

'Our respect for water is what you have termed fear': The Ocean in the Poetry of Ronelda S. Kamfer and Koleka Putuma

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Abstract

In this article, the representations of the ocean in Afrikaans poet Ronelda S. Kamfer's *grond/Santekraam* (2011) and in 'Water', a poem in Koleka Putuma's *Collective Amnesia* (2017) are compared. Meg Samuelson's identification of trends in the representation of the ocean in 21st-century South African prose fiction is used as a reference point. The aim here is to determine whether the same trends are present in these examples of 21st-century South African poetry. The ocean is depicted in the work of both Kamfer and Putuma as a metaphor for repressed historical trauma. In 'Water' the historical trauma relates to the ocean as route of slavery and colonialism; in *grond/Santekraam* it relates to slavery but also to a historical event, namely the forced resettlement of the fishing community of Skipskop. In some of the novels that Samuelson discusses, the ocean symbolises the unknowable, the irrational and spiritual. In 'Water' the ocean has a similar connotation. In *grond/Santekraam* the ocean is not depicted in spiritual terms, but in two poems an underwater town becomes a space in which a mythological version of events can be re-imagined. The unknowability of the ocean floor is depicted as a space in which the tragic influence of historical events on the present can be explored. The way in which the ocean is represented in the poetry of these two South African female poets therefore overlaps with how it is depicted in prose but also differs in the specificity of its metaphorical connotations.

Keywords: *Collective Amnesia*; *grond/Santekraam*; Koleka Putuma; ocean as metaphor; Ronelda S. Kamfer; Skipskop; slavery; South African poetry

Introduction

grond/Santekraam (2011) is the follow-up to Afrikaans poet Ronelda S. Kamfer's award-winning debut collection, *Noudat Slapende Honde* (2008).¹ *grond/Santekraam* was developed during Kamfer's Honours studies at the University of the Western Cape, where Antjie Krog acted as the supervisor of her research project.² The project involved a retracing and poetic re-imagining of the history of Kamfer's maternal ancestors, the Granfields. The Granfields lived in the fishing village of Skipskop, which was evacuated in 1984 to make way for a military test site.³ Those members of the community of Skipskop who were classified as 'coloured'⁴ under apartheid were relocated to Kassiesbaai. This town is fictionalised as Klippenkust in *grond/Santekraam*.⁵ Kamfer's own grandparents moved to Grabouw to work as farm labourers, but some of her family members who were forcibly removed from Skipskop still live in Kassiesbaai. As part of her research project (and again for her forthcoming literary project, provisionally entitled *Kompoun*) she interviewed these living ancestors.⁶

Koleka Putuma's debut poetry collection, *Collective Amnesia* (2017), is, as the title suggests, also concerned with history and, specifically, with the exploration of forgotten memories and histories.⁷ The collection consists of three sections: 'Inherited Memory', 'Buried Memory' and 'Postmemory'. Whereas *grond/Santekraam* is largely focused on a very specific place and time in South African history (Skipskop, pre- and post-1984), *Collective Amnesia* takes a broader view of South African history, 'centralis[ing] memory as a sum total of complex historical processes under colonial Christianity and apartheid'.⁸

¹ *Noudat Slapende Honde* was the joint recipient of the prestigious Eugène Marais Prize, which is awarded annually to a debut Afrikaans literary text published in the preceding year. See R.S. Kamfer, *grond/Santekraam* (Cape Town, Kwela, 2011) and R.S. Kamfer, *Noudat Slapende Honde* (Cape Town, Kwela, 2008).

² W. Brümmer, "'Ek is gevaarlik vir wit mense'", *Die Burger* (16 July 2011), p.10.

³ E. Paramoer, 'Ocean Grabbing: Robbing People of Dignity and Livelihoods', *The Journalist*, 3 September 2014, available at <http://www.thejournalist.org.za/spotlight/ocean-grabbing-robbing-people-dignity-livelihoods>, retrieved 13 June 2018.

⁴ Throughout this article, the term 'coloured' is placed in inverted commas to point to the constructed nature of this term, which was used to mark a heterogeneous group of people during apartheid.

⁵ Brümmer, "'Ek is gevaarlik'", p. 10.

