Article

Beyond experience: the mediation of traumatic memories in South African history museums[1]

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Introduction

South Africa is ten years into its democracy and history is actively rewritten and negotiated while many of the primary witnesses are still alive. Stakeholders within the Department of Education, the heritage industry, the academic world and teachers increasingly perceive museums as crucial educational sites that document and symbolise the transition and facilitate the building of 'the future' (see various contributions in Jeppie 2004).[2] Outcomes Based Education, discussed and developed over the last ten years (see Chisholm 2004), prescribes both the Holocaust and apartheid as topics in the Revised National Curriculum Statements for grades R-9 (Department of Education 2002:92-93). The educators, who might be primary or secondary witnesses to these events, are assumed to know how to achieve the prescribed outcomes and how to facilitate the learning process. References to the role and influence of personal positions and experiences of mediators, such as teachers and museum facilitators, on the learning process, are however rare (Harley et al 2000; Goodson 1996; Swina 1994).

This is problematic for historical and pedagogical reasons: writers such as Bar-On (1999) and Simon et al (2000) have pointed out that people do not merely change their identities and values when political or social changes occur. While one needs to be careful in drawing comparisons,[3] it is legitimate to argue that totalitarian regimes such as Nazism in Germany and apartheid in South Africa impact on people both in the past and present in two intertwined ways: on the one hand they erased and reshaped individual and collective memories of 'other' pasts and presents, particularly those memories that were not compatible with their ideologies (Winter and

Sivan 1999:7). On the other hand, in the case of the Holocaust and apartheid's forced removals, they took people away from their physical and metaphorical place in society. For the survivors, the actual loss of this physical and metaphorical place and thus of their identity is traumatic because with it they lost their trust in others and in the safety of the world (LaCapra 2001:45-46).[4] The question then is: how do people 'change', reflect on 'change' and how do they mediate this to the younger generations?

In the field of education, researchers such as Ellsworth (1997) and Jagodzinski (2002) also challenge an idealistic, unproblematic interpretation of 'change'. Ellsworth points out that pedagogy is 'a much messier and more inconclusive affair than the vast majority of our educational theories and practices make it out to be' (1997:8). Educators (and human beings in general) have the desire to forget that 'the fancy of understanding' is a prestigious but seductive illusion (1997:81-82) (see also Britzman 2000). Ellsworth (1997:70) explains:

> Teaching is not psychoanalysis. But consciously or unconsciously teachers deal nevertheless in repression, denial, ignore-ance, resistance, fear and desire whenever we teach. And in any classroom, the presence of the discourse of the Other can often become painfully and disturbingly evident and 'disruptive' to goals such as understanding, empathy, communicative dialogue. This is especially so in classrooms that deal explicitly with histories.

This project attempts to address this under researched area in history education in South Africa. Paying attention to the subjectivity of mediators, be they teachers or museum facilitators, is pivotal if we want to understand how 'change' – as a historical 'event' but also as changing moral values, behaviour and thought – is taught. The question that drives this paper is: how do museum facilitators define and analyse the role of primary narratives of traumatic events such as the Holocaust and apartheid forced removals in pedagogical interactions with a younger generation?[5] The data entails interviews conducted in 2003 with museum facilitators of the Cape Town Holocaust Centre and the District Six Museum. Both museums were established during the first ten years of South Africa's democracy, are extensively visited by school groups, and have developed lesson material and specific programs for schools. I interviewed respectively seven and five museum facilitators (holding different positions within the museum hierarchy). Two of the Holocaust Centre interviewees are Holocaust survivors and all District Six Museum interviewees lived in District Six. In the interviews I asked the facilitators how they perceive their own role in

facilitating school visits and what, according to them, is the role of (directly mediated) primary narratives of traumatic events in these interactions with young people. In this paper, I use pseudonyms for all the museum facilitators.

