Not All Those That Are Buried Are Dead: An Analysis of Memorialization at the Prestwich Memorial

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Not All Those That Are Buried Are Dead:
An analysis of memorialization at the Prestwich Memorial

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South Africa: Cape Town
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for South Africa: Multiculturalism and Human Rights, SIT Study Abroad

Fall 2015
Abstract

Memorialization is an ongoing process in South Africa as narratives are attempting to be reclaimed and transformation continues to be an approach of ‘new’ nation building. This paper attempts to understand how and why the most common form of memorialization of slavery and colonialism in the post-apartheid moment is that of the physical monument, memorial and museum as well as the repercussions of such a space. Through the lens of the Prestwich Memorial I examined themes of memory, erasure, historical production and landscape as artifact.

I problematized the notion of primary data because all data is skewed by personal bias, experience and positionality. Thus I used a mixture of an extensive literature review, personal visits to the site, interpretation of other sites of memorialization to slavery around Cape Town and a personal reading of the exhibit and art to guide my research. My writing is framed as an ‘essay as form’ – a theory derived from Theodor Adorno – where ethics are my starting point and my writing should be interpreted as an art form rather than an objective assignment.

From my research I can begin to understand that the most current forms of memorialization have been derived from the effective silencing and trivialization of certain narratives in relation to those in power and just how the physical site of Prestwich is highly problematic, as well as the power of memory in the new post-apartheid topography of Cape Town. Yet all that remains are more questions surrounding memorialization in Cape Town and the US such as: How do you memorialize something that is ongoing?
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many people who helped me complete this project. First, thank you to the SIT Cape Town staff, Stewart Chirova, Tabisa Dyonase and Ismail Farouk. I sincerely appreciate all that you did to make this program a wonderful adventure and academic experience for us this past semester.

Thank you to my advisor, Nicole Sarmiento, who was an incredible help in the formation and advancement of my project. Your guidance was superb and I feel so lucky that I got to work with a person of your caliber while I was in Cape Town. You and Ismail’s hospitality and instruction far exceeded all that I could have hoped for.

Lastly thank you to all my host families in Langa, Tshabo and Bo Kaap for creating a welcoming home environment to come back to each day. I learned more than I ever could have hoped from each home stay experience.
Table of Contents

Introduction .............................................................................................................. 5
Methodology .......................................................................................................... 18
Findings/ Analysis ................................................................................................. 20
Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 35
Glossary ................................................................................................................. 37
Appendix ................................................................................................................. 38
Bibliography .......................................................................................................... 39
Introduction

“In the house of the hangman one should not speak of the noose…One wants to
break free of the past: rightly, because nothing can live in its shadow, and
because there will be no end to the terror as long as guilt and violence are repaid
guilt and violence; wrongly because the past that one would like to evade is still
very much alive”.

These are the words of Theodor Adorno, a German philosopher from the
mid-twentieth century. I came across this quote while reading an article by
Thando Njovane, questioning to what extent are people in South Africa truly
living in a post-traumatic state; a question without an unyielding answer. It has
been an incredible time to be studying abroad in South Africa, change is
constantly occurring and the remnants of apartheid are all too present in the
politics of everyday life. In our program we have been pressed into learning so
much information so quickly so that we can make the most of our time in this
country- yet this had led to times of disjuncture and uncomfortable moments as
well as moments of profound beauty and enlightening educational experiences. I
have found myself in ethically precarious situations, times of great uneasiness
and moments where I have questioned the morality of other people. Yet not only
have I learned so much about the amazing, complex and archival city that is Cape
Town but my time here has also made me think about the United States in many
new ways. I have more perspective on some of the current events occurring in the
states as well as larger, more existential questions about the way the US deals
with its own past.

To what extent has the US been successful at moving forward from its
violent history of slavery? In what ways is memorialization prevalent in the US?
What comparisons can be drawn between the Black Lives Matter movement in
the states and the Rhodes Must Fall movement that emanates from the University
of Cape Town campus? How are elements of colonialism still found in the US?
How and why did it become so commonplace to have such violent depictions of
slavery in the US and in South Africa? These are just a few of the critical
questions that have emerged from my time here in South Africa, ponderings that
will never have firm answers but rather will continue to grow as my education expands after my time in Cape Town.

Memorialization of the past is an ongoing process; it is a timeless issue that society must deal with. Specifically in South Africa, which continues to undertake massive societal, political and economic transformation while persevering in reconciling its own violent colonial history that influences so much current day society. The way that events and memories are handled is a very sensitive issue with much surrounding controversy. As Adorno speaks to in the quote above, people want to move forward, away from the past- especially when the past is as violent and oppressive as the history of South Africa. Yet, the exact past that people want to evade is still alive today and thus there is no way to move forward without examining and acknowledging the previous chapter of South Africa’s history. This acknowledgement can come in many configurations and that is exactly what I set out to study: What forms has memorialization taken in the post-apartheid moment?

On September 17th we received a lecture from Chrischené Julius about the Prestwich Memorial and on the 18th we stopped at the actual site of the Memorial to try and have a better understanding about the topics of which Julius was speaking about. To be honest, I had not truly established any strong feelings about Prestwich after our lecture but once I visited the physical space of the memorial something radiated within me. I could not begin to understand how these remains could be so disrespected after the violence they experienced during their lives. I began to wonder about the silencing that occurred when these bodies were removed from their resting place and put in cardboard boxes in an ossuary that is now mostly preoccupied by a coffee shop. I was guided to a video by Nick Shepherd titled “Urban Cultural Heritage and Creative Practice” and in this video Shepherd examines a complex understanding of time, and how historical events can be recapitulated in current social injustice movements – focusing specifically on the Prestwich site. I was amazed at what little humanity these remains were given not only at the time of their exhumation but in the context of their current representation. This resurrects the question of memorialization in the post-apartheid moment. How should these remains be accurately preserved? How can we think about not only the physical bodies of the Prestwich site but also the
memory, history and recognition of loss should be memorialized in present day South Africa?

As my project developed my objectives became clearer: to understand how and why the most common form of memorialization in the post-apartheid moment is that of the physical museum, monument or memorial has developed as well as the repercussions of such spaces; while focusing on the lens of the Prestwich Memorial. This observation became evident from my readings surrounding the events at Prestwich and multiple visits to the site and there were many problematic issues with the space in terms of memorialization that needed to be addressed. I entered into this research project with a question: What forms has memorialization of slavery and colonialism taken in the post-apartheid moment? I had no expectations or predetermined argument that I was attempting to answer when I set out on this journey of memorialization but rather, I allowed the questions that emanated from my hypothesis about the physical space of memorialization to guide my objectives and research.

In this essay I want to discuss the archival elements of memorialization and how these types of physical monuments dedicated to historical events continue producing narratives of violence, erasure and systematic oppression. This will be conducted through four main lines of research and observation. The first being the role power plays in the production of history. The second examining the problematic nature of museums and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Third, the idea of landscape as archive and how the physical space of a memorial can impact the reading of such a space. Lastly, violence that stems from this type of representation of past events is systemic and a major issue with the current forms of memorialization in the post-apartheid moment.