⁶ R. Kamfer, 'Jan Rabie and Marjorie Wallace-lesing: Soos 'n Koeipaai op die Plaas', *LitNet* (26 April 2018), available at <https://www.litnet.co.za/jan-rabie-marjorie-wallace-lesing-soos-n-koeipaai-op-die-plaas/>, retrieved 13 June 2018.

⁷ K. Putuma, *Collective Amnesia* (Cape Town, Uhlanga, 2017).

⁸ U. Phalafala, 'Collective Amnesia by Koleka Putuma', *Feminist Africa*, 22 (2017), p. 251.

References to these complex historical processes are interwoven with the autobiographical exploration of the personal memories and the current experiences of a young, black, queer womxn. Putuma uses the word ‘womxn’, in poems such as ‘Growing up Black & Womxn’ (p. 24) to avoid using the suffixes ‘-man’ and ‘-men’ and to signal the inclusion of both cis and transgender women.⁹ As Uhuru Phalafala explains in her review of *Collective Amnesia*: ‘Putuma positions herself as heir to the traumas that were, in the struggle for survival throughout the ages, consciously or involuntarily unattended and stashed away’.¹⁰

The representation of the ocean as literal as well as metaphorical is central to *grond/Santekraam*. In telling the stories of a fishing community and its destruction, the ocean inevitably figures in some way or another in each of the poems in the collection. The ocean is more marginal in *Collective Amnesia*, only featuring in arguably the collection’s most celebrated poem, ‘Water’ (pp. 96–100).¹¹ My analysis of ‘Water’ is therefore necessarily shorter than that of *grond/Santekraam*, but the poem is also interpreted in terms of its placement in *Collective Amnesia*, and references are made to other poems in the collection. While both *grond/Santekraam* and *Collective Amnesia* have received media attention,¹² thus far neither collection has been the subject of much academic work. In comparing the representation of the ocean in ‘Water’ and in *grond/Santekraam*, I aim to rectify this, while also contributing to discourse on the representation of the ocean in South African literature.

⁹ Ibid., p. 254.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 252.

¹¹ ‘Water’ was awarded the PEN SA Student Writing Prize in 2016. See, also, Mkhabela’s description of ‘Water’ as one of Putuma’s ‘most popular pieces to date’, in S. Mkhabela, ‘Koleka Putuma is the Groundbreaking New Voice of South African Poetry’, *okayafrica* (20 July 2017), available at <http://www.okayafrica.com/koleka-putuma-collective-amnesia/>, retrieved 13 June 2018.

¹² For examples of interviews with Kamfer and reviews of or editorials on *grond/Santekraam*, see Brümmer, “‘Ek is gevaarlik’”; T. Gouws, ‘Die Onverwagse Middelvinger Ontbreek’, *Volksblad* (24 September 2011); B. Odendaal, ‘Resensie: grond/Santekraam (Ronelda S. Kamfer)’, *Versindaba* (25 August 2011), available at <http://versindaba.co.za/2011/08/25/resensie-grondsantekraam-ronelda-s-kamfer/>, retrieved 18 June 2018; and G. Pakendorf, ‘LitNet Akademies-resensie-essay: *Grond/Santekraam*’, *LitNet* (10 November 2011), available at <https://www.litnet.co.za/litnet-akademies-resensie-essay-grondsantekraam/>, retrieved 18 June 2018. For examples of reviews of and editorials on *Collective Amnesia*, see H. Herembi, ‘New Poetry Speaks Truth to Power’, *Cape Argus* (31 May 2017); L. Makgato, ‘Discovering Blackness, Feminism in “Collective Amnesia”’, *The Star* (1 June 2017); Mkhabela, ‘Koleka Putuma’ and M. Mohale, ‘Koleka Putuma’s Poems of Celebration, Grief and Rage’, *Mail & Guardian* (4 April 2017).