The paper is guided by theories of oral history and post-Vygotskian and Lacanian inspired pedagogic research (see Daniels 2001; Ellsworth 1997; Portelli 1991 and 1997; Samuel and Thompson 1990). These theories demand a self-reflective interpretation of the interview space as a dialogue in which both sides observe each other, and create and recreate expectations. In this dialogue the construction of narratives is central, which envelops an intangible interaction between 'facts' and 'evaluation' (Antze and Lambek 1996; Casey 1995; Portelli 1991 and 1997). In Portelli's words, 'oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did' (1991:50). The dialogue is perceived from a 'generational' point of view. I make a distinction between primary narratives, which are narratives of the victims of the traumatic historical event, and the narratives of secondary witnesses or commentators of the event. The latter do not only include relatives of the primary witnesses but also commentators and witnesses without a familial connection.

Pedagogical justification of remembrance

How the museum facilitators define the role of primary narratives in the pedagogical interactions with younger generations in the respective sites, is closely linked with how they define the role of the museum. The latter is described along generational lines: both sites are perceived as 'a spiritual home' for the primary witnesses/survivors of the respective atrocities. The majority of the facilitators in the District Six Museum are ex-District Sixers and a handful of Holocaust survivors testify at the end of some of the educational programs in the Cape Town Holocaust Centre.[6] The teaching of the history of past atrocities through the personal stories of survivors is linked with an active acknowledgment of the survivors' present needs through the establishment of a 'place of memory' but also, in the case of the District Six Museum, an initiative that strives to physically reconstruct District Six.

Closely linked to the notion of 'a spiritual home' is what Simon et al (2000) call the pedagogical justification of remembrance: to guarantee that the atrocities are not repeated, young people have to listen to, and thus acknowledge, the stories of the survivors as historically accurate, but also

learn not to make 'the same mistakes'. Stephen Ackers*, one of the older trustees of the District Six Museum explained this as follows:

> [T]he essential aspect of remembering and bringing to the youth also is important because [...] there is a saying that if you don't [sic] forget your past, you're up to return […] to actually repeat it. And the people tend to repeat bad things you know. So essentially what we're saying is, that […]the place and the struggle for the […] formation of the District Six Museum […] is to say that, never again must anything like this happen. […] But also, and that is the function of what we believe, because we believe that this institution certainly needs that connection […] for young people. Because […] they get the stories primary here! They get the stories that have been spoken and, and [...] recorded, and the photographic […] witnesses of it […]. And that should impact on people in terms of where they are, and say that 'how is it that this occurred in, in what we call a civilized country?'[7]

This pedagogical justification of remembrance is also used to point out the necessary and important cooperation between the museums and schools. Anne Hartmann*, one of the facilitators at the Cape Town Holocaust Centre, highlighted the role of the facilitators in the 'teaching of history' but also the 'building of bridges', which is one of the aims of the current syllabus for grade nine. However, success of this teaching also depends on the input of the school teachers:

> [O]n the one hand while you are there also to teach history. Because after all the […] main reason they're coming is, and this is to *the great* credit of the Holocaust Centre that at grade 9 now it is part of the syllabus within World War II history. […] [I]n terms of knowing that you have them for the one morning only, it's very important that it becomes an outreach, a building of bridges, you know, an interaction across faith, across cultural levels and so on. Or for me it's certainly, it's that. […] [O]f course, the difficulty is […] the extent to which they *do* come prepared or the extent to which there is follow up afterwards.

While this pedagogical justification of remembrance is rightly used and defended by many (including myself) it embodies an assumption about the moral vigilance of the listener which is not unproblematic. In the words of Simon et al (2000:5):

> While the promise of remembrance is that of a moral vigilance that stands over and against indifference, the continuation of local and global violence suggests that such a pedagogy rarely serves as an effective safeguard.

Some facilitators do reflect on the tensions that inhabit this assumption by indicating 'the gap' between the actual and desired roles of primary and secondary witnesses within the pedagogical interaction. In what follows I explore the facilitators' perceptions of the respective roles of teachers, learners and the facilitators themselves; what kind of message has to be 'transmitted' and how; and what kind of effects the specific interactions in the museum setting have on the younger generation, but also on the facilitators themselves.

