

Nationalism and feminism: Anne McClintock's reading of South Africa

Sikhumbuzo Mngadi & Tamlyn Monson

... the most radical programs of a deconstruction that would like, in order to be consistent with itself, not to remain enclosed in purely speculative, theoretical, academic discourses but rather ... to aspire to something more consequential, to *change* things and to intervene in an efficient and responsible, though always, of course, very mediated way, not only in the profession but in what one calls the *cite*, the *polis* and more generally the world. Not, doubtless, to change things in the rather naïve sense of calculated, deliberate and strategically controlled intervention, but in the sense of maximum intensification of a transformation in progress, in the name of neither a simple symptom nor a simple cause. In an industrial and hyper-technologized society, academia is less than ever the monadic or monastic ivory tower that in any case it never was (Derrida 1992:8-9).

In her essay, "No Longer in a Future Heaven": women and nationalism in South Africa', Anne McClintock (1991:109) focuses on the Afrikaner *Vrouemonument* (Women's Monument): 'erected in homage to the female victims of the (Anglo-Boer) war,' in which, '[i]n a circular enclosure, women stand weeping with their children'. McClintock theorises the image of weeping Afrikaner women in gender terms, as a by-product of Afrikaner patriarchal condescension, in which women were given a domesticated heroine status, in spite of historical evidence pointing to their having participated on the front-line of the war. Her aim is to go beyond the

privileging of well-worn critical choreographies which ignore the ambiguities of power by 'traffic(king) in the abstract Centre and Periphery' without evoking, as she would prefer, 'the multiple, contradictory constructions of subjectivity ... crisscrossed by myriad differences and loyalties' (McClintock 1991:123).

We will argue that, however well-intentioned, this commentary elides some of the intersubjective intimacies that nationalism(s) share with class, ethnicity and sexuality; even though McClintock cautions against such an elision in her essay. In the tradition of McClintock's interest in the contexts of names, a tradition firmly established by her two interventions in cultural-political critique¹, this speculative essay is concerned with the names 'nationalism and feminism' and their particular non-generalisable cultural-political contexts.

mothers and renegades

The opening line of McClintock's (1991:104) essay, '[a]ll nationalisms are gendered, all are invented, and all are dangerous', establishes a clear theoretical-political agenda. Nothing is to be taken for granted. Nationalisms are not, as Benedict Anderson argues, 'imagined communities'. Far from being 'phantasmagorias of mind'—the 'term "imagined" carries in its train connotations of fiction and make-believe, moonshine and chimera'—'nationalisms', as Ernest Gellner (1991:104) has argued, 'invent nations where they do not exist'. 'Women', McClintock (1991:105) argues, citing Frantz Fanon in 'Algeria Unveiled', relate to the nation as its "'bearers", its boundary and symbolic limit, but lack a nationality of their own ... serve to represent the limits of national difference between men'. As bearers, however, women do so without being made to feel that they are bearing a burden. Citing Nira Yuval Davis, she highlights five ways in which women bear a nation:

- * as biological reproducers of national groups (the biological mothers of the people);
- * as symbols and signifiers of national difference in male discourse ('Singapore Girl, you're a great way to fly');
- * as transmitters and producers of the cultural narratives themselves (mothers, teachers, writers, playwrights, artists);
- * as reproducers of the boundaries of the nation (by accepting or refusing sexual intercourse or marriage with prescribed groups of men);

¹ With Rob Nixon, 'No Names Apart' in *Critical Inquiry* (1986:140-154), and 'The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the term "Post-colonialism"' in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A reader* (1993:291-304).

* as active participants in national movements: in armies, congresses, trade union activism, community organizations (McClintock 1991:104f).

Because her argument centres, primarily, on the two nationalisms in South Africa, namely, Afrikaner (sometimes 'white') and African (sometimes 'black') nationalisms, and the different ways in which they related to women/women related to them, her argument is primarily a racially orientated one. Yet she is also aware of the intimacies that race shared (and continues to share) with class, generation, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, etc. In this regard, her primary focus is constantly under erasure, which sharpens her dialectic approach to race itself, as a subjectivity that must be simultaneously strategically occupied and resisted:

In South Africa, certainly, women's relations to the competing national narratives and struggles have taken a number of *intricate and changing historical shapes*, contests in which women are themselves deeply involved, and which have profound implications for the future of a transformed South Africa (McClintock 1991:106; e.a.).

