

# Displaying Anglophile Whiteness: A Case-Study of a South African Exhibition

Cecilia RODÉHN

*Uppsala University, Sweden*

## ABSTRACT

After the fall of apartheid, white South African heritage came to acquire negative connotations, mostly because of the role that white, especially Afrikaner heritage, played during apartheid. This was mostly due to the fact that for black South Africans, whites and whiteness was regarded as homogenous, with few exceptions. Afrikaner heritage has been subject to considerable research and self-criticism, but anglophile heritage has been overlooked. I seek to make a contribution in that regard by exploring the shifting attitude to anglophile whiteness as exemplified in the exhibition *The History Hall* at the KwaZulu-Natal Museum<sup>1</sup> (Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa). The research will pair large scale heritage negotiations with local ones, and will explore how anglophile whiteness was constructed in the museum as well as how it has changed. The research is based on qualitative methodology, and draws on participant observation and qualitative interviews, visual analysis, and archive materials.

*Keywords:* Whiteness, apartheid, democracy, museum, KwaZulu-Natal.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's South Africa, certain political discourses use Eurocentrism and whiteness as contrast to South African democratic values (see i.e. speeches by Bengu 1996, Skosana 2003, Mbeki 2005, 2007). Eurocentrism is expressed as something that the country must be aware of and overcome. It is understood along the lines of what e.g. Shohat and Stam as well as Serequeberhan write: that the oppressive colonial conquest and the imaginary superiority of European heritage systematically degraded Africans (Shohat and Stam 1994: 2, 57, 100, Serequeberhan 2002: 64). However, Eurocentrism and whiteness is far more complex and multilayered, and to simply appropriate it as an antithesis to South Africa's democratic values is to limit an understanding of it. In South Africa self-critical research on Afrikaner heritage has been conducted (Coombes 2003, Steyn 1999), yet anglophile heritage representation is still largely unexplored. This article, therefore, seeks to make a contribution towards understanding the power invested in anglophile heritage both in the past and in the present.

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<sup>1</sup> The KwaZulu-Natal museum was known as the Natal Museum from 1904 to 2011. When I refer to documents produced during that time, I use the name the Natal Museum.

In order to deconstruct whiteness, I seek to explore in what way anglophile whiteness was expressed in terms of heritage, as well as how its expression has changed over the years. It is important to explore different aspects of whiteness and its heterogeneity over a long period of time because of the role whiteness continues to play in political rhetoric in South Africa. The purpose of this article is therefore to analyze how anglophile<sup>2</sup> whiteness was expressed in the museum exhibition *The History Hall* housed in the KwaZulu-Natal Museum (Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa). In this text, I pair national heritage negotiations with local ones and I explore how anglophile whiteness was constructed by drawing on theories connected to whiteness studies. Thus, this text will give a brief introduction to whiteness studies, specifically focusing on the South African context. I continue by investigating the museum's geographical location and significance to the construction of whiteness. I next investigate the prelude to *The History Hall* from 1904–1970, and then focus on the development of the exhibition from 1970 to the present time.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

My research is based on archival material and qualitative methods within the context of my field research at the KwaZulu-Natal Museum during 2004–2007 as part of a larger project (Rodéhn 2008a). This field research consisted of participant observation and qualitative interviews, and included participating in the daily activities of the museum working with displays, collections and educational activities. During my fieldwork many informal conversations occurred from which I have drawn information. My informants were chosen because they had worked with The History Hall and the interviews were conducted in the museum and lasted between 45 minutes to two hours. My informants were coded to protect their anonymity. I also analyzed various documents connected with the museum such as annual reports, display proposals, newspaper clippings, and governmental policy documents. Furthermore, visual analysis of the exhibition constituted a large part of the fieldwork. The process included visiting and re-visiting the exhibition over a period of several years. First I spent time in The History Hall as an ordinary museum visitor, and thereafter I documented the display using words, drawings, and photographs. I also returned several times to add to my descriptions and

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<sup>2</sup> In this discussion I will use terms such as Eurocentrism, anglophile and English-speakers. I refer to Eurocentrism as a practice of viewing the world from a Eurocentric influenced perspective. Anglophile refers in this text to the culture and heritage of white people that adhere to an identity connected to an ideal of England and Englishness. English-speakers are referred to as white people that use English as their native language and adhere to an anglophile identity. Within these concepts there is a great heterogeneity, and I acknowledge the fact that people of other racial and ethnic identities can also assume an anglophile identity and be English-speaking, however for the purpose of this text, I adhere to the above mentioned definitions.

documentation of it. This took place during the three years of field research I undertook at the KwaZulu-Natal Museum. The process was time consuming but the knowledge that I gained during this process was of great benefit to me when interviewing my informants.