These findings have been garnered through extensive literary research and personal visits to sites of memorialization, generally surrounding slavery in the Cape. I began my research by reading many articles surrounding the controversy of Prestwich, ranging from the exhumation debate to the neoliberal politics of their current resting place. As I began to have a better grasp on the background of Prestwich I paired further reading with site visits. I looked at larger, more theory based explanations of power dynamics in historically important colonial sites as well as more alternative methods to thinking about memory and narrative. I
believe that the power of observation and an emotional response to physically occupying a space can provide astounding insight and questions about a site, so I have used a personal account of my time at Prestwich as aiding information in my research.

I have used a combination of primary and secondary sources to guide my hypothesis and lines of questioning thus far. Although, throughout my project I am problematizing the notion of primary data because all the data that I collect is subjective and mediated by a host of issues surrounding the person doing the interpreting. As Eduardo Bonilla-Silva states, “all scientific endeavors transpire in a world where race, gender, and class are important not only as subjects for investigation, but as structural factors that partly shape researchers and their scientific gaze” (p. 18). Therefore all these components of society inevitably shape my understanding and interpretation of ‘primary data’ in my project. Therefore the following are examples of the different methods of data gathering and analyzing that I have engaged in: I engaged in regular visits to the Prestwich memorial, visited other memorial sites to provide context to Prestwich, examined architecture and spatial dynamics, photographs, performance art pieces, and also brought to this research my own reading of the exhibit itself.

I have used a few main authors in my more secondary, literary research and they include: Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Nick Shepherd, Heidi Grunebaum, and Julian Jonker. These people helped shape my overarching thoughts on the Prestwich project and have provided a good grounding theory in which I explore the controversy and memorialization of the site. I used many scholarly articles to supplement my research as well, and they include works by: Michael Weeder, Crain Soudien, Louis Green and Noëleen Murray. In my literature review and bibliography I have sited other authors who provided strong background information for the debate surrounding Prestwich as well as theoretical and interpretive insight to theories surrounding the memorialization of slavery and colonialism.

Limitations

There are many limitations that surround my research, as is the case with all studies. The largest hindrance to the success of such a project are the time
restrictions we have placed on us. This can be viewed from two angles as well, the first being the time given to us for the ISP specifically. Four weeks is a short amount of time to draw any conclusions about my research and thus I will not be drawing any final judgments on memorialization in the post-apartheid moment. Rather, I have sought to use this as an opportunity to ask more questions about memorialization, to find the gaps and ask about them, and to derive questions about memorialization in the US. In the words of Mahmood Mamdani (2011), the recent trend of consultancy culture has led to seeing “research as finding answers, not as formulating a problem” (p. 1). There is no single answer to the question of memorialization in the post-apartheid moment; all the conclusions I can draw are to ask more questions and formulate a problem to be studied.

Although I feel as if I made the most of the time given to me by reading as much literature as I could and interpreting my site visits, more time would have been ideal to try and better understand memorialization in Cape Town. Secondly, we have only been in this country three months, and I am only a visitor to this great place. This is barely enough time to try and understand the complex society that operates in Cape Town, let alone be knowledgeable enough to draw conclusions on a specific aspect of culture, heritage or memory in the city, regardless of what you are studying.

My own positionality is a limitation to my research as well. I am coming from a place of privilege in the US; I have the financial and academic means to travel to another country for four months to study - an opportunity not afforded to many. Thus my privilege shapes all of my interpretations of everything in this country. There is no such thing as objectivity and so innately my partialities that spawn from my home country and my upbringing are limiting my analysis of memorialization in this moment. I draw upon my interpretation and analysis of my experiences both in South Africa and in the US during the writing of this paper because of the profound influence these events have had on me. In and of itself research is very problematic for it generally asks us to ignore our biases and prior experiences in order to attempt an objective conclusion (Trouillot, 1995).
Literature Review

The specific area of Prestwich and Green Point has a long history surrounding slavery in the Cape. Beginning during the Dutch occupation in the 17th century, the area became known as a site for formal and informal burial grounds for the underclass of colonial Cape Town. In the early 19th century the area was renamed District 1 and blacks and coloureds\(^1\) moved into the space and soon it became a working class neighborhood. During the Apartheid regime the Group Areas Act forcibly removed these two groups from the area to the Cape Flats. In the post-Apartheid era Green Point has been revitalized by gentrification surrounding the waterfront area accompanied by a housing boom. In May of 2003 the course of the area was shifted when a new housing development revealed a large grave a block off of Prestwich Street. The literature discussed below analyzes the past history of slavery within the area and the following debate around what to do with the remains found in Green Point.

The Dutch enslaved people of all backgrounds, ranging from the native Khoisan people to those from present-day Angola, Ghana, Madagascar, the East Indies and the Indian subcontinent. Themes of exclusion from society were already palpable in the early years of slavery within Cape Town. In the opinion of Finnegan, Hart and Halkett (2011), “the spatial division between town and periphery was deeply imbued with meanings around social status, marginalization and exile” (p. 37). At the time the Dutch Reform Church monopolized religion in the area and so the burial grounds became a place for cemeteries of all other religions; space was limited and thus gravesites became very crowded, not to mention mass graves where the bodies of the lowest rungs of society were just dumped. As the city expanded over the next couple centuries due to an increasing population it forced expansion closer to the waterfront and thus lead to the eventual forced removals of the blacks and coloureds whose families had resided in the area for decades to be moved further out of the city.

Beginning in the 1900’s the government began to implement stricter exclusionary policies and this caused many people to rebel against their

\(^1\) I am using these terms critically in full awareness of their historical nature. Race is a colonial fiction with very real connotations and meanings. People can identify as they choose but I understand that these terms can resurrect pride in some and feelings of pain in others.
background in slavery. According to Worden (2009), “By the early 1900’s, slavery was no longer a desirable heritage in a society where increasingly social and political segregation had made whiteness the most desirable social attribute” (p. 25). Worden argues that this increasing segregation of races prioritized the skin color white while the rest of society was forced to live in subjection during the apartheid government. Throughout the history of slavery the white man was the oppressor and this continued when the National Party took control in 1948. It is important to note though that the descendents of slaves did embrace their identity when they made sure to recognize themselves as coloureds during the racial classification of apartheid (Worden, 2009). They wanted to make sure that they were separated from the black population because when it came to classification and rights during an apartheid, the status of a coloured person was better than that of black and they received mildly better benefits from the government than blacks did. As the state sponsored segregation continued throughout the latter half of the 20th century the public awareness of slave heritage became buried (Worden, 2009). Worden goes on to explain that apartheid was a more recent violation of human rights and thus preoccupied most people’s attention, rather than scrutinizing the history of slavery, which had begun centuries ago. The attention of people in not only Cape Town, but also all around South Africa was captivated when the mass grave was uncovered at Prestwich in 2003.