This last point prompts our appraisal of her argument now (in the 'future' her article historicises) as part of the renegotiation of those intricate and changing historical shapes.

McClintock dates the invention of Afrikaner nationalism to the late nineteenth century/early twentieth century, after the devastation of the Anglo-Boer War:

Violently impoverished in the shocked aftermath of the war, Afrikaner nationalism was a doctrine of crisis. After their defeat by the British, the bloodied remnants of the scattered Boer communities had to forge a new counter-culture if they were to survive in the emergent capitalist state. The invention of this counter-culture had a clear class component. When the Boer generals and the British capitalists swore blood brotherhood in the Union of 1910, the raggle-taggle legion of 'poor whites' with little or no prospects, the modest clerks and shopkeepers, the small farmers and poor teachers, the intellectuals and petite bourgeoisie, all precarious in the new state, began to identify themselves as the vanguard of a new Afrikanerdom, the chosen emissaries of the national folk (McClintock 1991:106).

How this 'new Afrikanerdom' was forged is a matter of well-documented knowledge. Suffice to say that it was a combination of borrowings from High Dutch, '*kombuistaal*' (kitchen language) of the slaves, Ngunis and Khoisan, the symbolism

of the Great Trek, Aryan Brotherhood-type Broederbond (brotherhood) and a plethora of popular memories of persecution and notions of divine sanction and manifest racial destiny. For McClintock (1991:107) this new invention 'had a clear gender component'. The re-enactment of the Great Trek in 1938, she points out, enacted simultaneously what was to become a thoroughly masculine Afrikaner history and nation:

No wagon was named after an adult woman, but one was called, generically, *Vrou en Moeder* (Wife and Mother). This wagon, creaking across the country, symbolized woman's relation to the nation as indirect, mediated through her social relation to men, her national identity lying in her unpaid services, through husband and family, to the volk (McClintock 1991:107).

Besides this wagon's name, the only other tributes to Afrikaner women were the name '*Eeufesia*' (Centenaria) that was given to baby girls born during the Great Trek re-enactment, and the '*Vrouemonument*' (Women's Monument), 'erected in homage to the female victims of the war'. The symbolism of the monument, McClintock observes, inscribes '[i]n a circular enclosure, women stand(ing) weeping with their children'. Moreover,

[i]n the iconography of the monument, women's martial status as fighters and farmers was purged of its indecorously militant potential and replaced by the figure of the lamenting mother with babe in arms. The monument enshrined Afrikaner womanhood as neither militant nor political, but as suffering, stoical, and self-sacrificial. Women's disempowerment was figured not as expressive of the politics of gender difference, stemming from colonial women's ambiguous relation to imperial domination, but as emblematic of national (that is, male) disempowerment. By portraying the Afrikaner nation symbolically as a weeping woman, the mighty male embarrassment of military defeat could be overlooked, and the memory of women's vital efforts during the war washed away in images of feminine tears and maternal loss (McClintock 1991:109).

This took place even when South Africa was rapidly industrialising, and 'white working-class women were drawn into the factories in large numbers, discovering a taste for independence, and ceasing to wreck their father's rod':

As in Victorian Britain, a revamped ideology of motherhood was invoked to usher women back into the home, and thereby into unwaged service to

fathers, husbands, and sons [and as] readers of *Huisgenoot*, ... women began the enormous task of transforming every aspect of daily life into the ciphers of the Afrikaner spirit (McClintock 1991:110).

Because of this, she avers,

[t]he idea of 'motherhood' in Afrikaner nationalism was not a concept imposed willy-nilly on hapless, inert women. Rather, motherhood is a political concept, under constant contest. This is important for two reasons. Erasing Afrikaner women's historic agency also erases their historic complicity in the annals of apartheid. White women were not the weeping bystanders of apartheid history, but were active participants in the invention of Afrikaner identity. As such they were complicit in deploying the power of motherhood in the exercise and legitimization of white domination. White women were jealously and brutally denied any formal political power, but were compensated by their limited authority in the household. Clutching this small power, they became complicit in the racism that suffuses Afrikaner nationalism. This is a major reason why black South African women are justly suspicious of any easy assumption of universal, essential sisterhood. White women are both colonized and colonizers, ambiguously complicit in the history of African dispossession (McClintock 1991:110).