The role of the school teacher: an interface

Facilitators in both museums perceive the role of the school teacher as an interface between the museum space and the space of the classroom. Julie Abrahams* from the District Six Museum, for instance, remarked:

> If they have a project for their children, they will inform us what it is about, or they're asking me to fax a copy of their paper so that there can be some […] focus on the project while they are here and to motivate the learners so I don't think I have difficulties with the teachers. […] But […] teachers have to participate in what goes on. They have to take responsibility for their children and they have to be included. […] Sometimes the teachers think they will just drop the child, the children and,[…], you know, I would just take over completely and they have to be here and some of them will escape to the coffee shop (laugh) and, you know, have a nice break. And I will […] invite them to rather join. Because it is for their own benefit too.

The Holocaust survivors I interviewed linked the relationship with the visiting teachers more with their own ways of remembering and telling about the Holocaust. Maria Dubois*, for example, stressed that the Holocaust survivors only talk to adult groups (and to Jewish learners) because it is too painful to talk to young children. Well informed teachers should speak, she asserted:

> We find that for us to speak to young children is not necessary. Teachers, who are well informed, should speak, as part of their Holocaust Education. That's why we speak only to […] students, people over 18 and so on. Because every time we speak it/it's *a piece* of my *heart*. And it's a piece of my *health*, that is destroyed. You know, for the young people, 60 years, 50 years, [is] long time ago! For them it is part of history! For me it's my youth that was brutally taken away from me! And even after my miraculous survival it was not given back to me! I never got my youth back! I never got my home, my parents, […] my relatives, my teachers, my school!

It is interesting that the facilitators do not take into account the possibility of teachers being primary witnesses themselves. The role of the teacher is defined in very specific terms: the teacher needs to have a certain distance and discipline, and (for some of the facilitators) also needs to take on the role of 'the learner'.

The interactions with the learners: sermons and silences

The paradox of the pedagogical justification of remembrance seems to evolve around two challenges or unsettlements that inhabit the act of listening. Firstly, facilitators emphasise that imagining and understanding atrocities that oneself did not experience is difficult, if not, according to some facilitators, impossible. Secondly, listening is complicated by the silences and gaps that every narrative and dialogue contains. Although I make a distinction between these two challenges, the reader will see that they are intertwined. The second challenge can be read as an elaboration, or a deeper layer of the first challenge.[8]

Challenge 1: Imagining and understanding atrocities

Most of the museum facilitators questioned the possibility of imagining for those who did not experience the atrocities first hand. I had the following dialogue with Henry Anderson*, one of the trustees of District Six Museum:

HA*: […] the children don't and […] I don't expect them to fully understand and appreciate. They can read about it and they can say 'I hear what you're saying'. But they *can't* identify with it.

SG: Why?

HA*: Because they've not experienced it! So what does it need now, is for them to know the *history*, and to accept when people *tell* […] that when you are stripped of your humanity, this is what happens to you! Now I need you, if you are the student, I need you to accept my word!

SG: To believe you.

HA*: To believe me! And to believe what other writers have written about humankind's behaviour towards humans. OK? […] And here understanding is linked to seeing, and hearing it, and also feel. And the best way is to be able to use a vehicle, use words, which could be a vehicle, use sounds, which could be a vehicle, use visuals, which could be a vehicle to help you […] to transport yourself into that situation. And, […] imagine that you are experiencing that pain, that hardship. It's not easy! It is not easy for the children, descendants of those […] parents, those grandparents who suffered forced removals to *fully* appreciate [their experiences] […] They never lived here.