### 3. WHITENESS STUDIES AND WHITENESS IN SOUTH AFRICA

In order to analyze how anglophile whiteness is expressed in this museum exhibition, I draw on research within the field of whiteness studies. Whiteness studies is an interdisciplinary inquiry involving e.g. historical aspects of people who are identified as white, and the social construction of whiteness as tied to social status. Whiteness studies grew out of a need to challenge Eurocentric epistemology, white power, and privileges. Instead of focusing on the 'other' (as seen in post-colonial studies) the approach seeks to investigate the existence of the former and ongoing centrality of whiteness as a privileged 'centre' from whence power is executed. Whiteness has been associated with universally defined powers that have come to constitute the norm for what is socially acceptable. Whiteness studies, however, acknowledge that whiteness is complex and flawed, and seeks to deconstruct it (Nakayama & Martin 1999: vii, Johnson 1999: 1–9, Nakayama and Kritzek 1999: 90–96, Niemonen 2010: 53–54, Headley 2004: 94–96, Yancy 2004: 1–15, Supriya 1999: 141, Chubbuck 2004: 304, Gunew 2007: 141, Steyn & Conway 2010: 283–284).

This shift of focus is crucial in my study, as literature on museums in South Africa have mainly been discussing misrepresentations of the 'other' (see i.e. Leeb du Toit 2005, Davison 1990, 2001, 2005, Dubin 2006, Rassool 2000, Mpumlwana et al 2002). Although the Eurocentric heritage production in museums has been extensively debated since the 1980s, Eurocentrism is largely explored in terms of how whites dominated other groups in the society (Hofmeyer 1987; Wright & Mazel 1987, 1991; Stuckenberg 1987; Wilmot 1987; Owen & Holleman 1989; Dominy 1992, 2004; Odendaal 1995; Hall 1999; Mandela 1997; Wakashe 2001; Keene & Wanless 2002; Dlamuka & Ndlovu 2002; Dlamuka 2003; Abungu 2004; Witz and Rassool 2006; Merrington 2006). I argue that this is a rather narrow understanding of Eurocentrism and whiteness. I proposed in the beginning of this article that to simply appropriate whiteness as an antithesis to democratic values is to limit any understanding of it. Thus this article seeks to produce a more multifaceted understanding of whiteness by focusing on regionally specific and plural interpretations over a long period of time. This will allow me not only to erode the hegemonic and dominant position that whiteness has assumed in heritage expressions but also to deconstruct its role as an antithesis that it has assumed in today's democratic South Africa.

Whites in South Africa were responsible for creating and upholding segregationist systems, including apartheid, and they are therefore associated with the power invested in those systems. Therefore, following Hooks

(1992: 172), whites imply terror in black imaginary as well as perceived homogeneity. Although whites were responsible for colonialism and later the apartheid system, they were not solely responsible for upholding the latter. Ahmed (2007: 157) writes that whiteness is not reduced to white skins: anyone who acts on, performs, or ritualizes the power of whiteness as a norm is also responsible for upholding it. Yet in post-apartheid South Africa, whiteness has been appropriated as a rhetorical tool used to point out inequalities in society. Although the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996* made the citizens of South Africa equal and the *Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities Act 19 of 2002* made the citizens free to assume any preferred identity, the racial categories delineated during apartheid are still in use. My field research as well as research by Steyn and Foster (2007) Steyn (1999), Andrucki (2010), Steyn and Conway (2010), and Bahna and Pateman (2010) show that these categories are celebrated and upheld by all groups in society, and whiteness is still understood as being imbued with status.

Nonetheless, in South Africa there are many versions of whiteness which need to be taken into consideration. Two of the most predominant versions are anglophile and Afrikaner whiteness. Steyn explains the difference in their expressions of whiteness. Afrikaner heritage locates itself in an imbeddedness in Africa which they call home. They locate their history and heritage in momentous historical events such as the Great Trek (1834–1838), a northward migration from Cape Town which was given mythical proportions during apartheid (Steyn 1999: 267–269). The Anglo-Boer war (1899–1902) also plays a significant role in the construction of Afrikaner heritage in that it represented the first major conflict between whites in which the Boers challenged the invasiveness of the British Colonial enterprise. Anglophile heritage is largely constructed by using a British colonial framework. English-speakers manifest their roots in Britain, but also on a feeling of being in-between Africa and Europe, while regarding themselves as socially and economically superior in an African context. The association between Afrikaner heritage and apartheid has been discussed and deconstructed to some extent in terms of how identity and political power was created in relation to heritage and narrative (see e.g. Van der Merwe (2009) for a discussion). Anglophile heritage, however, was not substantially foregrounded in the articulation of white power, and the expressions of anglophile heritage within a museum context have consequently been largely unexplored. There is therefore a need to investigate how anglophile narratives of whiteness were upheld in the past, and how new narratives have appeared in post-apartheid South African museums.

The understanding of anglophile heritage in the KwaZulu-Natal Museum needs to be positioned in relation to the geographical location of the museum. The museum was founded in 1904 in Pietermaritzburg, which was the administrative capital of the British colony of Natal (1843–1910), and it was subject to colonial legislation (Natal Museum Annual Report 1904). The museum opened shortly after the British victory in the Anglo-Boer war, and the

museum can therefore possibly be interpreted as a monument to British imperialism. Since its inception, the museum has retained an anglophile atmosphere with predominantly English-speaking staff-members (Rodéhn 2008a), also a reflection of the, until recently, urban demographics of the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Consequently, the museum was an English-speaking space of heritage in a largely anglophile environment. In 1910, the British colony of Natal became a province under the Union of South Africa, and continued as such after the formation of the Republic of South Africa (1961). After the demise of apartheid (1994) Natal merged with KwaZulu (a former homeland) and became the province of KwaZulu-Natal. However, due to the white population's stark anglophile roots, Andrucki (2010: 358) explains that the province was and still is referred to as the 'last outpost of the British Empire'.