In 1961, as she observes, the fact that Afrikaner women were exhorted to 'Have a Baby for Republic Day' further bolsters her basic point. And of the status of white women within Afrikaner nationalism: 'one cannot forget the few renegades who have militantly crossed into the forbidden territory of anti-apartheid activism: in Black Sash, the Mass Democratic Movement and the ANC' (1991:111).

The picture drawn of the relation of (African) women to African nationalism is progressively differentiated from that of white women. Here there is movement from acquiescence to rejection of paternalistic notions of motherhood and its corollaries:

At the outset the ANC, like Afrikaner nationalism, had a specific class component. Drawn from the tiny urban intelligentsia and petite bourgeoisie, its members were mostly mission-educated teachers and clerks, small businessmen and traders.

While the language of the ANC was the inclusive language of national unity, the Congress was in fact male, exclusive, and hierarchical, ranked by an upper house of chiefs (which protected traditional patriarchal authority through descent), a lower house of elected representatives (all male), and an

executive (all male) Women could join as 'auxiliary members' but were denied formal political representation, as well as the power to vote (McClintock 1991:114).

Even after women had in 1913 'marched mutinously on Bloemfontein' to protest against the imposition of passes on them, and had formed, on their political initiative, 'the Bantu Women's League of the African National Congress in 1918', they still were denied voting rights within the ANC. It was not until their insistence that the ANC 'granted women full membership and voting rights in 1943'. This, however, did not automatically give women equal status with their male counterparts, despite the historical fact that what became the substance of the ANC Freedom Charter was 'inspired' by the Women's Charter, formed in the wake of the 1956 women's march on Pretoria, and 'calling for land redistribution, for worker benefits and union rights, housing, food subsidies, the abolition of child labour, universal education, the right to vote, and equal rights with men in property, marriage, and child custody'. Pronouncements of the recognition of women, McClintock notes, had not gone beyond pacifist notions of 'mother of the nation', and of women as 'auxiliary members', at least not until Oliver Tambo declared in 1955 that

... the Women's League was no longer a mere appendage to the ANC, and ... broke taboo ground by deploring the 'outmoded customs' that hobble women, and broached the vexed issue of domestic labor, urging fellow Congressmen to relieve women 'in their many family and household burdens so that women may be given an opportunity of being politically active' (McClintock 1991:114-115).

Thus, in African nationalism, despite the similarities in the 'presiding ideology of motherhood' through which women's subjectivities in both Afrikaner and African nationalisms were mediated, 'the ideology of the "mother of the nation" differs in some important respects from the iconography of the volksmoeder in Afrikaner nationalism' (1991:116).

Recall that for McClintock (1991:110) Afrikaner women acquiesced to a glorified male construction of motherhood that reinforced their undervalued relation to an ostensibly male nationalism. This acquiescence did not mean that Afrikaner women were thus victims of 'a concept imposed willy-nilly on hapless, inert women'. However, in the hands of African women within the ANC, this same concept acquired a redefined political status. McClintock informs us that 'African women ... embraced, transmuted, and transformed the ideology in a variety of ways, working strategically within traditional ideology to justify untraditional public

militancy'. One example she gives is of an 'anti-pass pamphlet of the 1950s [which] couched women's indecorously insurgent defiance within the decorous language of domestic duty: "As wives and mothers we condemn the pass laws and all that they imply"'. Moreover, unlike Afrikaner women,

African women appealed to a racially inclusive image of motherhood in their campaigns to fashion a non-racial alliance with white women. A Federation of South African Women pamphlet of 1958 exhorted white women: 'In the name of humanity, can you as a woman, as a mother, tolerate this?' In 1968 Albertina Sisulu appealed impatiently to white women: 'A mother is a mother, black or white. Stand up and be counted with other women' (McClintock 1991:116).