One can say that high school learners, as secondary witnesses to the event can only try to imagine what it was like by placing themselves in the shoes of the narrators. Smith (2001:447) however warns that believing in possibilities and similarities can foreclose remembering that one forgets and imply accepting uncritically what the primary witness conveys. One could say that survivors of atrocities experience an uncanniness that 'occurs when the boundaries between *imagination* and *reality* are erased' (Kristeva 1991:188; her emphasis). This uncanniness is also experienced by the listener. Even though museum facilitators indicate that certain groups amongst the young visitors have a familial connection with the traumatic event, having parents or grandparents that have experienced apartheid forced removals or the Holocaust, and one could expect these groups to have a 'better' understanding of (or potential to understand) these experiences, this is not taken for granted. Human beings universally have the tendency not to think about or to build an emotional wall against painful experiences, also when these experiences are not theirs (Bauer 2001:40,262; McCully et al 2002). Maria Dubois stressed that it is impossible for the young learners to understand what had been happening in the camps. Even for herself, a survivor of the extermination camps, understanding is an everlasting challenge and this is what makes testifying a difficult thing to do:

> They [learners] don't grasp it! And another thing! We can't speak so often! You speak a few times; you have to have a break! […] [Y]ou're trying to find out, you're trying to learn, you're trying to study, you will never fathom it! […] [Reflecting on a personal, very upsetting experience in one of the extermination camps:] For a [silence] good moment I thought I must have died and I am in hell! Because it couldn't happen in reality. […] [N]o *matter* how much you learn about it, you cannot fathom it, you cannot *even visualise* it!

Paddy Berkovitch*, one of the museum facilitators, said that the Centre asks the Holocaust survivors to testify only in some of the educational programs because of the emotional impact the act of testifying has on them. She states that even when the survivors talk, listeners do not necessarily understand what they say:

> '[…] often that is also falling, almost, on deaf ears. Because the listeners haven't got the context, and therefore haven't even got the empathy. Unless you've done quite a bit of reading, you don't really know what they are talking about. Because they never talk worst case scenario. They give you an outline of what happened to them. And

> these people have no idea what the worst case scenario actually was. (Silence). And we also don't like to expose them to […] young people, who may not appreciate what they are talking about. […] [They do] not empathise efficiently, you know, this, to them, to a very young person, this is an old person standing and talking about something that happened 60 years ago. OK and they *don't really* understand what it is.

Paddy Berkovitch's reflection indicates that reaching an understanding is challenging because of the different historical positions and needs of both parties. This challenge is complicated by dynamic and intrinsically social practices of forgetting and remembering (Hayden 1999). For the survivors it is important to be able to deal with their traumatic past and to construct a morally defendable self-image while the listeners might accept and even demand redemptive narratives (Friedlander 1992; LaCapra 2001:153-159). Isabelle Lagrange* highlighted the two-way direction of wanting to forget by saying the following about a family member who experienced the extermination camps: '[S]he would never talk to me about it. About the camp. And I didn't want to know'.

While uncanniness and 'misunderstandings' might be experienced as something restraining and even threatening, something that need to be 'remedied', they also open a door to what LaCapra calls 'empathic unsettlement' 'in which emotional response comes with respect for the other and the realization that the experience of the other is not one's own' (LaCapra 2001:40). Marian Spielberg*, one of the Cape Town Holocaust Centre facilitators, for example, did not experience the suffering of the Holocaust but directly witnessed the humiliation inflicted upon black people during apartheid. Her reflection on the suffering of the Holocaust indicates that she will never fully understand it, despite her attempts to imagine 'how it must be like'.

> I can imagine, but it wasn't me, so the best I can do is try *in limited language* I have, because I don't have a vocabulary to describe that suffering. And I wasn't even there! But the more I read, the more I know, the more I can give examples, and explain and engage and interact, *the closer one can get to imagining what it must be like*. I don't think one needs to have gone through it to be able to say *we/we can now relate to it, we can relate in some ways*, because we do have an imagination and with/with more knowledge, we can *begin to understand* without actually experiencing the same emotion.

Marian Spielberg's reflection points out that 'learning' through 'empathetic unsettlement' happens on two levels: on the one hand, one

learns about what happened to others, in another time and space. On the other hand, one learns 'within the disturbances and disruptions inherent in comprehending these events' (Simon et al 2000:3). According to Schlender (2002:138), 'estrangement' plays a crucial role in this context: one willingly and unwillingly estranges the experiences of oneself or another human being. Simon et al (2000) argue that this kind of pedagogy provides a 'remembrance as a difficult return' instead of the redemptive myth that the future will be better if one remembers; it provides an alternative for a 'total(itarian)' understanding of past and present.

