can verify facts) to the public, our notion of practice is concerned both to understand the politics of production and our relationship with, and immersion in, the cut and thrust of making history.

Here we want to draw a distinction between the popularisation project of the 1980s and the current transactions as historians in making histories. The former

20 Cohen, *Combing*, 23

21 Martin Legassick, ‘Reflections on practising applied history in South Africa, 1994-2002: From skeletons to schools’, in Stolten, *History Making*, 129-147.

relied very heavily on notions of academic expertise and making this accessible to wider audiences. Making extensive use of research into the lives and experiences of the underclasses, academics aligned with the History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand produced histories in an accessible form and language. Much of this research was undertaken by social historians associated with radical Marxist scholarship who made use of oral history methodologies. These included easy to read books, newspaper articles, video productions and slide/tape shows for audiences conceived of as ‘popular’.²² In the parlance of the US academy this is called ‘Public History’, in which academically trained historians imparted their skills and knowledge to institutions such as museums.²³ Our notion of engagement with the public in making histories is one that disavows this ‘trickle down’ process that relies on ideas of outreach, uplift and access while holding on to academic expertise. If one begins instead to see institutions of public culture as ‘critical social locations where knowledge and perceptions [of the public sphere] are shaped, debated, imposed, challenged, and disseminated’, then the historian takes on a somewhat different role.²⁴ It is more the case that one enters into discussions and debates with these institutions as a series of knowledge transactions. One’s expertise as an historian is constantly being challenged, shaped and re-shaped in these negotiations over the past as different historical knowledges are evoked and articulated. What Ciraj Rassool has called ‘the mystique of scientific knowledge’ is, consequently, shattered.²⁵

This notion of engagement with the public, where knowledge is negotiated and mediated, forces a rethink of our practices as historians and history educators. It is no longer useful to think of teaching and writing history as a scientific enterprise. A more productive concept which we want to propose is that of ‘history frictions’. It deliberately extends the term ‘museum frictions’ employed by Karp, Kratz et al to explain the ongoing contestations both within and outside the institutional bounds of the museum and how these impact upon each other. These frictions, they maintain, occur when ‘disparate communities, interests, goals and perspectives … produce debates, tensions, collaborations, [and] conflicts of many sorts’.²⁶ Historical practices within the public domain give rise to a similar set of frictions as the claims to knowledge are asserted, substantiated and articulated

22 See, for example, Luli Callinicos, *Gold and Workers, 1886-1924: A People's History of South Africa*, vol 1 (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981); Luli Callinicos, *Working Life, 1886-1940: Factories, Townships and Popular Culture on the Rand: A People's History of South Africa*, vol 2 (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987); Luli Callinicos, *A Place in the City: The Rand on the Eve of Apartheid: A People's History of South Africa* vol 3 (Johannesburg and Cape Town: Ravan Press and Maskew Miller Longman, 1993).

23 For an account of how public history took root in the USA see Cathy Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006).

24 Center for the Study of Public Scholarship, ‘Institutions of Public Culture fellowships, 2005-6’, poster/brochure (Cape Town and Atlanta: Steering Committee, Institutions of Public Culture, 2005).

25 Ciraj Rassool, ‘Community museums, memory politics, and social transformation in South Africa: Histories, possibilities and limits’, in Ivan Karp, Corinne A Kratz, Lynn Szwaja, and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, with Gustavo Buntinx, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Ciraj Rassool, *Museum Frictions: Global Transformations/ Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 307.

26 Corinne A. Kratz and Ivan Karp, ‘Introduction. Museum Frictions: Public culture/global transformations’, in I Karp et al, *Museum Frictions*, 2.

across an ever increasing wider-range of communities and institutions. In these 'history frictions' there are ongoing negotiations where different and competing narratives, claims and priorities come up against each other. The historian has constantly to negotiate and mediate between histories across a range of disparate domains, genres and interests to in effect 'make history'.

These 'history frictions' are evident in several of the articles in this special edition of *Kronos*. Nicky Rousseau and Madeleine Fullard give an account of how academic historians were disappointed by the outcome of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its ability to produce new history. They point out that, in effect, what was being expressed was that it did not conform to the type of history academics desired. They also show how the different and contending voices in the different TRC processes did not produce a singular narrative that analysts, such as ourselves, have ascribed to it. In the richness of the different testimonies, the varied responses and the convoluted organisational structures, different histories were made that have opened up new insights into South African pasts. Martin Legassick, probably the foremost revisionist historian, was called up into a megaproject of national history, under the auspices of the Presidency, to recover a history of resistance to the apartheid state. Although initially hesitant around the limitations that might be imposed he undertook the task with enthusiasm. But this turned sour in the second volume of the project dealing with the 1970s when his arguments, evidence and interpretations about a period he was involved with as an activist were dismissed. Although presented as an empirical struggle over facts and historical interpretation, laced with notions of academic dishonesty and skulduggery, at stake was the capacity for a large public national history connected to the involvement of the protagonists in political struggles to embrace different mobilisations of the past in a single national project.