An estimated total of 2,500 individuals, 1,272 of who could be articulated and 460 different groups of people were found below the luxury condominium development. Compared to many other cultural indicators, Finnegan, Hart and Halkett (2011) say “burials can provide discrete contexts where attributes such as style, manner of construction and/or the presence of grave gods can be cultural indicators directly associated with an individual” (136). This became one of the core arguments supporting the excavation of the site – that so much could be learned scientifically and culturally from examining the remains. Finnegan Hart & Halkett (2011) all say that as knowledge about the remains spread and the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) began dealing with the site a debate arose around what to do with the space. How should these human remains be treated and who should represent them?
There are many criticisms around the way that SAHRA handled the public hearings that are supposed to take place when a cultural heritage site like the burial ground is discovered. By the time the first hearing was held, 7 weeks after the remains were discovered, 500 individuals had already been removed from the ground (Shepherd, 2013). It became clear very quickly that two perspectives were unfolding in the debate over what to do with the remains. The hearings were conducted by framing the archeologists and scientists who were tasked with unearthing the bodies against the actual humanity of the remains, said Henry & Grunebaum (2006). Then a criticism of this approach is that the bones are made into objects when they are studied, not seen as human beings but resources and relics for research (Grunebaum, 2007). Challenging dehumanization, many people believed that the remains should stay where they were found and become a site of cultural recognition of the past. Grunebaum (2007) describes the reasoning behind this well:

Participants in the process demanded that the exhumation permit be revoked and a moratorium on construction declared. For many who were forced from their lands and properties in the central city and removed to the Cape Flats, the bones were evidence of what they had suspected: the city was built over the graves of slave ancestors, and its continued construction represented an architecture of erasure, a concrete covering over the material traces of memory (p. 213).

The history of slavery in the Cape had been glossed over for so long, a refusal to engage with the painful past. Grunebaum analyzed that the people who demanded the moratorium also argued that the remains belonged to those who had previously been excluded from Cape Town’s history, and thus they could claim identity through ownership of the remains. Shepherd (2013), an archeologist himself, compared the removal of people’s bodies from the gravesite to the forced removals that happened in the same area during apartheid. He argued that it was inhumane to remove these bodies from their resting place and in his piece *Ruin Memory* he discusses the challenging role that archeologists must play between doing their “scientific” job and respecting the humanity of the remains that they are working with. SAHRA eventually decided in September that the exhumation of the remains could continue and the building of the apartment complex could go ahead as planned.
A direct response to this announcement was the formation of the Hands Off Prestwich Street ad Hoc Committee (HOPSAHC). Recounted by Grunebaum (2007), “Following the new heritage legislation’s procedures, HOPSAHC launched a formal appeal challenging SAHRA’s decision to proceed with exhumations. At the same time HOPSAHC inaugurated a second and unofficial public appeal” (p. 214). Grunebaum (2007) states that during this time in limbo HOPSAHC opened up the physical space of the unearthing as a place where there could be social mourning and conscious memory work – so people could dissect the “relation between Cape Town’s history of slavery and the city’s erasure of memories of slavery from public consciousness” (p. 214). This platform allowed many people to engage with the space in a productive way and gave physical manifestation for an archival element of Cape history. Despite the appeal to public opinion, the legal appeal of SAHRA’s decision was not passed and nearly a year after the bones were discovered the decision to exhume the bodies was upheld. Grunebaum (2007) sums up the results of this decision well: “They (the remains) again become objects, defined not as violated human beings but as resources, relics, and commodities for ‘multidisciplinary research’” (p. 215).

After much debate the final resting place of the bones became the Prestwich Memorial, a new building a block away from the place where the remains were discovered. An important distinction to make about the Memorial is that the City Council of Cape Town was tasked to make this memorial economically sustainable, and thus turned over most of the space to a private contractor. On Wednesday, March 24th, 2010 the Truth Coffeecult was launched (Shepherd, 2013). About two yards give or take from the modern coffee counter and barista is a small door that leads to the vault with stacked boxes of human remains, the only marker of the findings at Green Point. Shepherd (2013) points out the fact that the Truth Coffee Shop monopolizes the history of this burial ground is a firm example of how post-Apartheid the ANC employed large-scale neo-liberal policies. Another aspect to said economic plan that Shepherd (2013) analyzes was the building of the new World Cup stadium in Green Point and the fan walk that was created to lead tourists to the sight. This “fan walk” would pass right next to the new Prestwich Memorial, but no special attention or attraction was given to this newfound resting place for the Prestwich Street dead. Once

Noonan 13
again, priority was given to neo-liberal economic revitalization in the post-Apartheid state rather than focusing on the injustices that occurred centuries prior.

Shepherd (2013) reflects upon the issue that the city of Cape Town struggled to ever engage with the history of slavery by saying “in this city there’s never been a willingness to take up (the issue of genocide and the) destruction of human communities that were brought from across the globe” (p. 235). He continues to say, the city has consciously chosen to dis-remember the past injustice and only when they were confronted with literal bodies were they forced to engage. In the twelve years following the discovery of the Prestwich Street bodies the silencing that overarches the themes of landscape, memory, memorials and power is just as prevalent. The following literature outlines the structure for the findings section of my paper, focused more intently on the theory surrounding Prestwich.

**Theoretical Grounding**

In his astounding interrogation of the role that power plays in the making and recording of history, M.R. Trouillot frames the imbalance of the archival narrative in relation to those in power. Although the base for his book is centered around the West’s lack of acknowledgement about the most successful slave revolt in history, the Haitian Revolution beginning in 1791, it is no less applicable to the recording of history that is found in South Africa today. Trouillot (1995) states “the production of historical narratives involves the uneven contribution of competing groups and individuals who have unequal access to the means for such production” (p. xix). It is staunchly clear in the make-up of society in South Africa that many different groups are now competing for political, economic, and cultural power and it is among these divisions that a jockeying for narrative power is occurring presently. Besides the mere power to define history- the group in power is in the position to decide what will be trivialized by creating what should be *celebrated* (Trouillot, 1995).

With the exercise of archival power, ‘facts’ become sanitized and the sterilization of these ‘facts’ trivializes all that surrounds them. The events that surround a certain date or a ‘fact’ that is called history effectively silences all occurrences that encompass that certain ‘fact’ or date; because those alternative
events were not deemed important enough by those in power. For example, Trouillot (1995) uses the example of October 12th, Columbus Day in the United States, listing other events that occurred on that day such as the opening of the Broadway musical of *Jesus Christ Superstar* in 1971 or the refusal of Martin Luther to renounce his assertions posted on the door of a church months prior in 1518. Any number of events could be seen as significant on October 12th yet the powers at be chose Columbus Day (a day dedicated to white supremacy and colonialism) to be celebrated on that day, effectively silencing all other notable events on that day.

The problem with commemorations is that “they help create, modify, or sanction the public meanings attached to historical events deemed worthy of mass celebration. As rituals that package history for public consumption, commemorations play the numbers game to create a past that seems both more real and more elementary” (p. 116). This phrase could not be truer in the context of Columbus Day and what I learned the holiday meant growing up. I was told that we should celebrate the finding of the Americas and that it was a day to be patriotic and loyal to the nation. Given these teachings could be attributed to my public education in the southern United States but nonetheless, the brutality of Columbus and colonial aspects to his conquest were never discussed in the classroom. The past was made elementary for our understanding, and manipulated into a public history that was easy for consumption. How have the ‘facts’ about slavery in the Cape been engineered to produce a trivialized narrative? In what ways are these ‘facts’ represented in memorialization?

Beginning in 1996, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission aimed to bear witness to and record the horrible human rights violations that occurred during apartheid, and in some cases grant amnesty to its perpetrators. Yet there are many criticisms of the TRC and even Arch-Bishop Desmond Tutu has been disappointed by its outcome. In the context of Prestwich, the TRC is an example of how memory is narrated for certain groups of people and becomes discontinued with the present time (Grunebaum, 2001). Grunebaum argues that the space built around the TRC led to the testimonies having “been made to ‘fit’ a particular narrative of a ‘new’ South African history” (p. 201). She continues to say that this has been done in a myriad of ways. Whether it is the labeling people
the demeaning term ‘victims’ or categorizing a certain injustice as worthy enough to be a HRV- these are all trivializing terms that the TRC perpetuated post-apartheid.