Challenge 2: Imagining an understanding community in museum narratives

Space is often understood as one of the tools of remembering and imagining (Nora 1989:9,13; Winter and Sivan 1999:37). Space shapes social and individual identities. The narratives of the facilitators at the District Six Museum exemplify this. With the destruction of the space and community that was District Six, the inhabitants lost their *place* that created and was created by their cosmopolitan identity as individuals and as a community (Field 2001; McEachern 2001; Rassool and Prosalendis 2001). Similarly, the Jewish community in Europe was destroyed – not just their community as a physical and social entity as the majority of its members were killed (Young 1988).

This social meaning of 'place' also relates to those who visit the museums. As Richard Rive (in Rassool and Prosalendis 2001:31) amply explains, there cannot be a place without people and without the capacity to empathise. Empathy is about putting oneself in somebody else's place. Empathy is not identification but an appreciation of the very place another person is in (LaCapra 2001:27,211-3; Bauer 2001:17,19). And space has also a metaphorical meaning: sense is made of events in reflections and the narrator 'unifies his vision in the knowledge of its outcome' (Young 1988:30).

These literal and metaphorical meanings of 'place' can work in contrasting ways. The District Six Museum facilitators stressed that the identity of the museum is in an important way shaped by the open, physical space of the District. The physical space, especially in correlation with the stories told in the museum, is a vehicle for outsiders to feel the lost space, to feel what it is like to be thrown out of your neighbourhood. It is a space one needs to commemorate by making it a heritage site. This however might conflict with the realism of human empathy for the victims who want to rebuild their

home in that very same space. Gillion Chapell* was very aware of this and tried to relieve the tension by stating that a 'realistic' point of view is pivotal:

> So there I sit in a catch-twenty-two situation, from where I look at it from both sides. I put myself *in their place*, and I want to get out, I got a family and I want to get out of here, and here is an opening. And it is being offered. I would take it! So, […] that is where I sit in a catch-twenty-two situation. So I haven't got a problem with people coming back, but I've also got a problem with, you know, with what you're going to be losing. The […] heritage …] of the open space of District Six. Where the sorrow and the pain happened. Maybe it is a healing process! […] I want to be realistic about it, and people want to come back, then that's the way it is then. You've got to be prepared to sacrifice.

One can say that the museum is a living space, contested and ever changing (see Soudien and Meltzer 2001). And this for two reasons: narratives are constructed around dynamic practices of forgetting and remembering, and constant shaping and reshaping of insiders and outsiders (see Davison 1998). Both practices happen within the survivors, in interaction between survivors and their descendants, and in the interaction between survivors and the general public, including learners and teachers. Let us explore these two practices in both museums:

Forgetting/remembering

The District Six Museum facilitators who were evicted from the district were cut out of the place they belonged to and this lost place ran the risk of being erased from their memories. This happened in two ways: apartheid officials named streets and housing complexes in the new areas after the names of streets and flat buildings in the destroyed neighbourhoods, such as Hanover Park and Lavender Hill (Delport 2001:39; Hart 1990:128-9). On the other hand, the people who directly experienced eviction often tried to erase their memories in an attempt to overcome the trauma of having lost that very space that made their home, their identity as an individual and as a community. This trauma is expressed in the constant tension between wanting to remember and wanting to forget (Zur 1999:50). Julie Abrahams and her family for example never spoke about 'the change'; they cut it out of their memory 'like we wanted to forget'. Stephen Ackers expressed the tension between wanting and not wanting to visit that world where people do something like that to one another as follows:

> (Y)our place and space […] is significant to you because it *is* your identification […] I wanted to just, to pull it out of my mind. But I *had* to, for my own healing, *come back* to it, and say 'yes, but that is exactly where I lived' […] So, I had to […] re-look at myself again and say 'well, no, I can't […] compartmentalise my mind!' you know. And I think because apartheid already wanted to do that! […] So what we have to do now is to create this in our mind again. [T]he fear about forced removals, […] one sometimes don't know how they could have actually […] done something like this, you know. And, yet, […] the world out there, […] it's possible today.