During the apartheid era the Group Areas Act (1950–1991) and other segregation laws resulted in Pietermaritzburg becoming an exclusively white area (with some exceptions). It continued as such to the late 1980s and early 1990s when the segregation laws were scrapped, and since then the town centre has become increasingly multicultural. After the fall of apartheid in 1994, the restructuring of society, known as *the transformation*, began in earnest. During this time museums were regarded as Eurocentric enclaves in predominantly white areas. Furthermore, a new South African heritage production, emerged out of the need to address past Eurocentric heritage production and stressed that museums needed to become multicultural (ACTAG 1995, *South African National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999*).<sup>3</sup>

#### 4. APARTHEID CULTURAL POLITICS: ORIGIN, IDENTITY, AND A MULTICULTURAL REALITY

The KwaZulu-Natal Museum was mainly a natural history museum, but displayed African and white material culture as well. At the beginning, white and African material culture was displayed together, but the museum lacked space and white material culture was withdrawn from displays in 1909 (Natal Museum Annual Report 1909). Merrington argues that white people expressed new collective self identities during this time, coinciding with the establishment of the Union in 1910, when the vision of a white-dominated South Africa was ushered in (Merrington 2006: 687–688). The museum showed an increasing interest in African material culture, which continued until the 1960s (when the museum started yet again to collect material culture from white communities) until the 1970s when the exhibition *The History Hall* opened to the public. The

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<sup>3</sup> In terms of museum the transformation has been examined by writers such as Hamilton and Rankin (1999), Coombes (2003), Shepherd and Murray (2007), Dubin (2006), Corsane (2004), Rassool (2000), Witz, Rassool & Minkley (2000), Witz & Rassool (2006), Davison (2005), Rodéhn (2008a, b, 2010), and Gibson (2009), and others.

lack of interest during the early 1900s could be because English-speakers dedicated their energies to the constructing of buildings and monuments to coincide with the celebration and formation of Union in 1910, as Merrington (2006) has exemplified.

When apartheid was instituted in 1948, there were new demands placed on heritage production, which is reflected in the *Du Toit Report* (1949) that was commissioned by the government. The report provided suggestions as to how the heritage of different groups should ideally be displayed. Although there would be several policy documents subsequent to this report (de Villiers 1968, Niemand 1975, Pauw 1994), it was not until the period of the transformation and the establishing of the Arts and Culture Task Group Report (ACTAG 1995), that any document offered specific guidelines for museums with regard to the display of heritage. In other words, heritage was connected to the normative political and academic agenda, but there were no officially sanctioned guidelines issued by the government during apartheid.

The *Du Toit Report* emphasized the building of historical displays showing whites' origins in classical Mediterranean cultures and stressing whites' origins in Europe (Du Toit 1949: 192–194, 207). This can be explained by the fact that classical Mediterranean cultures were a symbol of political virtue, wisdom, and taste within European context (Anderson 1999: 53). The report further stressed the need to display aspects such as Christianity, science, modern navigation, printing, and warfare, coupled with the relationship between the white population's level of civilization compared to other parts of Africa. In the report it was noted that there was no museum that reflected this in South Africa (Du Toit 1949: 192–194, 207). Technological advancement and the European context were emphasized as a point of reference for whites in an attempt to create unity and to highlight their difference from the rest of the population.

It was further argued in the report that historical displays in museums must refer to the white ancestors' 'role of pioneers in an underdeveloped country', to their political growth, and to their relation to 'non-Europeans' (Du Toit 1949: 192–194). The *Du Toit Report* also envisioned exhibitions as political spaces by stating: 'They make for social stability and social cohesion in an age when we are sorely in need of both' (Du Toit 1949: 196). This statement refers to the political conflict between different white groups and the need to promote a degree of unity. Yet it was not until the 1960s that the KwaZulu-Natal Museum showed any interest in white material culture and in the characteristics listed in the *Du Toit Report*. This was also prompted by the formation of the Republic of South Africa in 1961, when much attention was given nationally to heritage and history.

It was director John Pringle<sup>4</sup> who recognized that some traditions in white farming culture had started to decline in the region. He expressed a need to collect material culture representing this heritage, and encouraged older citizens of Pietermaritzburg to record their life stories and submit them to the museum

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<sup>4</sup> Director of the KwaZulu-Natal Museum, 1953-1976.

(Natal Museum Annual Report 1960, 1961, 1962). While the museum had selectively accepted donations in the past, this was their first real initiative to accumulate material from the white community, and it was suggested that ‘people should avail themselves of the opportunity to make a personal contribution’ (Natal Museum Annual Report 1960, 1961, 1962, *The Natal Witness* 1972–10–08). The collection and exhibition activities produced an opportunity for both the museum and the public to participate in the construction of a seemingly collective white identity and heritage. However, common identities are problematic in white colonial contexts, and are complicated by origin and ideological adherence. Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin (1989: 151–155) maintain that most settlers were never able to construct a simple concept of national culture. Place, displacement, settlement, and migration became crucial elements in the multicultural reality that settlers were faced with when trying to construct a unified heritage.