In a compatible narrative, Jonker and Till discuss more shortfalls of the TRC and the outcomes of such a problematic process. The TRC was used as a facilitation of building a ‘new’ nation, one that looks forward and not backwards, a new ‘rainbow nation’ on the Southern tip of Africa. Yet the discovery of the bones at Prestwich disrupted this so called nation-building-as-reconciliation approach because the past came roaring back and a disjuncture was created surrounding different races and ideas on what to do at the site (Jonker & Till, 2009). The TRC left little room for memorialization surrounding past events, and did not provide a space for people to discuss the injustices carried out upon them prior to 1960 – therefore discounting the centuries of slavery that many people’s ancestors were subjected to. Jonker and Till draw upon an article by Rasool when describing another dimension that the TRC has been described as: “a ‘paradox…of history’s simultaneous exhumation and burial!’” (p. 315). I find this a very accurate depiction of the TRC, as it was an outlet for many to reexamine the past and contribute to a personal narrative of their experience of apartheid but once those narratives were brought to life, they were quickly buried once again. There was no room for memorialization after the TRC, the past was resurrected and laid to rest in a matter of years. Had the TRC provided more space for the preserving of memory maybe it would be seen as a more successful venture.

Carohn Cornell states “museums have traditionally been temples where artifacts and other objects are displayed for public curiosity or reverence” (p.2). She continues to say how museums in South Africa are slowly attempting to transform from ‘whites-only temples’ to more community based organizations for remembrance but this process is occurring too slowly. The trend to base museums around attracting tourism is based on the neo-liberal values that have been all too prevalent post-apartheid. Museums package history into nice, neat little boxes argues Grunebaum. Frequently she says that museums trivialize memory and history by choosing what facts and narratives should be included in museums- and the choosing of these facts and narratives effectively silences all other experiences, stories and histories around an event. Evidenced by the Robben
Island Museum experience, the Slave Lodge and the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg. How can you create a museum attributed to something that is still going on?

In a critical examination of the physical space of Prestwich Memorial Noëleen Murray and Louise Green (2008) attempt to “to read what the building was saying, what it was concealing and how it interacted with the city surrounding it” (p. 3). Although the paper is written in the “essay as form” manner, and includes many personal observations and analyzing by the authors it provided excellent context for me to critically examine the physical space of Prestwich. They describe how the architecture of the building impacts the visitor’s experience and question what it says about sites of engagement with memory and memorialization. Jonker and Till take a more critical stance on the physical space, arguing that the building itself does not lend itself to openness and a space of mourning but rather leads to enclosure and distance from memory. I will examine my personal understanding of the Prestwich site in the analysis portion of the essay.

In a book dedicated to memory practices at the District 6 Museum, Michael Weeder discusses Prestwich and other 19th century cemeteries in terms of forgotten topographies. Weeder discusses how the “uncovering of the Prestwich burial ground raises issues that resonate with the type of recognition bestowed on the colonized body by history” (p. 39). How does memory factor into remembrance of the colonized body? These are the questions that he continues to ponder in the rest of the article. Weeder provided great insight into the role that the physical unearthing of the bodies at Prestwich played in giving voice to those who were not usually referred to as part of the history of the city. Then in turn, how the memories of these ‘forgotten’ peoples influenced Prestwich and the space it was developed into. An important point he makes is that the outcome of the Prestwich Memorial and Truth coffee is the shift in the city from ancestral ties and religious thought to one that is embedded in commercial interests, another sign of the neo-liberal trend of Cape Town.

A host of literature provided me with ample background knowledge on the events of Prestwich as well as founding theories on the formulation of memorialization of slavery and colonialism.
A Serious Consideration of Methodology

Ethics was the starting point of my methodology. Thus I chose to not conduct interviews and rather used an extensive literature review and my own observations and interpretations to guide my research and analysis.

I rejected the idea of interviews because current stances in academia have taught me all my life to try and be objective in research papers, while that is not possible. One must declare and acknowledge their own positionality because no matter how ‘objective’ I would try to be it would be impossible for me to not take into account my own biases. So I have rejected subjective reasoning and the violent dichotomy between knowledge ‘producer’ and ‘data’ that interviews can perpetuate in favor of my own observations and understanding of the space that is Prestwich Memorial.

With much guidance from my advisor I was able to read ample amounts of literature surrounding Prestwich and grounding theories of memorialization. As my project expanded and I became more aware of the themes of silencing and erasure I was able to guide my readings in that direction. All of the scholars that I read are extremely well qualified in their respective fields and take a critical stance on the events at Prestwich. It is within the base texts surrounding Prestwich that I was able to garner more complex ideas surrounding landscape as archive, trivialization and violence and then explore these new ideas further.

I participated in many different methods of collecting information for personal analysis throughout this ISP period. I visited the Prestwich site six times over the four weeks of ISP to conduct observations on my surroundings and how I felt in the physical space there. I also went to the Slave Lodge Museum, the memorial there and the Slave Bell located in Company’s Gardens to provide context around Prestwich and different representations of slavery in the Cape. I looked at pieces of art that attempt to represent the violent history of slavery and analyzed the physical space around Prestwich to understand the role spatialization plays in visitor’s interaction with the space. There are strengths and weaknesses to my primary method of collecting data. Positively speaking, I am not attempting to interpret anyone else’s feelings about the space; I tried to be as true to myself as I could and honest with my own though development
throughout the process. Negatively though I can only draw upon the six times I visited the space, and inevitably my experience there each time was affected by outside influences, such as the weather, my mental state and focus levels.

**Ethical Reflexivity**

Theodor Adorno’s *The Essay as Form* (1954) provided the grounding theory from which I built my ethical reflexivity and structure of this paper off of. Adorno states, “It starts not with Adam and Eve but with what it wants to talk about; it says what occurs to it in that context and stops when it feels finished rather than when there is nothing to say” (p.3). It is with this logic that I have proceeded with in writing my ISP. I am not going to belabor a point just to make my word count higher or match a page limit but rather I am going to write what is applicable to my topic and will stop when there is nothing left to say. Adorno goes on to say that it is a privilege in and of itself to be able to interpret and analyze, thus I acknowledge the privilege that I can interpret what I have read and experienced so far and in turn create a piece of writing.

I am rejecting subjective reasoning and the interview process. I ask myself this question: Who am I to be speaking to interviewees? Interviews in and of themselves are a trivialization of memory and personal narrative thus I did not want to participate in such a process for ethical reasons. Adorno (1954) argues that during interpretation of interviews “it is scarcely possible to determine what someone may have thought or felt at any particular point, nothing essential is to be gained through such insights” (p. 4). One’s feelings are so personal that no matter how vividly they may be communicated they will only really be true that the one individual, thus the interpreter has no grounds to make assumptions. Trouillot continues to say, “the inability to step out of history in order to write or rewrite it applies to all actors and narrators” (p.140) There is no way for me to be objective when analyzing history because of my own positionality but also the innate problem of trying to re-categorize historical information. I will elaborate in my findings, but history is really just the production of those in power and in turn silences the voices that are not represented so I am in no place to ‘step outside of history’ to write this paper.
Coming from the US, I am already in a state of privilege in this country and that creates a power dynamic with most everyone I interact with. Regardless of how objective I would try and remain there is no way to ignore my positionality or the way that someone interacts with me because of this positionality. By not conducting interviews I circumvent the extreme ethical problems of conducting such research and instead have accepted my lack of objectivity and rather embraced it in organizing my fieldwork around my own interpretations of space and art.