Stephen Ackers' reflection and the very language he used clearly points to the tension of wanting to forget, and wanting to remember. Traumatic memories have the potential to recur irrespective of the individual's will to recall (Rogers et al 1999). Stephen Ackers perceived the (re-) 'creation' of the mental place as pivotal for his 'healing'. Shutting out the memory would mean to surrender to the ideology of apartheid and a denial of his own identity. This healing does not entail a solution of all that was or is forgotten.

Remembering the Holocaust was, and still is, difficult. The Nazis destroyed not only the physical witnesses of their crime; the atrocities were such that both the survivors and secondary witnesses did not want to or could not believe it really happened (Felman and Laub 1992:80). I had the following dialogue with Isabelle Lagrange about how she got to know about the atrocities committed in the extermination camps in which her parents died:

> SG: How did, how did they tell you, because you were only 12 or something.

> IL: I was 12. It is not only how I was told, […] I didn't know my parents were in Auschwitz. […] How did we know? Because at the end of the war, when all the atrocities became known, it was *shown* on huge big pictures, it was shown in the *movies* […]. *You heard* about it! And amongst the Jewish community, we all heard about it. And I actually saw pictures, of you know the emaciated bodies, and […] that's how I heard about it. And I hoped that my parents weren't *among them* […]

> SG: How did, how does it feel?

> IL: Well it was for me very, very traumatic. […] I really looked once, and didn't look again. I, I really didn't want to, to see them. I had to see them, because I *had* to know, but I didn't want to see them.

> SG: I understand.

> IL: I mean, I could understand that people were so thin, because I knew we were hungry in the camps and there wasn't food and, and it wasn't an ordinary *life* style, it was not the one I had been living before. But I didn't know exactly, I didn't know about the extermination camps, that I didn't know about, until after the war. Most of the *world pretended* not to know about it. But we, we as a child, I really didn't understand and I think I was also shielded from being told.

This dialogue points at the interactive character of forgetting and remembering. It also points at how people did not have a language (and schemata) to talk about such a seemingly unprecedented atrocity. Isabelle Lagrange referred to things she did experience herself but everything that went beyond her own past experiences seemed difficult to fathom, not only because she did not experience it herself but also because of the dynamics of forgetting and remembering within herself and within and between the people around her (see Iorio et al 1997).

Insiders and outsiders

There is yet another reason which makes the process of representing and empathising a complex one. Both visitors and facilitators constantly reshape identities of insiderliness and outsiderliness for themselves and those they talk or listen to (Soudien 2001:125-6). The possibility of 'understanding' and 'imagining' needs, in the words of Simon (2000:13), 'a much more dialectical and uncanny conception of what constitutes a "point of connection", one that initiates an ongoing attentiveness to identification and difference, to ordinariness and the shock of the un-ordinary'. This is not only the case in the facilitators' relation to younger generations. It is also the case in the facilitators' relation to people who have 'other' memories of atrocities.

There are people who lived in District Six but benefited from the forced removals and have 'other' memories. Their position and memories are one of the most contested and un-represented areas in the District Six Museum. The dialogues in the museum contain stories in which agency and a good feeling are central (Soudien and Meltzer 2001:66-68). These 'good old times' stories are an attempt to deal with loss, to reclaim the ability to make individual choices and to retain a sense of morality (Field 2001:118). They are also part of the museum's role in reshaping public memory for a new and better South Africa (Davison 1998:147). In these stories idealisation and demonisation of characters give clues to unrealised hopes or hidden fears (Samuel and Thompson 1990:7).

In the Cape Town Holocaust Centre the need to imagine a progress towards an ideal society without racism and prejudice is equally strong. Magda Goldberg* highlighted 'the extra dimension' that the Cape Town Holocaust Centre gives to the teaching of history by exploring the links between the ideologies behind Nazism and apartheid:

> […] even though there are people who know about the Holocaust, who know about apartheid, it's the way that it's done here that gives them that extra dimension. So, they possibly haven't *thought* about, they know the history of both, but they don't realise what the stepping stones were all about. They don't process what the stepping stones to all this was all about and hopefully and really what I always say to whoever I take around: the history is one thing that's there but what you learn from the history you know. […] I hope that whoever comes and whoever leaves goes away and really just looks at themselves.