African women, 'unlike their Afrikaans counterparts' were less mothers of the nation than 'mothers of revolution' (McClintock 1991:116). This was because for them systematic state harassment and violence traversed the private and public spaces similarly. McClintock (1991:117) quotes an interview which appeared in an ANC's women's magazine *Speak*, in which 'leaders of the ANC Women's Section warned of the very real danger of exclusively glamorising the profession of motherhood: "We must not assume that every woman is a wife or mother. This is a weakness. It arises from our tradition"'. Thus, 'On August 9, 1985, the twenty- ninth anniversary of South African Women's Day, the ANC's Women's Section called on women to "take up arms against the enemy. In the past we have used rudimentary home-made weapons like petrol bombs. Now is the time that we use modern weapons"'. McClintock concludes:

Black women's relation to nationalism has significantly shifted over the years. At the outset, women were denied formal representation; then their volunteer work was put at the service of the national revolution, still largely male. Gradually, as a result of women's own insurrections, the need for women's full participation in the national liberation movement was granted, but women's emancipation was still figured as the handmaiden of the national revolution. Only recently has women's empowerment been recognized in its own right, distinct from the national, democratic, and socialist revolution. Only recently has women's empowerment come to be seen as a separate, independent, and indispensable element of the full social transformation of the nation (McClintock 1991:117).

We will return to this gesture of solidarity.

feminist imperialism and magazines

The last section of McClintock's essay explores what she calls 'Feminism as Imperialism'. The main thrust of this section is summed up by her citation of Chandra Mohanty, who 'has decried the appropriation of the struggles of women of color by hegemonic white women's movements, specifically through the production of the category "Third World woman" as a singular, monolithic, and paradigmatically victimized subject' (1991:120)². In this spirit, McClintock makes the point that:

There is not only one feminism, nor is there only one patriarchy. Feminism is not transhistorical, any more than nationalism is. History reveals myriad feminisms, and all take very different contexts. Feminism is imperialist when it puts the interests and needs of privileged women in imperialist countries above the local needs of disempowered women and men, when it operates within the terms of imperial power, borrowing from patriarchal privilege. If theories of nationalism have tended to ignore gender as a category constitutive of nationalism itself, so too have some feminist tendencies (largely white and middle-class) ignored race and class as categories constitutive of gender (1991:120).

It is perhaps not an extraordinary observation to make that where discourses of race and gender are concerned (and any such discourses which constitute points of political-theoretical contestation), a certain amount of essentialism³ cannot be

² In an essay not included in the list of references, Mohanty is said to have 'argued brilliantly' that 'assumptions of privilege and ethnocentric universality on the one hand, and inadequate self-consciousness about the effect of western scholarship on the "third world" in the context of a world system dominated by the west, on the other, characterize a sizable extent of western feminist work on women in the third world' (McClintock 1991:120-121). South African feminists, among others Sisi Maqagi in 'Who Theorizes?' (1996:27-30) and Desiree Lewis in 'The Politics of Feminism in South Africa', (1996:91-106) have proffered versions of these arguments.

³ It is this recognition which led Stuart Hall (cited in Azoulay 1996:137) to assert that: 'Political identity often requires the need to make conscious commitments. Thus it may be necessary to momentarily abandon the multiplicity of cultural identities for more simple ones around which political lines have been drawn. You need all the folks together, under one hat, carrying one banner, saying we are for this, for the purpose of this fight, we are all the same, just black and just there'.

avoided, lest one falls into infinite anti-foundationalist regress⁴. And McClintock's (1991:111) article refuses concession to 'white' women broadly and, white Afrikaner women in particular, if giving it grudgingly to 'the few renegades who have militantly crossed into forbidden territory of anti-apartheid activism: in Black Sash, the Mass Democratic Movement and the ANC'. The article, it must be noted, was published in 1991, when it was becoming evident that the apartheid minority regime, to use its crude terminology, could no longer promise its predominantly 'white' conservative constituency protection from 'blacks'. As is evident from the above quotations, McClintock is not making a simple case for a universal feminism that must realise that its (universal) future does not lie with a (universal) gendered national consciousness but, rather, a case which reminds us that the futures of feminism have always been drawn from specific positions of power (racial, class, and first worldist for example). In this spirit we do feel that, at the present historical juncture, it might be salutary to 'close ranks', as it were, without being either overly ungenerous with the analysis of crucial markers of power, in particular those relating to class and 'white', or without being overly generous with accolades where 'blackness' is concerned.