## 5. THE HISTORY HALL: CONSTRUCTING WHITENESS

The first section of *The History Hall* opened to the public on 15 May 1970, and since then it has been modified several times. In the 1980s, mannequins were included in the display, as well as display-cases introducing the history of the Anglo-Boer war, the Anglo-Zulu war, and World wars I and II. Colonization and the history of the Natal Carbineers were also introduced, together with a display of dresses and an optician’s store.<sup>5</sup> In the 1990s, a display of the artwork of Hezekile Ntuli and a redisplay of the Anglo-Boer war was installed. Finally, in 2000 photographs showing the multicultural history of Pietermaritzburg along with a display of traditional Zulu dress was exhibited. In 2007, plans for a more multicultural exhibition hall were introduced, which is at present (2012) being realized.

*The History Hall* was an attempt to show how white settlers lived in Natal in the 1870s, and when it opened to the public it included a life-size street scene, a settler’s cottage and a smithy, a carpenter’s house, a chemist, and a cobbler. There was also a section with late Victorian period rooms which included a bedroom, a hallway, a living room, a dining room, and an office. This display was inspired by an English museum, and it was the first reconstructed street scene in a South African museum that was intended to produce what was identified as ‘an authentic atmosphere’ (Natal Museum Annual Report 1961, 1968, 1969/1970, 1970/1971, Bowland 1970, *The Natal Witness* 1972–11–08, *The Natal Witness* 1973–10–12).

The 1870s have a particular political significance in South Africa, as it marks the period when the British imperial forces invaded (KwaZulu-)Natal, heralding the end of the Boer Republic established in the region and the beginning of the Anglo-Zulu war (1879–1884). These historical events are significant in the

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<sup>5</sup> The latter two will not be discussed in this text.

construction of anglophile whiteness, as is the upholding of historical sites during the present day in the greater KwaZulu-Natal area, i.e. in the so called 'The Battlefields'. Andrucki (2010: 362) notes that the white anglophile population of (KwaZulu-)Natal was, and is still to a lesser extent, known for its allegiance to the British Monarchy and Empire. Merrington (2006) notes that Natalians were preoccupied with colonial traditions in the region, resulting in a more distinct cultural continuity than in other parts of South Africa.

During the colonial era, white English-speakers in (KwaZulu-)Natal regarded themselves as English rather than as South African. It was also a time when (KwaZulu-)Natal was a British colony loyal to the British Empire. The exhibition therefore reaffirmed local white South African heritage during apartheid to English-speakers' roots and origins in Britain. The exhibition further positioned anglophile affinity and heritage as distinctive in relation to apartheid's social environment. In this environment, the Afrikaner historical narrative of the Great Trek was politically appropriated and *The History Hall* co-existed with the 1970s and 1980s academic revisiting of the Great Trek. Grundlingh and Sapire (1989: 20) argue that this recontextualizing re-established Afrikaner 'uniqueness' in regard to the state policy of promoting separate/segregated nationalism. The KwaZulu-Natal Museum acted on this academic and political environment, and drew on Afrikaner sentiments associated with their political and economic struggle and eventual success, coupling that with colonialism. Consequently, the anglophile narrative must be seen as affected by, but also a counter-narrative to, the Great Trek narrative.

This can be further understood in the representation of the British victories over Boers and Zulus that is referenced in the exhibition. The street scene in the exhibition was named Theophilus Shepstone's place. Shepstone can be referred to as the 'father of homelands' as he initiated the idea of reserves for Africans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a means of containment and labour exploitation (Snail 1993: 134). The use of his name is therefore problematic, as it signifies the maintenance and promulgation of segregation. Therefore, drawing on Andrucki (2010: 259), it is possible to interpret this as a space where whiteness maintained itself as hegemonic in the rejection of 'blackness'. Additionally, Theophilus Shepstone was also instrumental in annexing the Transvaal Boer Republic in 1877, with the result that this exhibition unfolds as not only a non-African space but also a non-Afrikaner one. Consequently, through the medium of this exhibition, anglophile whiteness was established as a rejection of Africanness and Afrikanerdom. I argue, however, that the rejection was a result rather than the objective, implicit in the celebration of Shepstone's role in claiming and maintaining British rule in Natal.