She was however aware of the 'sermon' quality that teaching about these ideologies might have:

> I hope by the time they leave, they don't feel that they've had a good dose of church, sometimes they think, maybe I'm giving them a sermon along the way.

This contrasts with her wish that learners will reflect on their own attitudes and practices. Anne Hartmann*, another secondary witness facilitator, pointed at the challenge of reaching an understanding within the museum by mentioning the sensitive question 'how could the survivors have faced coming to an apartheid state' that listeners ask and that she finds only the survivors can answer. Eric Williams*, also a facilitator at the Centre, pointed at the different positions amongst Jewish and non-Jewish people on whether or not one can compare the Holocaust with apartheid. Facilitators also regularly mentioned questions relating to the factuality of the Holocaust (Holocaust denial) and the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These sensitive questions point to the possible uncanniness within the interaction between primary and secondary witnesses. They highlight the historical trauma the primary witness went through and the 'post'-encounter of this trauma by the secondary witness. The uncanniness evolves around the accountability of one's agency in different historical and social contexts.

This tension between insiders and outsiders highlights the crucial balance between empathy and critical reflection. Kris Holmes* of the District Six Museum pointed out the possible dangerous pedagogical impact of conveying only 'good' stories in the museum:

> It's affecting the children […] The children think that only heroes lived in District Six when they come to our museum […] [but the District Sixers] still have memories of these people […] [and the collaborators'] children are alive, hey? It's like take the white, no white person comes now in South Africa today, you know 'I voted for the apartheid government', nobody voted for the apartheid government! And there again, you've got a problem with memory, selective memory, you see? (Sigh) So, all these things are taken into consideration, you know. And maybe history has to be reviewed every ten years, you know, and retold in a relevant way for its time.

This reflection on the selectivity of memory exemplifies the tension between wanting to forget and wanting to remember and the ever changing process of making history. As a remedy, Kris Holmes argued that the museum should put up a rogues' gallery, to show the kids of today that in that time there were bad people as well. He was, however, aware that his stance contrasts with that of other District Sixers who do not want to talk about 'memories that might reflect negatively on others' (Field 2001:123). Stephen Ackers, for example, wants to 'pay tribute to the ordinary men and women who sacrificed much in the quest for freedom'. To him they are role models for the present society. Those who did not fight for justice and peace do not have a place in his narrative. As Henry Anderson* stated it: 'Well I suppose the best way to […] protect the future is to keep as far as possible away from all the potential enemy […] who overrun us'.

However, this 'keeping away' can be questioned when it is linked with Stephen Ackers' reflection on the dialectic between wanting to forget and wanting to remember: in how far is this potential enemy or Other not part of 'us'? Is this not what we are afraid of, namely imagining the other inside us, *being the other* (Kristeva 1991:1,13)? The District Six museum facilitators want to represent their old District Six as a good place, and not represent it as a 'slum'. This selectivity, however, seems to create a tension between the remembering of the District Six survivors and the imagining of the younger generations. The younger generations, growing up in post-apartheid South Africa characterised by poverty, crime and unemployment, might think that good and bad people only exist in their present and that 'District Six' as remembered by the facilitators is an unreachable, 'foreign' place. Similarly the Holocaust as an event that happened as a result of uncontested stereotyping and prejudice on another continent, in another time, might be regarded as 'foreign'. As Baum (2000:95) states: 'Survivor stories are irreplaceable in their witness of the event [of the Holocaust], but they do not

provide models of remembrance for those who did not experience the destruction primary'.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored unsettlements in the pedagogical interaction between museum facilitators, who are primary or secondary witnesses to the Holocaust and/or the apartheid forced removals, and younger generations, who visit the museums as part of their formal education. Laws and policies have changed post-1994 but changing practices and attitudes remain a daily struggle. While defending an anti-apartheid and anti-Holocaust pedagogical stance, stakeholders in the field of education drew and still draw on the rich alternative histories developed since the 1970s as an alternative to the dominant, apartheid school history. However, then and now, these stakeholders might be tempted within the process of pedagogical justification of remembrance to create 'grand narratives' in which 'bad people' are not represented or are put in a clear non-transcendental box of 'perpetrators'.