Meg Samuelson's 'Sea Changes, Dark Tides and Littoral States: Oceans and Coastlines in Post-apartheid South African Narratives' (2013) is used as a primary reference point for the discourse on the ocean in South African literature. In the article, Samuelson discusses the ways in which oceans and watery masses more generally are depicted in 21st-century South African novels (and one short story, 'Loot' by Nadine Gordimer).¹³ Without creating a neat taxonomy, Samuelson distinguishes between narratives in which the ocean figures as 'a transport surface connecting distant and dispersed landmasses', narratives in which the ocean is a metaphor for suppressed histories and memories and narratives in which the ocean is represented as a material 'living presence' which is beyond complete human understanding.¹⁴ This last-mentioned type of representation has ecocritical and spiritual implications, as it implies that the ocean resists human manipulation and that it 'summon[s] ways of knowing that accommodate the "strange": the mystery abjected and repressed by the (early to post) enlightenment rationality that docked on South African shores during the long colonial encounter'.¹⁵ The aim of this article is to investigate whether the ocean figures in similar ways in the poetry of Kamfer and Putuma.

These different aspects of the literary representation of the ocean overlap. The ocean as metaphor for suppressed histories overlaps with the representation of the ocean as the literal site of historical events (many of them represented as traumatic and suppressed – psychologically and in public discourse). The ocean as metaphor for suppressed histories also seeps into the spiritual meaning accorded to the ocean, given the centrality of ancestors to some Southern African cosmologies. The ocean as store of both historical memory and spiritual meaning overlaps with the ocean as a material 'living presence', in that, as Samuelson argues, the ocean has consequences for humanity that affect humanity's view of history. It also cannot be completely controlled or understood by humans and therefore becomes symbolic of the 'strange', including repressed histories and a spirituality (including repressed histories of spirituality and religions) that cannot be comprehended in terms of 'enlightenment rationality'.

¹³ M. Samuelson, 'Sea Changes, Dark Tides and Littoral States: Oceans and Coastlines in Post-Apartheid South African Narratives', *Alternation*, Special Edition 6 (2013), pp. 9–28.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10. See also K. Bystrom and I. Hofmeyr, 'Oceanic Routes: (Post-it) Notes on Hydro-Colonialism', *Comparative Literature*, 69, 1 (2017), p. 3.

¹⁵ Samuelson, 'Sea Changes', p. 11.

The representation of these themes and the ways in which they seep into each other in *grond/Santekraam* by Kamfer and ‘Water’ by Putuma will be analysed in two separate sections. *grond/Santekraam* is discussed first because it was published first. This ordering means that most of the comparative work is done in the discussion of ‘Water’, with certain aspects of the poem being analysed with reference to the preceding interpretation of *grond/Santekraam*. In particular, the differences in the repressed histories connoted by the ocean and shipwrecks in the work of Kamfer and Putuma will be highlighted, as well as the differences in the mythological or spiritual meaning accorded to the ocean by the speakers of the different poems.

grond/Santekraam

Kamfer’s research into her ancestors who lived in, and were forcibly removed from, Skipskop, has already been mentioned. This research is incorporated in *grond/Santekraam* in a series of poems entitled ‘oorvertel 1’ (p. 16), ‘oorvertel 2’ (p. 17), ‘oorvertel 3’ (p. 18), ‘oorvertel 4’ (p. 25) and ‘oorvertel 5’ (p. 57).¹⁶ The Afrikaans word ‘oorvertel’ can be translated as ‘repeat’ but also has the more informal connotation of gossip (‘snitching’) or the (re)telling of stories.¹⁷ The speakers in these poems, the respondents Kamfer interviewed, are retelling the tale of their lost lives in the town of Skipskop and their attempts to deal with their relocation to Kassiesbaai. The poet, in turn, repeats their words in verse form. Dates, presumably of when the interviews took place, are provided as subheadings. These dates reveal that the *oorvertel* poems are arranged chronologically: ‘oorvertel 1’ is dated December 2009 and ‘oorvertel 5’ May 2010, with the other poems situated in between these dates.

As the author of this article, I am also participating in the *oorvertel* of these stories, not only in my interpretation of the poems but also in my translations of the Afrikaans poetry into English. For the sake of readability, only the English translations are included here, with the Afrikaans original appearing in footnotes except when the poems contain untranslatable colloquial terms, which are explained in square brackets in the text. This

¹⁶ Page numbers in the text here and in following pages refer to Kamfer, *grond/Santekraam*.