In McClintock's article the fields of 'whiteness' and of 'blackness' are, understandably, separate; the crucial point that it would be dangerous, indeed unnecessary, to elide race in order that a universal sisterhood can be used to sweep historical tensions under the carpet. With this understanding in mind, she moves to fix the space of black African womanhood as a repository of progressive feminist consciousness, and white women enter this space as 'renegades'. What is lost in the insistence that we see and talk about gender questions under the sign of a generalised notion of what constitutes progressive political affiliation? What was the Mass Democratic Movement, the United Democratic Front or the Black Sash, and the ANC? More precisely, what were the voices within these political formations?

Another crucial question we want to open a bit more is one that relates to the cultural capital whereby nationalism, in particular Afrikaner nationalism, sought to legitimate its gender bias. In the article, McClintock (1991:110) makes the point that Afrikaner women, 'as readers of *Huisgenoot* ... began the enormous task of transforming every aspect of daily life into the ciphers of the Afrikaner spirit', while, on the other hand, African women read *Speak*, a more radical feminist journal. While the cultural significance of *Huisgenoot* in reinforcing certain stereotypical

⁴ Sisi Maqagi's (1996:27-30) response to Cecily Lockett's paper on the political usefulness of French linguistic theories/theories of signification to the agendas of feminism in South Africa (1996:3-26) echoes Hall's anxiety with regard to a certain universalising theoreticism.

ways of conceiving the values attached to gender difference can hardly be challenged, there is a sense in which McClintock elides a crucial comparison with *Bona* and *Pace*. The latter were, and remain, two of the most influential magazines which targeted 'Black' consumers on a similar scale as *Huisgenoot* did 'White Afrikaner' readers, and whose pinups of naked women, women using skin lighteners, muscular men, and readers sending their pictures for publication, sometimes showing lightened skin, standing next to a flashy car or showing a well-etched torso, have continued to be objects of desire and identification among their readers. Of course *Speak* was characterised by a very specific feminist agenda, and by implication, was also a critical commentary on the aforementioned magazines. But the affinity between 'white' and 'black' representations raises an important issue:

The 'masses' ... have become individual historical subjects, at least in western capitalist societies, not so much through the representative organs of parliamentary democracy ... but through the diverse modalities of urban popular culture. It is there that the greatest exercise in the powers of individual and local choice and taste has been realized, effectively remaking the field of culture in a far more extensive fashion than the presence of the 'masses' in the more restricted field of politics has so far achieved. To adopt this perspective is to raise questions about the understanding of power and politics in the everyday world. Perhaps the particular histories of cultures and politics in Britain, and elsewhere in the West, suggest that *it is not a more political culture that is needed but rather a culture that interrupts and interrogates the existing codification of the 'political'*. This would be to reiterate and reinforce the Gramscian proposition that it is 'civil society that makes 'political society' possible (Chambers 1996:205, ea.)

The question, of course, is the extent to which this applies to 'non-Western' societies and, indeed, whether one can retain such a strict distinction between 'Western' and 'non-Western' societies while acknowledging the transnational rubric of capitalism⁵. At any rate, the point that it is not a more political culture that is needed but rather a culture that interrupts and interrogates the existing codification of the 'political', seems to us to apply with equal force to any interrogation of the roles which the

⁵ Stuart Hall, in 'The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity' (1991:19-40), seems to suggest that capitalisms create locals as repositories of the logic of exchange and demand.

magazines such as *Huisgenoot*, *Bona* and *Pace* have played in the creation of the needs of particularly working and petty bourgeois classes.

There is surely a danger in the assumption that texts such as *Speak* and/or *Vukani Makhosikazi*, because of their avowed feminist positioning, have access to an exemplary feminism. To read these texts is to begin to engage the structural and ideological anomalies in documentary discourse, for instance, but also to begin to disentangle the term *woman* in specific instances of its articulations. If the predominantly American soap operas, for instance, or the visual discourses that they may be seen to have propelled on the local cultural scene, reinforce well-worn stereotypes relating to a range of social signifiers, including woman and man, perhaps the discourse of 'stereotypes' is not a sufficient one with which to sustain this engagement, and to explain why such images continue to have a strong purchase on mainly working and petty bourgeois classes, men and women (the question of proportion is beside the point). In this light, perhaps it will be more useful to look at the critical grammars themselves, instead of collapsing what may be very complex voices (conservative, liberal, rad-lib, lib-rad, conservative-radical, all of these simultaneously, etc.), into 'renegade', 'mass democratic', or 'united democratic'. In the hope of addressing some of these issues we turn now to look beyond McClintock's immediate argument at some of the instances in which African womanhood has been figured.

figuring women

The preface of *Vukani Makhosikazi: South African women speak* announces the text as 'written by a group of Johannesburg women who have participated in a women's study group since 1979'. 'We are', the authors introduce themselves,

Jane Barrett: General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union.