This reflection on the complexity of historical change and pedagogy suggests that as teachers and museum facilitators we need to be careful with terms such as 'the new South Africa' and unquestioned exclamations such as 'We need to learn from the past'. Looking at unsettlements within pedagogical interactions and unpacking the claim that 'we need to learn from the past', change might have to do more with reflecting on education's illusion of understanding and the actual performativity and undecidability of learning. Museums in this sense are not only safe places where redemptive narratives are mediated around historical events that seem to be beyond experience for both primary witnesses and their listeners. They can also, and need to, offer a safe space to question these constructions. In this space learning might take place – a learning that opens the possibility of unknown and hopeful futures.

Notes

1. This paper is based on a presentation at the Kenton Khahlamba 2004 conference. I would like to thank the interviewees of the District Six Museum and the Cape Town Holocaust Centre, and Dr Sean Field, Dr Crain Soudien and Ines Meyer for sharing their insights with me and for giving feedback on this paper. I also wish to thank the University of Cape Town, the Oppenheimer Institute and the National Research Fund for funding this project.

2. See for a discussion on the history of museums and their current role in offering a forum on representations of the past: Boswell and Evans 1999; Davison 1998;

Dubin 1999; Roberts 1997; Spalding 2002; and the various papers presented at the University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop 'Myths, Monuments, Museums: New Premises?' 16-18 July 1992, Johannesburg.

3. Jews were a minority in Nazi Europe and were as individuals and as a community nearly totally eliminated during the Holocaust. Black South Africans were a majority and were denied citizenship and literally displaced during apartheid but gained political power with the transition to democracy in 1994 (LaCapra 2001:45).

4. In daily language the words 'trauma' and 'traumatic' are often used interchangeably with words such as 'painful' and 'sensitive'. It is important to remain aware of the easy slide between these words. Not all painful experiences are traumatic, but traumatic experiences and memories have painful legacies (Benezer 1999 and LaCapra 2000:64). In addition, painful narratives can reflect some of the 'trauma signals' that Benezer (1999:34-36) has distinguished (such as self-report and 'hidden' events), without necessarily being traumatic. Trauma is difficult to define and there is no consensus amongst academics. Trauma was originally a medical term meaning a physical wound. In the late nineteenth century, the meaning of trauma was transferred from the psychical to the psychological with the ground-breaking though contested work of Freud (Hacking 1996:75-76). Since then the discussion has evolved around the question: is trauma an external and/or internal reality? Psychologists such as Benezer (1999), but also researchers in history (LaCapra 2001 and Portelli 1991, 1997) and in literature studies (Caruth 1996; Felman and Laub 1992) choose to work with the notion of trauma as a temporary or permanent rupturing of the boundaries between a person's sense of her external and internal reality. This notion assists one to look at the role of narratives in the sense making practices of individuals who have experienced trauma. It is this notion of trauma that I choose to use in this project because it enables one to look carefully at two historical events that cannot be equated.

5. While it is important and valuable to study the perceptions of these younger generations, being born 'post-apartheid' and 'post-Holocaust', this article focuses only on the perceptions of the museum facilitators. A study of the reactions and perceptions of grade nine learners on these museum interactions will be part of future research.

6. Namely the educational programs for learners of Jewish background, and the programs for adult visitors (correctional service, teacher students …).

7. Transcription conventions used are: '(silence)' stands for pauses taken by the narrator. '[…]' are editing and cutting interventions by the author. Italic indicates author's emphasis, or interviewee's raised voice. Asterisk with first use of a name indicates pseudonym.

8. See for an epistemological analysis of looking at unsettlements or 'estrangements' Nora 1989:17-18.

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