¹⁷ M. du Plessis (ed.), ‘oorvertel’, *Pharos Afrikaans–Engels English–Afrikaans Woordeboek Dictionary* (Cape Town, NB Publishers, 2005), p. 420.

is also the case when I wish to comment on the significance of the specific Afrikaans words used. On this point it should be noted that Kamfer's poems have sometimes been inaccurately described as being written in 'Kaaps',¹⁸ the variant of Afrikaans mostly spoken by the 'coloured' inhabitants of Cape Town. Most are actually written in so-called 'standard Afrikaans' and interspersed with words from different variants of Afrikaans (including the geolects of Kaaps and of the Overberg region in which Skipskop and Kassiesbaai are located). *grond/Santekraam* also contains English, Arabic and Dutch words and phrases.¹⁹ The inclusion of Arabic and Dutch phrases can be read as an indication of the divergent influences, on Afrikaans and on 'coloured' identities, brought to South Africa via colonial and/or slave ships.

Given the chronology of the oorvertel poems, it is appropriate that Kamfer inserts herself (and the aim of her project) in 'oorvertel 1'. In response to the question 'what is your business here',²⁰ the speaker replies: 'i am searching for information stories about Skipskop'.²¹ Later in the poem, in stanza 4, she says:

yes uncle but i want to know what
happened there at Skipskop
what did it look like
who lived there²²

In stanza 2 of 'oorvertel 3' (given the subheading, apparently based on an interview conducted in March 2010) the speaker emphasises the pain associated with forced removal and the way in which it separates people from the land which used to give their lives meaning:

¹⁸ See N. Botes, "'Haar art was befok, haar gap was groovy': Die Resepsie van Noudat Slapende Honde in Suid-Afrika en die Lae Lande', in Y. T'Sjoen and R. Foster (eds), *Toenadering: Literair Grensverkeer Tussen Afrikaans en Nederlands/Literêre Grensverkeer tussen Afrikaans en Nederlands* (Leuven, Acco, 2012), p. 528; M. Taljard, 'Resensie: Hammie (Ronelda S. Kamfer)', *Versindaba* (3 March 2016), available at <http://versindaba.co.za/2016/03/03/resensie-hammie-ronelda-s-kamfer/>, retrieved 15 May 2019.

¹⁹ See D. Vermeulen, "'n Ondersoek na Ronelda Kamfer se Poësie aan die Hand van bell hooks se Filosofie oor Ras en Taal' (MA dissertation, Stellenbosch University, 2018), pp. 157–8, 165.

²⁰ 'wat is jou besigheid'.

²¹ 'ek soek inligting stories oor Skipskop'.

²² 'ja oom maar ek wil weet wat daar / by Skipskop gebeur het / hoe het dit gelyk / wie het daar gewoon'.

land is a dirty business once you love a place any shit can happen there you hold on [...] ²³
In this way *grond/Santekraam* relates to the discourse around land in South Africa and the way it manifests in literature. As Gabeba Baderoon explains, this emphasis on land can be understood in terms of ‘the great obsession of the settlers and the sign of anguished loss for the indigenous Khoi-San’.²⁴ To this should be added the prominent role of land (and race-based laws governing who could own and live on what land) in apartheid ideology and the ways in which land’s prominent role led to the enforced destruction of communities and their various (agricultural, cultural, spiritual, historical etc.) ties to the land. The importance of land for an interpretation of *grond/Santekraam* is emphasised by the collection’s title, which can be translated as ‘land/The whole caboodle’. ‘Santekraam’ is a Dutch and archaic Afrikaans word meaning ‘the rest’. Kamfer explains that the collection’s title refers to ‘land and the rest – everything that comes along with it’.²⁵ She therefore signals the current and historical South African discourse around, among other things, land, land ownership and redistribution, colonialism and decolonisation.

Because *grond/Santekraam* is centred on a fishing village, however, the question of land and the unjust occupation of land is inextricably entangled with the ocean. As the speaker in ‘oorvertel 1’ explains:

i lived there and my parents
we caught fish
those years without permits
us children weren’t bothered much
with swimming
the water was too bloody cold²⁶

In the third stanza, the speaker criticises fans of Afrikaans singer David Kramer’s famous

²³ ‘grond is ’n vuilheid as jy eers lief is vir ’n plek kan watte kak maar / daar gebeur jy hou maar vas [...]’