Aneene Dawber: Speech and hearing therapist and part-time worker with Christian women's groups.

Barbara Klugman: Researcher at the Health Information Centre.

Ingrid Obery: Editor at South African Research Services.

Jennifer Schindler: Researcher at the South African Institute of Race Relations.

Joanne Yawitch: Rural field worker at the Black Sash.

Concerning the project, the authors inform that

In 1982 the Catholic Institute of International Relations asked us to write a short booklet on women in South Africa as part of a series. As *white intellectuals with university training* we felt the booklet was a *good opportunity* to share with *our fellow South Africans*, some of the substantial research we had done on *women* in South Africa. The challenge was then to rewrite academic work in an *interesting way*, accessible to others who were also concerned with change in South African society and women's position in it.

Through our work and broader involvement we recognised the need to *document the experience of women in South Africa*. Also, that it was necessary to *understand their oppression as Africans, as members of the working class and as women*. We agreed to focus the book on African women since this would reflect the experience of the women most abused by the process of apartheid and capitalism, the women who are at the centre of the struggle for meaningful change.

Although we locate the position of women within a class framework, in the book we draw out those factors which comprise their specific burden. These include the assumption of differing sexual roles in the family and male dominance in sexual relationships. As a result women shoulder responsibility for the household and children. Women are also drawn into the labour market at the lowest levels of employment—capital conveniently assumes that they are supplementary earners within the family (Barret *et al* 1985:v).

The study, thus, states as the methodology by which it constitutes its subject, the 'document[ation]' of the 'experience' of women in South Africa and, in particular, 'African women', who are 'most abused by the process of apartheid and capitalism, the women who are at the centre of the struggle for meaningful change' (1985:v). In the first chapter, entitled 'Stamped and dated lives', Tryphina Lesea, one of the women whose life is told

... sat quietly in the Black Sash Advise office. She folded her hands in her lap. She told her story calmly. But her story reflects the desperation which many South Africans feel because of the pass laws (Barret *et al* 1985:7).

The authors continue to make the point that:

Although she has lived a relatively peaceful life in the city, Tryphina is in serious trouble. For neither her residence, nor her employment, have ever

been reflected in the reference book (pass book) which she took out in 1964.

Because of this, officials will not believe that she is an urban resident who should have the right to live and work in Johannesburg. If arrested for a pass offence, she would probably be deported to Frankfort, where she was born. She has not returned to Frankfort since 1964 (Barret *et al* 1985:7f).

In her own words, another informant, Sara Sibisi, tells a 'common' story:

I was born in 1946 at a place near Klaserie in the Northern Transvaal. Until I was 13 years old we worked and lived on a white farm. The life there was hard, but even so we had our own plot to plough, and we had some cows and some sheep. Then we were chased off the farm. The farmer just told us to go—he gave us no reason at all. What could we do? We just went.

We trekked to this village and got a plot. They promised us land but it never came. Our troubles really started here. My youngest brother got sick. He swelled up and died. He was only a baby. It was hunger. It was really painful. Then my other sister.

My father was working on the mines at that time. But there was little money. As soon as I could I decided to go and work and help my family with food and the other necessities.

So in 1963 I went to Jo'burg and found a job. I was very lucky at that time. It was before the passes were so heavy.

I went on contract and worked in Southdale. Then the people left. They went to Durban. It was in 1970. I went to stay with my aunt in Soweto.

I had piece-jobs for some time. Then I had my firstborn. I went home at that time. Since then I have never found a job. Not a proper job.

When I ask at the commissioner they say only farm work. City jobs are only available from the commissioner's office. The work on the farms it is heavy, and the money is little. It can kill people.