It is furthermore important to contextualize the exhibition by taking into account the political context of the 1970s, a period dominated by forced removals, the harsh implementation of segregation policies, and political violence. Lozanski (2007: 223) writes that any memory of colonial legacy is embedded in a capitalist economic system, where ownership of resources stands in contrast to the indigenous population. This can be connected to Wright and

Mazel (1987: 65) who, in reference to *The History Hall*, note that whites became synonymous with progress and that urbanization was juxtaposed with the presentation of African heritage. In relation to this, the museum situated anglophile heritage in a dominant position, as it suggested development and progress. In terms of visual representation, Lozanski's and Wright and Mazel's contentions need to be positioned in relation to the control over land and human resources dominated by English-speakers, which consequently resulted in their domination over Africans, Indians, Coloureds, and Afrikaners, especially during the colonial period as well as how this was visually translated during the 1970s. By connecting colonial ideals to apartheid values (associated with forced removals and racial segregation) the exhibition thus created a sense of ideological and political continuation. Anglophile heritage representations are experienced as more subtle in their articulation than Afrikaner heritage, due to the fact that this was not used in apartheid propaganda. It is however equally as powerful, and this can also be seen in Anthea Bristow's (1995) article reviewing *The History Hall*. She describes the exhibition in the following words: '[the] colonial cringe is so genteel, it never looks its victim in the face, it never marshals the facts and attacks'.

The political articulation of heritage continued during the 1980s with the inclusion of additional display cases focusing on different themes pertaining to the history of the Natal province. Themes such as the colonization by Afrikaners, Portuguese, and British settlers were dealt with along with themes focusing on the Anglo-Zulu war (1879), Anglo-Boer wars (1880–1881 and 1899–1902), World Wars I and II and a display of the Natal Carbineers (Natal Museum Annual Report 1984/1985). These themes focused on masculine militarism and associated such memorabilia. This is not unexpected, as scholars have shown that that anglophile identity during the colonial period was centred on militarisms, and that English-speakers in particular expressed nostalgia connected to World War II (Morell 2001: 157, Lambert 2008).

The nostalgia expressed in connection with militarism had some bearing on the 1980s, a time marked by internal and international opposition which was reflected through violence, states of emergency, and forced removals both in the rural homelands and in towns. Internecine war broke out in KwaZulu and Natal, and young white men were conscripted to fight along South Africa's borders. So in terms of this exhibition, masculine identity and the contemporary political context of the 1980s was evoked in this exhibition. The exhibition could therefore be regarded as a space where whites could reflect on their military achievement of the past with nostalgia, in contrast to the turbulent social environment of the present. In keeping with Steyn and Conway (2010: 285) militarism reflects white masculine powers, and therefore I argue that the exhibition reads as society's investment in this.

## 6. EMBODIED WHITENESS

The History Hall also included five period rooms: a study, a dining room, a living room, a hallway, and a bedroom all typical of a white urban middle- to upper-class home of the 1870s. It was furnished with material culture from the collection procured in the 1960s. The layout of the period rooms and the arrangement of material culture had significance regarding the construction of whiteness. Drawing on Baudrillard (1996: 15–16), Ahmed (2007: 155) and Tolia-Kelly (2003: 315–316) I argue that as the concept of home is linked to how people experience and relate to the past and thus also construct their identity. Therefore, the arranging of space like a home makes material culture assume an emotional value related to the nostalgia of the past and to belonging. This is how the museum constructed anglophile whiteness, and how it intended visitors to understand it. However, due to the heterogeneity of museum goers, their response is difficult to generalize and account for.

The period rooms offered an ‘authentic’ representation of a home, and thus provided a platform for identification of what an anglophile home should look like. It also provided a framework and a social structure of anglophile whiteness. Thus the placement and the capacity to use and relate to the objects on display provided a possibility to distinguish what anglophile whiteness entailed. Furthermore, by being able to relate to the objects on display it was possible to identify what kind of people could be classified as having an anglophile identity. Following Merleau-Ponty (2004: 288) and Baudrillard (1996: 16) I suggest that the staging of the material culture served as a symbolic boundary marker between anglophile whiteness and that of the ‘other’. The display, the period rooms/the home, became not only a place where things were arranged but a place where things were made possible. Although it materialized itself as an attempt to show an ‘objective’ version of an urban home, *The History Hall* served as a platform of recognition and it was a pure manifestation of politics and ideology in the manner that it expressed anglophile whiteness as being different from e.g. African, Indian, and Coloured identities.

In the 1980s, the museum incorporated one male and two female white mannequins in the period rooms<sup>6</sup> (Natal Museum Annual Report 1984/1985), and their introduction reinforced the association of an urban home to people with white skin. As a result, the 1970s version of a stable anglophile environment was further enhanced in the 1980s, communicating ideas about anglophile whiteness in relation to race, class, and gender. Following Massey (1994: 4, 70) and Moi (1997: 106) I argue that the spatial organization of the room is integral to the production of history, ideology, and politics in which the body (in this case the mannequins) assumed an act and a situation that created an

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<sup>6</sup> The male mannequin was dressed in a suit and placed in the study with his back to the visitor, doing paperwork. The older female mannequin was placed in the living-room, was in Victorian dress, and was resting on a sofa awaiting a cup of tea. The young lady was placed in the bedroom in Victorian underwear, admiring herself in the mirror.

image of the world and how it was perceived. Placing mannequins in certain positions (such as resting, working, and mirroring) and their reflections of gender, race, and class further imbues the room with socio-political meaning. Drawing on Porter (1991: 193–204) I argue that masculinity and femininity constructed in museums are central to the production of meaning, and in *The History Hall* the mannequins underlined gender stereotypes such as active men and passive females, represented through their positions.