²⁴ G. Baderoon, ‘The African Oceans – Tracing the Sea as Memory of Slavery in South African Literature and Culture’, *Research in African Literatures*, 40, 4 (2009), p. 90. ‘Khoi-San’ is now the preferred term.

²⁵ ‘grond en die res – alles wat daarmee gepaard gaan’. Quoted in Brummer, “‘Ek is gevaarlik’”, p. 10.

²⁶ ‘ek het daar gebly en my ouers / ons het vis gevang / daai jare sonder permitte / ons kinders het nie baie geworrie / om te swem nie / die water was te bleddie koud’.

song 'Skipskop' for lamenting the destruction of Skipskop because it was beautiful (and, implicitly, a seaside destination of recreational activities, including swimming). This critique can be complicated by the fact that Kramer's song does emphasise the pain of forced removals. It is true though that, as the speaker of 'oorvertel 1' claims, Kramer sang the song in a Kaapse accent and in this way took it upon himself as a white man to speak (in an inaccurate Afrikaans accent)²⁷ for the 'coloured' community of Skipskop.²⁸

Relevant to my argument is that the speaker explains that for his parents and their community the ocean was the source of their livelihoods. They did not mourn the destruction of Skipskop as an idyllic holiday destination ('[white people] cry because of the place/because it was beautiful'),²⁹ but rather for the loss of their freedom ('our people cry because they/just had to do as they were told')³⁰ and their ways of life.

The resentful position of the speaker of 'oorvertel 1' is poetically retold in 'slot Klippenkust' (p. 56) (the title can be translated as 'conclusion Klippenkust', with 'Klippenkust' a fictionalised name for Kassiesbaai, the town to which they moved after being forced out of Skipskop:

[...] he stares at

'them' 'they' who come on holiday 'they' who paint pictures and
take photos 'they' who think national heritage site means something 'they'
who eat fish in the restaurant and will never see how his mother cried³¹

The people whom Kamfer interviews are not only resentful because their stories have been told only by white people (such as David Kramer) and are nostalgically and touristically romanticised by these same white people. The speaker of 'oorvertel 2'

²⁷ Vermeulen, "n Ondersoek na Ronelda Kamfer se Poësie", p. 133.

²⁸ D. Kramer, 'Skipskop Lyrics'. All the Lyrics are available at http://www.allthelyrics.com/lyrics/david_kramer/skipskop-lyrics-1247201.html, retrieved 14 June 2018.

²⁹ '[wit mense] huil oor die plek / oor dit mooi was'.

³⁰ 'onse mense huil oor hulle / net moes maak soos ges^e was'.

³¹ '[...] hy staar na / "hulle" "hulle" wat kom vakansie hou "hulle wat prentjies verf en / foto's vat "hulle" wat dink national heritage site beteken iets "hulle" / wat vis in die restrand eet en nooit sal sien hoe sy ma gehuil het nie'.

explains that she/he is also upset because the history of Skipskop has been mostly forgotten, submerged in the hegemonic narrative of South African history:

i don't cry over Apartheid shit i cry because you all only hear about District 6 i could still smell the St Helena in my grandmother's hair³²

The smell of St Helena is here symbolic of the grandmother's history as a slave. The speaker is lamenting that his/her ancestor's status as slave has been forgotten in the wake of more recent traumas (the eviction of the people of District Six). In a speech made in her capacity as recipient of the Jan Rabie and Marjorie Wallace grant for the writing of Afrikaans literature, Kamfer emphasises her devotion to specific history – the history of those individuals, groups and regions that tend to get lost when history is written in broad strokes:

I think I get my obsession with accurate representation from my grandmother and mother; anyone familiar with the Overberg knows that you are not only from the farm, you are from the farm and the farm has a name, Molteno, or Appelthwaite or you live in Pineview or Pineview North. [...] You don't have a name of your own, you are Trei's child or [U]ncle Tom's granddaughter, everyone has a story, every family has a history and irrespective of how you live your life, there is someone who knows you and can retell [oorvertel] this story to you. This tradition was the inspiration for my second collection, *grond/Santekraam*.³³

For Kamfer, the submergence of this history is not apolitical. She relates the forgotten history of her ancestors to the marginalisation of 'coloured' people in South African history: 'so much of our history is erased from the record, our heritage, our contribution

³² 'ek huil nie oor Apartheid-kak nie ek huil oor julle klo'goed net hoor van Distrik 6 ek kon nog die St Helena in my oumoeder se hare ruik'.