I tried to go back to Soweto without a contract and work. But it is harder than ever before. Many madams are scared now. They say they'll get caught if they have a 'girl' without a pass. I tried at the pass office. But they just say I must go home. There is no work for 'girls' from the homelands.

I was arrested too. That was bad. So I came home. Maybe I will work on the farms. But only for a while. It's bad (Barret *et al* 1985:8-9).

And consider Lena Msini's dilemma at the hands of the same system:

Mr. Harlan Msini ... is a crippled African factory worker who resides in Paarl in the Cape province. His wife, Lena Msini, however, is not legally entitled to live with her husband, since, on marrying, she became at once the wife of a 'disqualified person'—a disqualified person being a person who has not earned the right of permanent residence by serving ten years in continuous employment with the same employer. Since her relation to the national rights of residence and work is entirely mediated through the marriage relation, Mrs. Msini was told she could live legally with her husband only when he had qualified. Summarily banished from Paarl, Mrs. Msini set out for the bleak Dordrecht location in the Eastern Cape, where she had been born, to wait.

In July 1970, when Mr. Msini became a 'qualified' person, the headman at Dordrecht sent Mrs. Msini to live with her husband at Paarl. At a stroke, falling now under the tutelage of her husband, she forfeited her right to live in Dordrecht, the place of her birth. Yet in Paarl, at the whim of the local bureaucracy, she received only a 'temporary permit', and this permit was not renewed. In November Mrs. Msini was charged with living illegally in the area. She was ordered out of Paarl and banished once more to Dordrecht. In Dordrecht, however, she was given only a temporary permit. This soon expired and was not renewed. In short, Mrs. Msini had entered the impossible nowhere-land of permanent illegality inhabited by thousands of South Africa's 'displaced people'. As the 'superfluous appendage' of her husband's labor, in the notorious official terminology, there is not one inch of her native South African soil on which she can legally tread (Barret *et al* 1991:112f).

We have quoted at length from the cases presented before us as evidence of the 'difficult' life of many Black South Africans 'without documents', with the impact on Black women even more strongly felt. Even though this situation could be said to have been 'common', as the authors put it, the scene in which this common situation is made to play itself out, and to be mediated by the informants, is one that the authors have determined. Thus, it is important to trace what seems to us to be an *intransitive structure of feeling* that shapes that mediation itself, and to ponder its merits and implications for the shifts towards the militancy of later chapters. Crucial, of course, is the critical grammar that the book adopts, a grammar that seems to determine its choices.

For *Vukani Makhosikazi*, with its totally depressed domestic workers, this means that the women whose photographs we see and whose stories we read, may

very well be the constructing gaze returning to itself, and not evidence of the book's conclusions. Indeed, it seems to us that the movement of the book from a totally depressed situation to one of mass unionisation, is made easy by the evacuation of the civil socio-cultural scene (if not its representation as entirely politically denied/impossible), and the romanticisation of the narrowly political one, as though they were mutually exclusive. Part of the difficulty lies in precisely the words with which one can articulate outrage, without the penalties of the binary structure that Ania Loomba (1998:235), for instance, argues has, in large measure, determined the critical choices in studies of subalternity, that is, on the one hand, a 'romanticising and homogenising [of] the subaltern subject' and, on the other, the adoption of the trope of the 'silent' subaltern as a 'definitive statement about colonial relations' (and, by extension, sexual and gender relations).

It seems to us that, if one is to talk about the issues raised in McClintock's article and *Vukani Makhosikazi*, one cannot adequately appreciate them without the critical contexts that these interventions have drawn. This involves moving to theorise the 'everyday' and the relation of such a notion to the *grand recits* with which the 'everyday' has been seen to exist in a relation of rapture. The very idea of 'the everyday', in its apparently decided singularity and the various metaphors that may be seen to accentuate it, signals towards the constitution of the modern in South Africa, and the manners in which modernity, in its senses as progress, development, possibility, etc., have been narrowly constituted as such. The question of the valorisation and interrogation of the everyday points us in the direction of problematising the far from redemptive complexities of 'the rediscovery of the ordinary'⁶. If the speech of the subaltern women and men is in question, perhaps it may be a good idea to start by dispensing with the ideal subaltern, and to listen to the many voices which may not at all be in the expected sense 'pleasing' to the 'trained' ear.