The way gender roles were portrayed in the exhibition provides some insight into how anglophile whiteness differs from Afrikaner whiteness. I have observed in various museums that the Afrikaner woman is usually portrayed as a pious, domesticated, hard-working *volksmoeder*<sup>7</sup>, whereas the English woman is portrayed as a serene, urban, middle-class wife. Afrikaner women assume a more active role, while anglophile females seem to be portrayed in contrast to their engaged male counterparts. In terms of white masculinities there are also differences: the Afrikaner man is usually depicted in museum exhibitions as a pious farmer or a pastor or priest, while the English male is depicted as urban, military, or academic.

What is significant in the representation of gender roles in the period rooms is that it reveals something about the fragile social environment for whites and how this was addressed within cultural productions. Domestic life and militarism centred on complementary traditional heteronormative gender roles, such as active men and passive females as embodied in the mannequins. As a consequence, the display articulated a heteronormative and stable social environment and pride in Eurocentric origin. Furthermore, the mannequins embodied a sense of security embodied in the home, the right to a ‘home’ in South Africa and in Britain as the ‘home country’. It dealt with the issue of security and belonging as both an ideal and as counter to the 1980s violent social and political climate. The exhibition manifested this by connecting and creating a heritage space where English-speakers could renegotiate an anglophile identity and experience a sense of stability manifested in the representation of the past.

The mannequins also en-raced the space, in other words they contributed to the production of a racialized space, and reinforced the domestic material culture on display. As a consequence, the narrative of the urban landscape as a white space was further enforced. Therefore *The History Hall* reflects the invisibility of ‘blackness’ and strengthens the perception of hegemonic and heterogeneous whiteness by denying urban history to Africans, Indians, and Coloureds and further denying a racially mixed history and economy. This had consequences because *The History Hall* provided the ‘need for the visitor to identify with the person, life and times envisaged’ (Staniland 1988). My informant Bill (2006–04–18), however, held that it was too ‘clean’ and therefore impossible to identify with. Dominy (1992: 11) writes that Africans found the display off-putting because they could not identify with it. My informant who constructed the display said that it was never meant to be identified with; it was meant to

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<sup>7</sup> Meaning ‘mother of the nation’.

encourage the visitor to ask questions about the past (Gilbert 2006–05–05). If contextualized as the latter, it may have provided a different understanding of life during the colonial period. In my view, however, it reflects a celebration of difference that could be attached to both colonialism and apartheid, especially as the presence and absence of mannequins in the display clearly identifies who was a member of the urban landscape and who was excluded, and therefore who could identify with the display.

Although this is how the display is perceived, documents and interviews show that there were negotiations surrounding the production of white heritage that would have made it appear differently. In the KwaZulu-Natal Museum photography archive I found photographs that show the people that the mannequins were cast from, and this revealed that the museum had in fact prepared a cast of an African woman, but that she was never incorporated into the diorama. My informant Gilbert (2006–05–05) explained that there had been complaints by African visitors about how Africans were represented by mannequins in displays. So in an effort to be sensitive to the African community they therefore excluded the mannequin of the African woman. I also found a document that indicates that negotiations were entered into to include aspects of Indian heritage in Pietermaritzburg in *The History Hall* (Stuckenberg 1984–11–09), but this too was excluded.

These ideas and suggestions never materialized in the display, reflecting both attitudes prevailing in white society at the time as well as an adherence to sensitivities associated with black embodiment and representation. The latter was also in part attached to taboos regarding the representation of Africans, which was often perceived to be invasive and insensitive. The social environment of the Tricameral Parliament (1983) that allowed Indian and Coloured groups into the Parliament also changed the perception of what it meant to be white in South Africa. In the museum, white heritage was under negotiation and it was a very ambiguous process. On the one hand, efforts to reinforce hegemonic white ideals were made, and on the other hand negotiations were made to deconstruct this.

## 7. (RE-)REMEMBERING WHITENESS

During the 1990s, the transformation of South African society began in earnest. In museums this entailed making heritage production and the functions of museums applicable to a multicultural society. The transformation of museums in South Africa entailed, among many things, representing groups that had not been represented before and addressing previous bias in collections, displays, staffing, and policies (see e.g. Witz & Rassool 2006; Rodéhn 2008a,b, 2010; Corsane 2004; Davison 2001, 2005; Gibson 2009). As *The History Hall* represented the heritage of the dominant group, and because no black South

Africans were represented, many of my informants experienced the exhibition as being connected to apartheid values.

In an effort to balance this reading of the exhibition, a photographic display of transport, sport and African urban history was mounted across the period rooms in *The History Hall*. These images reflect the multicultural history of Pietermaritzburg. Other attempts to make this exhibition multicultural included the instalment of displays featuring the local Zulu artist Hezekile Ntuli's artwork, a display of Zulu traditional dresses, and a redisplay of the Anglo-Boer war (Natal Museum Annual Report 2000/2001, 2004/2005). The latter coincided with the centenary of the war, which prompted South African museums to display a more balanced perspective of this part of history. Museums in South Africa focused on the African response to the war with the intention of foregrounding the fact that this was not only the white men's war. This was in line with the academic revisiting of the war and a political climate where the *White Paper on Arts and Culture* (1996) suggested a rewriting of history in all its facets. Despite these efforts, *The History Hall* was still experienced by my informants as being in line with segregation politics because of its association with colonialism and apartheid.