³³ 'Ek dink ek kry my obsessie met akkurate representation van my ouma en ma af, enige iemand wat bekend is met die Overberg, weet dat jy is nie net van die plaas nie, jy is van die plaas en die plaas het 'n naam, Molteno, of Appelthwaite of jy bly in Pineview of Pinieview noord. [...] Jy het nie 'n naam van jou eie nie, jy is Trei se kind of oom Tom se kleindogter. Elkeen het 'n storie, elke familie het 'n geskiedenis en ongeag hoe jy jou lewe leef, is daar imeand wat jou ken en wie jou storie vir jou kan oorvertel. Hierdie tradisie was die inspirasie vir my tweede digbundel, *grond/Santekraam*'. Kamfer, 'Soos 'n Koeipaal', paragraph 21 from website text.

to the struggle against Apartheid, our historical pain and humiliation, our contribution to the food and culture of the country'.³⁴ As the speaker of 'oorvertel 2' claims, 'coloured' people are only mentioned in the narrative of South African history in terms of District Six, while other, less famous, evictions and relocations are forgotten.

In the same poem, the speaker also laments the other ways in which 'coloured' people and their histories are stereotyped:

but coloured people are only coons, papbekke [teethless] and glue sniffers to be coloured is not such a shitty story as those slams [derogatory term for Islamic people of Malay descent] pretend
and then there's also the other story of being bushman the problem is
when you know your people's story and there is not a slams or bushman
in there but you have to say yes indeed because all you have is the
oorvertel.³⁵

The speaker explains that the history of specific 'coloured' people has to be oversimplified in order to fit in with hegemonic national historical narratives, if they wish for their stories to be a part of this 'oorvertel'. As she claimed in her previously mentioned speech, Kamfer in *grond/Santekraam* attempts to bring to the surface the specific history of the people who were relocated to Kassiesbaai. This attempt at 're-surfacing', as in bringing a shipwreck to the surface, is described metaphorically in two poems, 'slot onder water' (p. 55) ('conclusion under water') and 'slot slot slot' (pp. 59–60) ('conclusion conclusion conclusion').

In 'slot onder water' the attempts of 'afkopskepe' ('headless ships') to rise from the ocean floor is described: 'the/wrecks are awake after everlasting silence [...] /the headless ships

³⁴ 'so baie van ons geskiedenis is van die rekord geskrap – ons herkoms, ons bydrae tot die veg teen Apartheid, ons historiese pyn en humiliation, ons bydrae tot die kos en kultuur van die land'. Kamfer, 'Soos 'n Koeipaai', paragraph 34 from website text.

³⁵ 'maar bruin mense is net klopse papbekke en gomgatte om bruin / te wees is glad nie so verkakte storie soos daai slamse voorgee nie / en dan is dit nog die anner storie van boesman wees die probleem is / wanner jy jou mense se storie ken en daar's nie 'n slams of boesman / in nie maar jy moet maar ja en amen want al wat jy het is die / oorvertel'.

groan and creak rusted rotted and forgotten'.³⁶ Their attempt fails 'for the headless ships everything has been silent for way too long they are stuck under the water/broken and names forgotten'.³⁷ In 'slot slot slot', the last poem in *grond/Santekraam*, the forgotten names are bemoaned lyrically in the repetition of the phrase 'no one even knows a name'³⁸ in ten stanzas, with each repetition varying slightly. This passage is reminiscent of Christina Sharpe's reading of Canadian poet M. NourbeSe Philip's collection *Zong!* (2008).³⁹ Like *grond/Santekraam*, *Zong!* is a collection based on one (ocean-related) event, namely the murder, in 1781, of more than 140 black slaves who were cast from the slave ship *Zong* (because the owners of the ship would receive insurance if the slaves drowned but not if they died from thirst or hunger) and the resulting court case (*Gregson vs Gilbert*). The first section of *Zong!*, entitled 'Os', consists of words taken from the court case but also contains Philip's 'names for those Africans on board the *Zong* who had no names that their captors were bound to recognize or record'.⁴⁰ In this way, Philip surfaces 'those submerged lives and brings them back to the text from which they were ejected'.⁴¹