⁶ Njabulo Ndebele (1992) argues that the intimate knowledge associated with the 'rediscovery of the ordinary' can counter the fixation with spectacle indicative of the struggle era. In the first volume of his autobiography, *My Life*, Godfrey Moloi (1987:112) says of one of the dancehalls, Mai Mai, in which he and his band used to play: 'Mai Mai was often booked up to six months in advance. Everybody wanted a date there because one was sure of a full house. The bait here was the "Sheilas" who patronized the venues in scores from all the neighbouring suburbs, *emakhishini* (the kitchens). 'Sheilas' is a collective name that was and still is used to refer to domestic workers and, to this day, people still talk about Thursday as 'Sheilas' day.

conclusion

McClintock's comparison of the magazine *Speak* with *Huisgenoot*, elides what is a crucial comparison with what could be considered *Huisgenoot*'s 'Black' consumer-orientated counterparts, that is, among other magazines, *Bona* and *Pace*. It is crucial to talk about these magazines as well, and there to ponder questions of consumerism, of the voices that speak in them and the investments of such voices not merely in vague ideas of 'mass', 'popular', 'from above', 'from below', 'democratic', 'united'. Why, after such struggles by 'African women in the African National Congress' to change the perceptions of the male leaders, does *Speak*, on page 5 of its "Jokes Aside" section, find it necessary, in its number 38 issue of 1992, to write again about 'ANC NEC member Steve Tshwete [who] recently spoke in Natal about people's courts [and] said they would continue, but would deal with "minor offences—like wife bashing"'.

The magazines, *Huisgenoot*, *Bona* and *Pace*, over and above their emphasis on domestic bliss when it came to the 'huisgenoot' (housemate, or, more notoriously, inmate), also offered dreams of, admittedly, chequered financial independence (i.e. within the confines of one's gender and racial station in South African political life). In this sense, it is not such a terrible and/or inexplicable trajectory that the market forces have so smoothly claimed the space that they had always occupied anyway⁷. Perhaps the question that was never asked with rigorous insistence, save some isolated critical readings of the Freedom Charter, and the election promises, is what the struggle was *for*. Whereas appraisals that are much more substantial have been offered of the 'struggle' discourses we would like to re-pose the question: what *were* the United Democratic Movement, the Mass Democratic Movement, the Black Sash, and the ANC?

English Department
Rand Afrikaans University

References

- Azoulay, Katya Gibel 1996. Outside Our Parents' House: Race, Culture, and Identity. *Research in African Literatures* 27,1:129-142.
Barrett, Jane *et al* 1985. *Vukani Makhosikazi: South African Women Speak*. London: Catholic Institute for International Relations.

⁷ See Eve Bertelsen's (1998:222) discussion of the surprising turn in the discourse of quasi-socialism of the struggle decades

- Bertelsen, Eve 1998. Ads and Amnesia: Black Advertising in the New South Africa. In Nuttall, Sarah & Carli Coetzee (eds). *The Making of Memory in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press
- Chambers, Iain 1996. Waiting on the End of the World? In Morley, David & Kuang-Hsing Chen (eds): *Stuart Hall. Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Derrida, Jacques 1992. Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'. In Cornell, Drucilla *et al* (eds): *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Hall, Stuart 1991. The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity. In King, Anthony D (ed): *Culture, Globalization and the World System*. New York: Macmillan.
- Lewis, Desiree 1994. The Politics of Feminism in South Africa. In Daymond, Margaret (ed): *South African Feminisms: Writing, Theory, and Criticism 1990-1994*. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Lloyd, Libby (ed) 1992. *Speak* 38. Johannesburg, South Africa.
- Loomba, Ania 1998. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. New York: Routledge.
- Maqagi, Sisi 1994. Who Theorizes? In Daymond, Margaret (ed): *South African Feminisms: Writing, Theory, and Criticism 1990-1994*. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- McClintock, Anne 1991. 'No Longer in a Future Heaven': Women and Nationalism in South Africa. *Transition* 51:104-123.
- Moloi, Godfrey 1987. *My Life. Volume One*. South Africa: Ravan Press
- Ndebele, Njabulo 1991. *Rediscovery of the Ordinary. Essays on South African Literature and Culture*. South Africa: COSAW.