Throughout the whole ISP period I did my best to maintain my high ethical guidelines. I did not conduct any interviews and when I was at the Memorial I did not purchase coffee from TRUTH. Thus the most interpretation I did was through my literature review and categorizing what I read into my research themes. Throughout this essay I only acknowledge how I feel about certain things and do not use any other human subjects. I did my best to treat the literature I read as mere guiding principals for my thinking and interpretation.

**Findings and Analysis**

I am walking down Buitengracht Street in the downtown Green Point area of Cape Town, approaching a brick building that exudes sharp lines and clean spaces, an attempt to provide a New York style ‘oasis’ for coffee and relaxation in the middle of the city. Large letters greet me, proclaiming ‘TRUTH. Coffeeicult’ yet I am not entering this space as a trendy coffee lover but rather I am here to visit with those that are buried behind the state-of-the-art coffee roasting machines. In much smaller letters above the large, French style doors is ‘Prestwich Memorial’ and it is this ossuary that I have hiked across Cape Town to see. I only have to see the building for the sickening feelings to take over me. I feel physically ill entering a space of such disrespect. My head is swimming with more questions than there could ever be answers for but I try and refocus myself. I am here to attempt to provide clarification on one specific inquiry: What forms has memorialization of slavery and colonialism taken in the post-apartheid moment?
Power in the creation of history…

My academic journey has led me to take a plethora of history courses. They fulfill a majority of my major requirements; I feel that learning about the past can provide a lot of information about the present and the future. History was always a more malleable subject than mathematics, and there was just something comforting in learning about different societies and the accompanying facts. Yet as my education progressed I began to understand the necessity in understanding who created these histories, and all the limitations and problems that coexist with the historical narrative. As I entered the Prestwich building I am immediately aware of the silencing that occurs in the space. How certain voices are discounted and a particular narrative is told in relation to the remains that are kept there. Who is given the power to control a certain story?

In his groundbreaking book, Silencing the Past, Trouillot discusses the interplay between power and the production of history. History is vital to memorialization in general because frequently certain events, people and places are made into memorials and history is what shapes the current interpretation of said occurrences. This first major point that I would like to draw upon is the idea that everything is created. It is how everything is created that is important to note and understand. Trouillot (1995) says “(power) precedes the narrative proper, contributes to its creation and to its interpretation” (p. 29). Someone created a narrative that we know today long ago, created by whomever was in power and had the dominant voice in that day in age.

For example, in the United States the holiday of Thanksgiving occurred five days ago. Growing up, in school plays and in history classes we were always acting out the “first thanksgiving” and learning about the relationship between the Mayflower passengers and Squanto. Yet this past year I have more critically examined this narrative that I was taught. Why was I never taught about the genocide of the Native Americans? Thanksgiving is really just another example of the capitalism of an empire. The holiday is an act of erasure, erasing the genocide, sexual violence and land displacement of Native Americans that occurred centuries prior but is still ongoing. Prior to my time in South Africa I would not have been nearly as critical of such a holiday but after this project I am
all the more aware of holidays and celebrations in the US that are highly problematic and serve as mechanisms of silencing.

The act of silencing is an engaging practice. After understanding the way that silencing manifests this way I was aware of the silencing that I was unknowingly practicing in my own life. Trouillot (1995) explains this phenomenon well:

Thus the presences and absences embodied in sources (artifacts and bodies that turn an event into fact) or archives (facts collected, thematized and processed as documents and monuments) are neither neutral or natural. They are created. As such, they are not mere presences and absences, but mentions or silences of various kinds and degrees. By silence, I mean an active and transitive process: one ‘silences’ a fact or an individual as a silencer silences a gun. One engages in the practice of silencing. Mentions and silences are thus active, dialectical counterparts of which history is the synthesis (p.48).

When we choose to acknowledge one event or place over another we are effectively silencing all that surrounds that history. Thus in turn we are privileging one event over another, a tight dichotomy between times of inclusion and exclusion.

I am sitting at Prestwich Memorial looking at the placards designated to explain the ossuary that is held behind the kitchen of TRUTH coffee. Reading these exhibits they exude displacement and silencing – willful choices to include a certain narrative and story. Titled ‘Displacement’ a board reads different ‘stories’ of displacement in District One. The stories they choose to tell do not discuss how colonialism played a role in said displacement, and they only list a fraction of the type of people that could have been buried at Prestwich. The lack of detail and surface level recognition of the people that lived in District One is silencing all the narratives of people who were part of that community.

Trouillot provides an anecdote at the beginning of a chapter detailing an encounter he had with two African-American students at American institutions. These students were clinging to the histories that they had been taught, histories
that did not accurately represent the changing climate of the American race culture. Yet Trouillot points out that these students are “too close to the unfolding story” (pg. 70). This perplexed me at first, these students were in a position I have found myself in many a time in college- questioning the history that we are learning and wanting to know how it has affected my own life. Yet the longer I have been away from my home institution and America I have begun to understand what Trouillot meant. Being away from the current events of Black Lives Matter and the 2016 election drama for example has made me realize overarching themes of colonialism, slavery, gendered opinions, positionality and privilege that all play into not only my own interpretation of these events but the impact those events are having on society. Having space away from issues that hit close to home has provided me with better insight into global issues that have to do with silencing.

In my literature review I discuss Trouillot’s views on how facts trivialize narratives and I want to apply this argument to the Prestwich Memorial. On one of the panels depicting the “Early Inhabitants of District One” the following ‘fact’ is proclaimed: “Following the landing of Jan van Riebeeck in 1652 they (Khoekhoen peoples) would have watched the establishment of the VOC victualling station, while they grazed their fat-tailed sheep on the slopes of Signal Hill”. This statement, on a public memorial open to all, sanitizes the truth and trivializes the history of the Khoekhoen people. The sign neglects to mention the interactions between Riebeeck and the native people of South Africa and the violent dichotomy of slavery that developed. The sign also assumes what would have happened, that the Khoekhoen people would have remained on Signal Hill with their grazing sheep while the forceful hand of colonialism quietly passed them by. It is when reading ‘information’ like this that I become angry and the systems of power that have created this interpretation of history. Trouillot (1995) argues “public history is often now a tale of sheer power clothes in electronic innocence and lexical clarity”(136). This sort of public history displayed perpetuates the problem of false historical narrative because the accessibility of not just the Prestwich Memorial but the sanitized facts of history in general only create a broader problem of silencing.
Lastly, Trouillot discusses the problem with attempting to represent slavery in museums, monuments and memorials. He quotes the popular author William Styron in saying that “slavery cannot be represented in exhibits” (p. 143). Trouillot discusses this in terms of Disney’s plans to build a theme park in Virginia, USA that would be historically themed, including a section on slavery. Thankfully this plan did not go through but it certainly brought around conversation about the portrayal of slavery in culture today. In the case of the theme park and many other sites of slave remembrance around the US the displays of slavery would be romanticized and thus inaccurate.