The negative association to whiteness was one of the first things that I encountered when I initiated my fieldwork in the KwaZulu-Natal Museum in 2004. The first day after my arrival in South Africa, a white gay English-speaking male South African colleague accompanied me to the museum. As we strolled through the exhibition he showed me artifacts that his family had donated and expressed his dislike of these. To him, it was a celebration of apartheid and it was clear that he did not want to be associated with this representation. His rejection of the representation of heritage and his suggestion of making it multicultural interested me. It was clear that the donated objects embodied to him the spirit of hegemonic whiteness and his family's investment in it. The privilege of being white and taking advantage of other groups was embodied in both the setting and the material culture. So in rejecting whiteness, and what it was associated with, he created for himself a new identity that was principally acted out as being, or desiring to be, a non-racially categorized person and a South African citizen.

Matthews has identified a similar renegotiation of identity where whites define themselves as 'African' to position their belonging in the democratic South African (Matthews 2010: 1). These ideas are not shared by everyone in the society, and there are many emotional and conflicting opinions when it comes to whiteness. I experienced during my fieldwork that there appears to be an official version of whiteness that is upheld in public spaces and a different version in a private context. The public articulation is connected to a desire to be perceived as politically correct, whereas private articulations are more complex and emotionally laden. It is safe to say that South African anglophile whiteness is in an identity crisis, as it is constantly being redefined and discussed both by white groups but also through interracial communication, and this is a very emotional process.

This can be further exemplified through one of my informant's articulation of *The History Hall*. I asked why the exhibition was not contextualized further, as people were resentful about what it represented. Victor gave me an honest answer which can in part be said to reflect attitudes to anglophile heritage in the new democratic dispensation. He compared South Africa during apartheid to Nazi Germany, and said that the past was as yet too painful to be contextualized or remembered. What he tried to put across was the guilt that whites feel and yet are challenged to deal with on a daily basis. Steyn and Foster (2007: 25) write that the challenge for whites has been to adjust to the new order, where political pressure stands in opposition to the colonial and white supremacist past. Yet Bhana and Pattman (2010: 372–375) argue that whiteness is becoming increasingly significant for whites at a time when their lifestyle is under threat. According to them, English-speakers continue to construct their identity as *not being* (e.g. as not being Indian, Coloured, African, or Afrikaner). This way of positioning white identity is however overall regarded as threatening to the democratization of society, and the transformation of heritage has been played out as an eradication of white heritage. For instance, during my fieldwork it was explained to me by a person in a management position that the collection of material culture from the white population should be repatriated to Europe (Thabang 2006–04–04). His statement is worrying, considering that ideally all kinds of heritage expressions should be respected in a democratic society.

The rejection of Eurocentrism and whiteness in political and social discourses has created a feeling among many whites of not belonging in South Africa. Steyn and Foster (2007: 26) and Andruki (2010) write that many whites have chosen to leave the country as a result. Whites in South Africa are therefore placed in the very ambiguous position of being the previously dominant group, still being the dominant socio-economic group, yet having fewer privileges and no longer feeling that they belong in South Africa. Today, some whites adhere to traditional values connected to colonialism and apartheid while others try to identify and construct a new South African identity. In times like these, heritage usually serves as a way to affirm identity and heritage sites, and museums are often evoked as points of reference. In terms of *The History Hall*, this is complicated as suggestions made during 2007 will transform the exhibition into a multicultural heritage display focusing especially on African heritage.

As explained above, the cultural policies which emerged during the transformation expressed a need to rid South Africa from Eurocentric heritage expressions. Thus there has been a declining interest in representations of white heritage in museums and at heritage sites. The affirmation of identities is instead enacted in other spaces where English-speakers can express their anglophile heritage. One example is the 'ancestral visa' that allows people of British descent to move between Africa and Britain freely (Andruki 2010: 364, 368–369). This is a complex discussion of identity that the scope of this paper does not allow me to elaborate on. Nevertheless, lineage and mobility are still acted out as a form of heritage in both tangible and intangible ways, and it could be

regarded as a continuation of anglophile affinity, based on the feeling of being in-between. If the museum addressed this, it could also explore the role that diaspora and migration played in the creation of whiteness. In doing so, the museum could also address socio-political and socio-economic issues pertaining to anglophile whiteness, and thus contribute to the deconstruction of power invested in it. Furthermore, in doing so it is possible to diversify the discussion of Eurocentrism and whiteness and address the label that it has received as threatening to democratic society. Thereby it is also possible to address the current cultural-political power in South Africa that has received African nationalistic connotations, which is not necessarily inclusive.