Jos Thorne and Cynthia Kros present accounts of designing history as exhibition, the former from outside the academy as an architect-cum-exhibition designer, the latter as an academic historian who has worked largely studying texts. What is apparent in both of their renditions is how in the world of exhibition design appropriate means of expression are created to convey historical meanings. This might mean extensive or minimalist text, the placing of images, the creation of a singular symbol to inscribe a life history, or even, as in an instance Thorne refers to, deliberating about the size and font of a cross. As these visual cues come to stand for history these considerations take on a huge significance and are often the source of the most tremendous frictions which erupt amongst the makers of history.

Probably some of the biggest contests over the content and form of history in the last fifteen years have been in the area that has become widely known as heritage. Although claimed as inheritance it is absolutely apparent that heritage has been produced in South Africa on a vast scale through memorials, museums, tourism, themed environments, pageants, street-naming, proclamations and listings. Academic historians, though, have been uneasy about associating themselves with these heritage projects which they see as characterised by uncritical, static, error-filled depictions of the past. It is precisely these understandings of the work and practice of historians that we are attempting to challenge. Heritage might often be part of the domain of nation-building, and may seem to 'thrive on historical

error',²⁷ but to regard these as the salient characteristics of heritage is not to comprehend the complexities of a varied and disputatious field. It is precisely because of the possibilities of contestation in the public domain that some historians have actively engaged with the making of heritage. Gary Minkley has been one of these as, from his academic location at the University of Fort Hare in East London, he has been part of several heritage initiatives in the city and the province. In his article he examines the ways that A.C. Jordan has been inscribed on the heritage landscape, and shows how a canonical persona has been created through the intersection of discourses of indigenous knowledge and national resistance. He advocates a move beyond this bland, one-sided heritage, characterized by the employment of essentialist categories of race and ethnicity, towards a critical heritage that instead displays and continually allows for the disturbances, fragments and contradictions. This move from what he labels 'heritage as romance' to 'heritage as tragedy' is one that he insists must foreground the 'history frictions'.

Such ruptures and dissonances are integral to the postcolonial strategies that Premesh Lalu proposes. Taking issue with the notion that South African historiography had already reached its postcolonial moment in the 1980s through radical Marxist history and its incarnation as history-from-below he argues, following Stuart Hall, for a thinking at the limit.²⁸ Instead of creating a subaltern subject this involves a continual interrogation of the constitution of disciplinary formations. How history creates its events and subjects, unraveling the power and authority of its knowledge and continually disavowing its foundational narratives, is all important in constituting an agenda for an engagement with subaltern studies.

Many of the issues that are being dealt with in this issue of *Kronos* emerge from research, debates and practices of the National Research Foundation Project on Public Pasts (PoPP) that was based in the History Department at the University of the Western Cape between 2001 and 2007. PoPP sought to investigate the different ways that public representations of the past could open up debates about the nature of history by considering the different ways that 'pastness' is framed and claimed as history in its own right. It strove to understand the production, representations and the makings of meanings in a range of sites, from museums to memorials in the Eastern and Western Cape. A key issue that consistently emerged during PoPP was the relationship between the category and use of 'heritage' and academic disciplines. At moments this appeared as a relationship that drew upon the academy to provide the knowledge and technical expertise to authorise and authenticate heritage projects. New fields or sub-fields have emerged that re-cast disciplines in a heritage mould. Architecture and archaeology, for instance, are constantly being employed as the essential tools for heritage resource management. At the other end of the spectrum are the heritage challenges that emerged to the knowledge produced in the academy.

27 David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (London: Viking, 1997), 131.

28 Stuart Hall, 'When was the Post-colonial? Thinking at the limit' in Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti, eds., *The Post-colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (London, New York: Routledge, 1996).

Since we started the Project on Public Pasts there has been a veritable explosion of heritage in South Africa with new sites, institutions and routes being proclaimed and older ones being re-framed. With this upsurge, many academic disciplines are carving out specific areas of heritage as their domains of expertise, re-packaging teaching programmes and disciplinary knowledge to meet the requirements of an ever-broadening field. It is appropriate to refer to the emergence of what can be called the heritage disciplines, ranging across different faculties, programmes, and tertiary institutions, offering specialized heritage knowledge, being invoked and, at times, contested. This proliferation has provided the impetus for a new NRF funded project in the History Department at UWC on the 'Heritage Disciplines'. What is important for this new project is that the starting point of analysis is not the institutional settings (as it was in PoPP) but the relationships between systems of knowledge production, circulation and dissemination.

It is the emphasis that Kratz and Karp place on 'practices, processes, and interactions'²⁹ that provides us with an approach to investigate the connections, associations and dissociations between academic disciplines and categories of heritage formation. An implication of investigating processes is that the categories themselves, in the disciplines and in the constitution of heritage, are constantly being made and re-made. Rather than taking academic disciplines and heritage as essential categories that can be delineated at the outset, it is how they come to be defined and re-defined, particularly in relation to each other, that need to be examined. These questions about how knowledge is negotiated, circulated and contested amongst different constituencies, publics and academic locales are important to making histories. Furthermore, they also constitute the central challenges for re-positioning the humanities beyond fieldwork and outreach, as new ways are found for rethinking the academy and the production and social organization of knowledge.

29 Kratz and Karp, 'Introduction', 2.