I can reflect upon the problematic issue of portrayals of slavery in a very personal sense. I grew up in the college town of Chapel Hill, NC – home to the esteemed University of North Carolina; where in the middle of a green in campus stands a monument to slavery. It is a haunting display of the violent past that was slavery in the South. A table like structure built with figures of slaves built around the base to ‘honor’ the slaves on whose back the greatness of US society was built upon. It makes me sick for many reasons.

First, it implies that slavery is a dead institution when that is far from the truth and secondly because the portrayal of the slaves is done in a demeaning way. Many a time while walking through the campus green you will see students sitting on top of the memorial, with no understanding of the meaning behind it and all the while disrespecting the people it was built to honor. How can such suffering be accurately represented? In many ways this memorial reminds me of the bench that was built to honor Krotoa – resurrected in such a disrespectful manner.

“U.S. slavery has both officially ended, yet continues in many complex forms – most notably institutionalized racism and the cultural denigration of blackness” (p.147). Trouillot speaks eloquently on the ways that slavery persists
today in America yet this is just as applicable to South Africa. Institutionalized racism is blatantly prevalent in just the fact that although blacks were given political power after apartheid whites remained in economic power and little looks to be changing in that field. Slavery is a heavily trivialized aspect, and not only slavery itself but also the suffering that surrounds it and continues to impact generations to come, includes both racism and silencing. At Prestwich slavery is seen as a few facts on a board and the voices of the bones buried at Prestwich were used as an attempt to reclaim agency in the narrative of slavery. Trouillot states well the delicate balance between the past and current times: “the focus on The Past often diverts us from the present injustices for which previous generations only set the foundations” (p. 150).

The role museums play in the formation of a ‘new’ South Africa...

When I was four I visited the Museum of Life and Science in Durham, North Carolina with my preschool to learn about butterflies and dinosaurs- my first interaction with institutionalized knowledge packaging. Flash-forward 16 years and my SIT group and I were being herded around the CBD on a walking tour of downtown. We have just emerged at the end when we spot to our right a protest going on in front of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament building. It was a group of the Ses’khona People’s Rights Movement protesting about service delivery but barred from participating in social protests we kept our distance and turned left, heading straight into the Slave Lodge at the end of Wale Street. I enter the bright white rotunda and I am astonished at what I see. Surrounding me are panels providing a brief overview of slavery in the Cape, providing no agency to the people who experienced slavery or continue to feel its effects today. Trouillot would point out (and I would agree with him) that the panels only provide sanitized facts that trivialize the history of slavery in the Cape. Which, in and of itself cannot be accurately portrayed because of the inherent violent nature that the history of slavery carries. Museums and memorials are closely tied and bear many problems in this day in age when it comes to an accurate representation of memorialization.

Identity problems are not a new issue to South Africa in this day in age and museums are suffering from them as well. Chakrabarty sums up the debates
that have emanated from museums in late democratic nations: “debates have challenged the authority of the museum in deciding what could be collected and exhibited. Museums have been drawn into debates about the past, its representation and ownership, debated often driven by the so-called politics of identity” (p. 3). Because of this, museums have been key in the new questions surrounding cultural heritage and politics. A prime example of this can be seen in one of the panels at Prestwich. Titled ‘The People and their Burials’, this exhibit name calls into question many problems surrounding identity. The phrase ‘the people’ makes the information so unapproachable, foreign sounding even. How would someone who identifies with an ancestry of slavery in the Cape feel when they saw this? Museums must find a new identity in this day in age to maintain relativity to the changing aspects of society, and Prestwich had the opportunity to create a welcoming environment to those searching for information on the history of burial grounds within the city but rather chose isolating language that lacks identity. In the post-apartheid landscape museums continue to search for a new identity that accurately represents the past and can carry them into the future. In an article about narrative, place and memory during the turn of the century Grunebaum discusses the larger meaning of narrative within society:

What is the aim of these speculations? First, the unpacking of the reciprocal relationship between narrative, memory, and place might make visible the processes by which the individual life story becomes a metonymy for the collective, in this instance, the "nation" where the memory and history of the individual are constructed as the collective memory and public history of a nation (p.199).

This brings up the question, what role should narrative play in a museum-especially a museum that is supposed to represent an entire country’s heritage or history? How emotional should a museum be? In this post-apartheid neoliberal realm that Cape Town finds itself in museums have the difficult task of attracting and challenging visitors while not alienating them, both visitors who have felt or been excluded in the past and those who want a comforting experience for their children (Cornell). This is a challenging task for any museum but my experience
at the Slave Lodge was one void of narrative and conflict. I felt alienated, uncomfortable and troubled during my time there and I can only imagine how people who identified with a heritage of slavery in the Cape would feel in such a space.

About a five minute walk down the road is the District Six Museum, a striking contrast to the imposing harshness of the Slave Lodge. A living museum, dedicated to the forced removals of District Six residents and the ensuing and continuing repercussions, the museum breathes narrative. Bonita Bennett (2008), current director of the museum discusses “the museum continues to consolidate, reflect on and document the range of ways in which it has managed to mobilize individual and collective memory as it tries to impact cultural restitution” (p. 120). This sort of work is vital to understanding the forced removals during apartheid as well as making the museum accessible to those who were displaced during apartheid and visitors like me. When memory becomes moored in place and time it is becomes represented as suspended from current times, yet when memory, reflection and recovery are ongoing, there is life in a museum. This is something that Prestwich seriously lacks. When the remains were first discovered many voices came forward identifying themselves with not only the remains but also the ensuing cultural heritage: yet these narratives are nowhere to be found in Prestwich. Even though there were two sides to the argument over what should be done with the remains, and dehumanization won, that does not exempt the memorial from being a space for people to gather and share memories or narratives, let alone a spot for memorialization of slavery and colonialism in this time.

Another strong criticism of current museums is that they are based too much in tourism and in turn this focus on appealing to the masses trivializes and silences the process of memorialization and the belittles the voices of those not in power during the creation of history. Grunebaum (2001) places this in context by using the Robben Island Museum as an example “To the visitor to Robben Island not only is the past packaged for the consumption of a growing global tourist industry, but it is there that the narrative of the ‘new’ nation concretizes itself in a place and congeals around the prison cell of Nelson Mandela” (p. 199). I find the words ‘packaged for consumption’ very applicable in this case. Having been to

Noonan 27
the museum on the island, the history of the island is displayed in simple terms with Mandela’s cell being the highlight of the tour. Since when did glorifying one man’s suffering in a prison cell come to represent neoliberal touristic interests? The island is chock full of colonial, slavery, apartheid oppression and resistance yet the ‘new’ nation that Grunebaum speaks of lacks acknowledgement of these pasts and instead uses Mandela’s prison cell as a way to create a new story moving forward.

Prestwich lives and breathes gentrification and neoliberal values. The architecture of the building (which will be discussed further on) attempts to fit in with the new international styled buildings in the Green Point area to attract the foreign buyer. The fact that SAHRA was concerned with making the memorial a ‘sustainable economic venture’ is an example of the neoliberal tendencies of the current ANC government. TRUTH coffee cult occupies 70% of the space inside the Prestwich Memorial, in my opinion a telling fact about how unvalued the narrative of slavery, burial grounds and the Prestwich Street dead are. I am left questioning how come the Rhodes Memorial does not have a coffee shop attached to it? Why is the imperialist mastermind given more respect than Prestwich? It seems as though that even as power has transitioned to the ANC the remnants of white colonialism continue to dominant over the silenced narrative of those buried in the Green Point burial site.