## 8. CONCLUDING WORDS

In this article I have argued that expressions of whiteness are multifaceted and ambiguous. There is a need, therefore, to critically examine such expressions in museum exhibitions to understand the power invested in these, and to examine the consequences in articulating such expressions as an antithesis to aspirant South African democratic values. This is especially important in times such as these, when South Africa is experiencing a rise of African nationalism that is not necessarily democratic. In this article I argue for a contextualization of whiteness over a long period of time in order to understand the many aspects that whiteness can assume. In doing so, an understanding of anglophile whiteness can be understood as flawed, complex, and changing over time. Understanding whiteness in this way can assist in a deconstruction of not only the power of whiteness but also the power invested in the present political dispensation.

As noted in this article, when the KwaZulu-Natal Museum collected and displayed material from the museum's inception, it represented recollections of the memory of colonial times. The museum, however, did not play a role in manifesting a supreme white heritage. An articulation of a more segregationist heritage occurred much later. It was not until the 1960s that an active drive to materialize this and to procure material culture from the white communities occurred. The construction of whiteness must be understood as related to the establishment of the Republic of South Africa and the separation from Great Britain. Thus the museum combined nostalgia for the colonial past with apartheid policies that stressed the supremacy of white heritage. Drawing on the colonial experience was a way to set anglophile whiteness apart from Afrikaner heritage. Combining it with apartheid policies was also a way to draw on the common understanding of whiteness as dominant and to differentiate it from other groups' heritage. Anglophile whiteness was thus expressed in this museum as *not being* and as being in-between. This ambiguous position is also one of the reasons why anglophile heritage is more difficult to deal with than e.g. Afrikaner heritage.

During the turbulent social climate of the 1970s and 1980s the museum reinforced the connection between the material culture on display and people with white skin, but they also emphasized that anglophile whiteness was different to that of Afrikaner heritage in terms of class and gender. Anglophile whiteness was thus further expressed as *not being*. During the 1980s, however, anglophile whiteness took on different and ambiguous expressions. Whiteness was expressed as dominant, and was seen mainly through connections with masculinity, militarism, and warfare. The articulation of South Africa as a home where English-speakers belonged also became important. These two aspects can be regarded as a construction of an alternative South African anglophile heritage that builds on an 'African' identity.

Expressions of anglophile whiteness depend on how the museum responded to the socio-political environment but were also intertwined with previous heritage expressions. This created a base from which anglophile whiteness could be argued. The need to deconstruct the dominant role of whiteness was however expressed during the transformation. There was a general understanding that previously dominant expressions of heritage needed to become multicultural. Not only was this a way to deconstruct the power invested in white heritage, but also a way to make it multicultural or make it more democratic. Although anglophile heritage expressions are becoming en-raced, English-speakers are still creating their identity as *not being* or as being in-between South Africa and Great Britain. This is, however, not evoked in the museum exhibition because some museums are not interested in displaying white heritage, but are instead preoccupied with deconstructing Eurocentric heritage in order to argue in favour of a multicultural expression of heritage. Thus, the role of anglophile whiteness remains largely unchallenged. As museums are dismantling displays of white heritage people are expressing heritage in other spaces, and these draw on traditional articulations. Affinities to past heritage expressions, e.g., being in-between, are therefore increasingly currently evoked, for instance in the relation to the 'ancestral visa'. These articulations are, however, not displayed in museums although there is a need for it to understand the contemporary social situation and how it is rooted in the past.

The dominant role of anglophile whiteness is still present in expressions of heritage and evoked in scholarly publications as something needing to be rejected. Although portraying white heritage as opposed to the transformation might seem necessary in order to convey democratic ideals it reduces the possibility of addressing, contextualizing, and questioning the power invested in the past and in the present. A democratic heritage expression should ideally accommodate all groups in society so that the museum can potentially question previous stereotypes and address issues of power and belonging. Whiteness and Eurocentrism should not be juxtaposed with democratic values; instead I suggest that we should engage in a more diversified discussion of identity, class, gender, and power within a racially differentiated society. Discussing whiteness has benefits beyond the scholarly community and can benefit museum work greatly. It allows curators to address the power invested in whiteness both in the past and

present. Furthermore, it can prompt discussions on race, class, gender, belonging, and migration – all issues relevant to society at large. Exploring whiteness in museums can help people understand what they were, who they are, and what they are becoming, and further enhance interracial communication. For museums to continue to allow a previously dominant group to represent their heritage is not necessarily continuing the hegemonic representation of whiteness. It instead allows for a diversity of heritage while at the same time questioning it.

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## INTERVIEWS

Gilbert [coded name] 2006–05–05.

Location: KwaZulu-Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

Bill [coded name] 2006–04–18.

Location: KwaZulu-Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

Victor [coded name] 2004–10–11.

Location: KwaZulu-Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

Thabang [coded name] 2006–04–04.

Location: KwaZulu-Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

**About the author:** *Cecilia Rodéhn* is a senior lecturer in museum and heritage studies at the Department of ALM<sup>8</sup> and a researcher at the Centre for Gender Research, Uppsala University. She obtained her PhD from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2009 and her dissertation focused on the transition of museums from apartheid to democracy in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Rodéhn has also a background as an educational officer in Swedish museums.

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<sup>8</sup> Department of Archive Science, Library and Information Science, Museum and Heritage Studies.