Philip's project is thus comparable to Kamfer's, and in the last two stanzas of 'slot slot slot' it is positively stated that, despite 'the fight of the grains of sand',⁴² 'headless ships sink here years someone knows a name'.⁴³ These concluding lines – affirming that someone does know a name – metaphorically imply that despite the struggle involved and the odds against it, the history of the people of Skipskop is resurfaced in *grond/Santekraam*, at least momentarily. While their voices are repeated in the 'oorvertel' poems, an attempt is made to imagine their everyday lives after being resettled in Kassiesbaai in a poem entitled 'Klippenkust' (pp. 11–12).

In 'Klippenkust' various inhabitants of the town and their everyday activities are described. 'Sara die Slimvrou' ('Sara the Smartwoman') secretly drinks pills while her husband, 'Kêns Terence' ('Senile Terence') dreams of the mermaids who rescued him

³⁶ 'die / wrakke is wakker n_a ewige stilte [...] / die afkopskepe kreun en kraak verroes verrot en vergeet'.

³⁷ 'vir die afkopskepe is als te veel te lank sit hulle van onder die water / stukkend en name vergeete'.

³⁸ 'niemand ken eers 'n naam'.

³⁹ C. Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2016), E-book. M.N. Philip, *Zong!* (Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2008).

⁴⁰ Sharpe, *In the Wake*, loc. 728.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, loc. 733.

⁴² 'sandkorrels baklei nog'.

⁴³ 'afkopskepe sink hier jare iemand ken 'n naam'.

when his boat drifted into the 'sick/black sea'.⁴⁴ 'Mooi Mitchy Mitchell' ('Pretty Mitchy Mitchell') secretly wears his pretty girlfriend's underwear. 'Mal Maria' ('Crazy Maria') wears a key around her neck and leans over the bottom half of her kitchen door. 'Oom Grootvis Visser' ('uncle Bigfish Fisher') sits on his patio thinking back on

a time when the sea could still
speak and all the world's stories
stayed under the water
he thinks of the voices in his veins
uncle Grootvis Visser thinks of his people
his people and the santekraam.⁴⁵

Most of these figures' stories are further explained in other poems. The limited scope of this article does not allow for an analysis of each and every poem. What is most relevant to my argument is the way in which their stories are echoed in the poems stretching from pages 30 to 39. In these poems, the focus shifts from the people of Skipskop and Klippenkust to autobiographical reflections on figures of the present or recent past, presumably living in Cape Town (with the exception of oupa Thomas Daniel Granfield, the poet's grandfather from Grabouw, who is memorialised in a poem on pages 30 to 31). 'Shaun' (pp. 32–3), for example, deals with a young man who was jailed on a drug-related charge and murdered the day before he was set to be released. In 'Jeppe' (p. 35) the autobiographical speaker describes her conversations with the eponymous Jeppe in a taxi each morning. Jeppe tells her that he is an alcoholic and wishes he were dead. The speaker replies that if she could she would kill him in order to feel more alive.

These poems not only relate to the 'Klippenkust' poems because they retell the (often tragic) narratives of different individuals. The different worlds, Klippenkust and contemporary Cape Town, are also entwined and surreally inverted in two twinned poems: 'onder water' (pp. 26–7) ('under water') and 'de diep' (pp. 51–3) ('the deep': 'de' is a Dutch article, signalling Afrikaans' historical relationship with Dutch and the still

⁴⁴ 'siek / swart see'.