**Did the Truth Commission really Reconcile?**

I think it is important to note the role that the TRC played in memorialization (or lack there of) after apartheid and how this large gesture of public memory was handled. The interconnected nature of historical acknowledgement, public testimony, and social reparations is a unique occurrence yet the TRC failed to address systematic oppression and rather maintained the structural status quo (Henri & Grunebaum). This type of structural violence becomes normalized within society; in a similar way in which romanticized depictions of slavery have become so commonplace in society we are immune to the real narrative of violence. Henri and Grunebaum elaborate on the fact that the TRC created rigid boundaries, “They do not politicise histories of struggle and oppression outside of the historical rubrics they construct to explain
state violence and people’s resistance” (p. 5). Because of such unyielding parameters, the TRC left little room for opposing or alternative narratives of violence, harm and struggle.

Jonker and Till explain the relationship between the narrative of the ‘new’ South Africa that the TRC created and the history of slavery in the Cape that was a result of the Prestwich burial grounds.

Even the progressive work of transformation and constitutional transition, initiated by legal reforms of the early 1990s and exemplified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), formulated a historical narrative of the nation that often neglected certain dimensions of Cape Town’s complex past…transformational and memorial strategies fail to exorcise pre-apartheid injustices, in particular the consequences of slavery at the Cape and its distinctive discourses of racial impurity. The human remains that emerged at Prestwich Place thus embodied a past that exceeded national narrations of public memory, and also presented this past as an object of urgent concern for private capital and activists alike (p. 305).

In a nation reeling from the horrible injustice of apartheid it made sense for the TRC to attempt to define a new nation, a new South Africa that wanted to acknowledge the past and then move forward. Yet this was problematic as the TRC neglected to provide recognition to the standardized history of slavery in the Cape, a history that continues to effect everyday life in Cape Town. Prestwich place became a physical manifestation of the consequences of slavery, an issue that many people found to be relevant in society today.

Reviewing Landscape as Artifact at Prestwich Memorial

I stare back at my reflection outside with Prestwich Memorial. I am walking around the triangular plot of land taking pictures of my surroundings. Why did they put mirrored glass in so that I can see out but nobody can see in?

I was lucky enough to read a piece by Noëleen Murray and Louise Green (2008) before I took my first trip to Prestwich, the essay was a personal interpretation of the Prestwich Memorial. They focus mainly on the “confictual relationship between private property and public space in the reconfiguring of the city of Cape Town in post-apartheid South Africa” (p.1). The exhibition inside manages ones experience of the space. The panels depicting the ‘history’ of
slavery in the Cape, burial grounds etc. are all placed on rolling platforms, thus they can be moved around.

The last time I visited Prestwich all of the information panels had been moved very close together, enough space between them for me to fit but not to take a picture and this had a profound effect on my understanding of the space. There is no sequence to the panels and so they do not portray a story or narrative but rather spew a few facts out about disjointed subjects. The space was designed with an open floor plan to enable new interpretations of the memorial but it seems that TRUTH is occupying most of the floor while the Memorial has taken a backseat. The placement and positioning of these panels manage my experience in the space; contribute to my emotional reaction and the role it played in the closing of public debate on what to do with the remains.

While continuing to focus on the inside of the building, I want to discuss the role that the physical space plays in a personal interpretation of Prestwich. Green and Murray (2008) note the space maintains a certain “a degree of blankness, a certain, careful neutrality” (p. 5). This sort of space does not leave room for personal response; there is no place for flowers or candles, no small area for small rituals of respect for the dead housed there (Green & Murray, 2008). They note that graves are normally places of extreme excess, to pay reverence to those who are no longer with us yet the cold concrete and dim lighting illuminating the faded and saggy cardboard boxes does no such thing.

Jonker and Till (2009) mention that the building is not conducive to memory practice, there is no space for quiet reflection or artistic interpretations of the heritage that accompanied the unearthing of the remains. How can memorialization of slavery and colonialism occur in this time when the landscape itself does not allow one to do so?
Green and Murray (2008) sum up well their interpretations of the physical space of Prestwich, and how that space has been impacted by SAHRA’s decision to continue exhumations.

What appears to be at play here is no longer simply the tensions between the profit driven desires of private development and the ‘communities of memory’ of those dispossessed in Cape Town, but the playing out of institutional and disciplinary interpretations of the Prestwich dispute, where the confident methods of conventional heritage practice and modes of interpretation have overwritten the more open discourses of interpretation advocated by the Prestwich Committee and the District Six Museum (p. 11).

There is no more of a conventional method to memorialization than a monument/museum/memorial. These types of heritage practices are designed to manage the past and manage the visitor’s experience of the past – not exactly the most engaging or personal way to interact with a contentious history. The District Six Museum was highly influential in the HOPSAC movement and I can only wonder how memorialization of slavery and colonialism would be different had the Prestwich burial ground had been treated in the way the physical landscape of District Six has been.

Jonker and Till summarize that the vast, barren, open land of District Six that still occupies a portion of the city has become a physical reminder of activists work during apartheid, an ‘open wound’ some may say but nevertheless a space to mourn loss and recognize the violence of apartheid. There is the need to keep the wound open in memory of the past for hopes of a more tolerant future. Imagine if this type of respect had been given to the burial site. If that physical landscape could become a site of remembrance, memorialization of a painful past and a space where recovery and interpretation could occur, similar to the empty fields of District Six. I think that interpretation of the space, history and narrative of Prestwich would be very different if the environment was not that of TRUTH coffee but rather a place of living memory with the remains buried. A reclaiming of sorts, of excluded people claiming their right to inhabit the inner post-colonial city once more.

Thinking about the ways that ones surroundings interpret an interaction and about the significance of bones and death in a one’s life has made me question a lot. For a person of only 20 years I have attended more funerals than
most, seven to be exact. Each one has been a different experience but I have been
trying to understand the role landscape plays in death. My mom’s side of the
family is from the deep South of the United States so many of the funerals I
attended were open casket ceremonies in places of worship. As a little girl I was
taught that I was supposed to go up to the body at the front of the church and
‘visit’. But what did this mean? The person was no longer alive but was I
supposed to just spend time with the body?

I had so many questions. This final ‘visit’ was prior to saying goodbye at
the graveyard, with the casket being lowered into its final resting place. In what
ways is it comforting for a body to be surrounded by others? Burial grounds have
always been treated as places of high reverence so why do the remains of
Prestwich receive such unremarkable care? What does it mean to just visit? I am
only visiting Prestwich, only visiting South Africa. How does the fact that I am
just visiting impact my experience of my surroundings and understanding of
space if I am only occupying for a temporary time? I am left with many questions
about visitation, death and landscape after reading about the role the physical
topography of the Prestwich Memorial interacts with the city of Cape Town but
these questions will only push me to be further aware of the spaces in which I am
visiting.

Memory in Haunting Practice

“The mapping of moments and movements of struggle, trauma and memory
across and through time is an open-ended project” (p. 305).

Jonker and Till (2008) are discussing the mapping of the city of Cape
Town through memorial cartography above yet the key phrase from this passage
is ‘open-ended project’. Memory takes a lot of work and the process of
remembering, recalling and retaining information is an ever-continuous activity.
Throughout my time in South Africa I have visited many burial sites, Steve
Biko’s grave, Gugulethu Cemetery, and the Kramat of Tuan Guru to name a few
and each time I leave these places I find myself looking back on memories I have
of those who have died. This is part of my memorialization process, recognizing
these memories and giving them credence. Yet how is memory being dealt with
at Prestwich? This is the question I am attempting to answer in this final portion of my analysis.

In the memorial cartography sites of trauma, violence and oppression are anchoring points to an understanding of new spatial and historical imaginings of the city. Prestwich would be such a place.

In such a mapping, particular places such as Prestwich can be seen as thresholds through which citizens can access voices, inheritances and resources that provide for them a language of belonging, even as these phantoms speak of structural exclusions from the city. In this way, sites of displacement have the potential to disrupt established zones of social belonging, allowing the excluded to re-imagine how they might inhabit the urban spaces from which they and their ancestors were displaced (p. 307).

Prestwich would become a place in the urban CBD where people could reclaim agency in their own memory. The living physically opened up space for the dead but metaphorically when the bodies were unearthed they were given a voice. The voice was manifested by those who resonated with the ancestry of displacement from the inner city. This would drastically turn Prestwich Memorial from a place to get expensive coffee to one of public memory and remembrance.

Jonker and Till speak of all the activism and claims to descendancy that occurred after the exhumations as also a desire to resurrect the memory of inhabiting the inner-city space of Cape Town. The colonial history of the city was now clashing with the post-apartheid landscape of memorialization of slavery and colonialism.

Memory is an ongoing narrative that should be connected with the present. Grunebaum (2001) discusses this importance, “the event, the memory of the event, and its place to be narrated in terms of a past that has become closed-off and complete. As such, the reciprocal mooring of place and memory in narrative becomes represented as discontinuous with the present time” (p. 200). This is the exact opposite of a living and breathing narrative as memory is ongoing and should be used in conjunction with the present moment rather than a divergence of time and place. Although the bones held at the Prestwich Memorial no longer have voices of their own it is through the memory work of the living that they are given agency.
Throughout this independent study process I feel as though I have not only examined memorialization in the post-apartheid moment but also examined memorialization within myself. After reading Trouillot I began to question the powers at be that created the histories that I have become familiar with not only in academia but also how the different power structures in my own life have impacted my interpretation of certain events. While examining museums and the TRC I am able to see how narrative should better fit into history and the credit that is due towards personal memory. I feel all the more aware of the space around me after reading about the theory of landscape as artifact. How have the physical spaces that I have been raised in impacted my worldview and perceptions? Lastly, and most profoundly I have a better understanding of memory. The power and importance that it holds, the partiality that it brings to a conversation and how I can best give credence to my own memories in the future. This has been a very personal journey for me in not only learning about memorialization in this time and space but also having the space and now resources to better interpret my own experience in this country.
Conclusion

Inspired by an original idea of wanting to hear the stories of the silenced people of Cape Town, my project transformed into this amazing journey of memorialization in the post-apartheid space. By themselves, the bones of the Prestwich street dead are mute but they ignited an ongoing conversation surrounding memorialization in this post-apartheid landscape. They came to stand for everything that the city had glossed over during the creation of the neo-liberal global tourist city that exists today. When I first entered the space of the Prestwich Memorial I could not believe how disrespected these remains were and led me to want to better understand why these voices and storied were dampened. This led me to my research question: what forms has memorialization taken in the post-apartheid moment?

After an extensive literature review spanning background information on the Prestwich site to theory based readings on erasure, archeology, memory and museums. From this I came to understand four main themes that contributed to the objectives surrounding my research question. The main lines of thinking were as follows; the role that power plays in the creation of history and thus silencing of voices, the problematic nature of museums and memorials in the current post-apartheid moment, viewing landscape as artifact and lastly the power that memory and narrative holds.

In short, from these four themes I learned a lot about the process of memorialization. Power plays a vital role in the creation of history, in whose story gets told and the trivialization of certain narratives. Museums struggle to accurately represent histories at times because of the process of choosing ‘facts’ and especially in memorial/ museums that depict histories of slavery; the exhibits are so violent and dehumanizing that they should not be on display. Similarly, the TRC is criticized for the resurrection and subsequent burial of narrative. Viewing the physical space of Prestwich, the architecture firmly impacts ones interaction with the space and provides a stark contrast to the remains that are held inside. Lastly, questions of ownership of narrative were brought up throughout my research and I can only begin to understand the power of memory and story
telling but I can be sure that recovery and interpretation of a violent historical narrative such as slavery is never ending.

I am in no place to draw any conclusions because I was only researching this topic for four weeks and it would be very unethical of me to pretend that I had a solution or firm answer to my original question. Rather I dove into these four topics above and tried my best to understand how they related to current memorialization in Cape Town. Since I did not conduct interviews I am relying on my ‘primary’ research of visiting the Prestwich Memorial, other sites of memorial to slavery around the city, my interpretation of art, exhibit, performance and landscape as my main fieldwork to accompany the extensive readings I did.

Although I cannot draw conclusions on the problems that surround memorialization currently, my own education was deeply enriched by this independent study project and my understanding of Cape Town is much improved after these four weeks. Rather than providing a traditional conclusion I would like to point to the questions that have become evident to me after finishing my research. What is national heritage in South Africa? What is memorial property? Who should be privileged when claims to memorial property are being evaluated? Should mediators of structures of power be held accountable? What does it mean to have agency in the process of remembering? How are these violent dichotomies of slavery being perpetuated in not only memorials within South Africa but in the United States as well? Why do some voices still count more than others – and how can this be counteracted? What are the bones saying to me when I visit them? I will leave you with this quote by Thuli Gamedze from *Whose ‘Death Speaks’*:

“How is it that the disparate narratives of land, of death, of resources, and of power feed into one another? How is it that the death in one story speaks so much louder than the death of *the other*?”

Whose death are we willing to listen to?
Recommendations for Further Study

The process of memorialization is an ongoing one, a task that will never be finished but constantly studied. There are many more ways in which this project could be expanded, beginning with more literary research surrounding other memorial sites around Cape Town as well as delving deeper into ideas of erasure, silencing and memory. I believe that the best ways for this study to grow is for each person to look internally and see how they process memory. How do you represent the past in your everyday life? How do you interpret spaces of death? What forms has memorialization taken in your life and where do you see such sites in the US? How can you give a voice to the silenced in your past?

Glossary of Terms

ANC: African National Congress

UCT: University of Cape Town

Memorialization: The process of preserving memories of people or events.

TRC: Truth and Reconciliation Commission

HRV: Human Rights Violation

ISP: Independent Study Project

CBD: Central Business District
Appendix/Appendices

Above: View of Prestwich Memorial and surrounding area from pedestrian bridge over Buitengracht.

Left: Image of the Memorial closed to the public.

All photography not sited is my own work.

Photos taken: 15/11/15

Noonan 38
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Student Name: Anna Sumner Noonan

Title of ISP: Not all those that are buried are dead: An analysis of memorialization at the Prestwich Memorial

Program and Term: Fall 2015 – South Africa: Multiculturalism and Human Rights

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