⁴⁵ "n tyd toe die see nog kon / praat en al die w^ereld se stories / onder in die water / gebly het hy dink aan die stemme in sy are / oom Grootvis Visser dink aan sy mense / die mense en die santekraam'.

prevalent influence of Dutch on Afrikaans place names). These poems take place under the ocean in a space where mermaids act as a Greek chorus commenting on events by singing traditional Afrikaans folk songs and contemporary Afrikaans pop songs. Figures such as 'oom Geelstert' ('uncle Yellow Tail'), 'tannie Domvrou Groot de Wit' and 'Pa Groot de Wit' ('auntie Stupidwoman Big de Wit' and 'Father Big de Wit'), 'Mislukte Mitchy manmin' ('Failed Mitchy merman') and 'Malorie Makriel' ('Malorie Mackerel') recall the figures described in the Klippenkust and Cape Town poems, without correlating precisely with them (apart from failed Mitchy merman, who is an underwater version of pretty Mitchy Mitchell).

While these fishy names might sound more like the nicknames of the Klippenkust figures (for example oom Grootvis Visser), the conflict described as taking place in the underwater world corresponds more with the events described in the autobiographical contemporary poems. In 'onder water' it is mentioned, for example, that Malorie Makriel is expelled from school (a pun on the collective noun for fish) for dealing in 'seaweed'. Makriel's story is continued in 'de diep', when the mermaids gossip that her parents are siblings and that she has been in jail.

The 'headless shipwrecks' rise from the ocean floor, to signal the end of 'de diep', and, at the same time, refer to the 'conclusion' series of poems in which, as argued earlier, the wrecks represent the forgotten histories that are surfaced in *grond/Santekraam*. The havoc caused by the ships' rise in 'de diep' perhaps indicates the disruption that such a surfacing of history can cause. The fact that it is the De Wit family that is most perturbed by these events could also be interpreted as implying that the unearthing of forgotten histories is especially dangerous for white people's worldviews. That the fish family named De Wit represents white people is not only signified by their surname ('wit' being the Afrikaans for 'white'), but also by the De Wit child's Afrikaans accent. When being told off by his mother he replies: 'no mô not now i'm online i'm checking my profile'.⁴⁶ The pronunciation of 'ma' as 'mô' refers to the rounded vowels more common in the pronunciation of white Afrikaans speakers than that of 'coloured' Afrikaans speakers.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ 'nee mô nie nou nie ek's online ek check my profile'.

⁴⁷ D. Wissing, 'Ontronding in Afrikaans', *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 51, 1 (2011), p. 8.

In 'onder water' and 'de diep' the history and present of the figures described in the rest of the collection are entwined. In describing this fantastical undersea world, Kamfer is commenting on the impact of (submerged and often traumatic) histories on the present. In his seminal *Rabelais and his World*, Mikhail Bakhtin argues that the relatively unscrutinised space of the carnival allowed medieval societies, through humour, to criticise and subvert hierarchies of power.⁴⁸ In 'onder water' and 'de diep', Kamfer is similarly providing social critique in poems that are seemingly humorous and playful. The imagined ocean here provides a space removed from the (painful) histories explored in the rest of the collection. Here, in a carnivalesque space, she implicitly connects the generally ignored history of 'coloured' people with their continuing economic subjugation in contemporary South Africa.

The cover of *grond/Santekraam* is dark blue, with yellow concentric circles. These circles suggest the outwards rippling after the water's surface has been disturbed. In *grond/Santekraam* the forced removal of the people of Skipskop is implicitly incriminated in the tragedies of the present – the effects of this historical injustice are shown to be still rippling outwards. This, perhaps, also explains the four 'conclusion' poems ending the collection, the suggestion being that this history is not yet concluded. In this way, *grond/Santekraam* can be said to exist in what Sharpe calls 'the wake', with 'wake' referring to 'the track left on the water's surface by a ship',⁴⁹ specifically the slave ship. The word 'wake' also connotes 'the state of wakefulness',⁵⁰ as well as the ritual of 'keeping watch with the dead'.⁵¹ Staying, being and working in the wake therefore means being awake to, staying aware of, the enduring history of slavery and its dehumanising effects, as well as attendance to the resultant 'physical, social and figurative death'⁵² that is not a thing of the past but still unfolding.⁵³ *grond/Santekraam* is not only a collection created in the wake of the slave ship but also one specifically examining the continuing ripple effects of apartheid and its forced relocations. In the next section Kamfer's 'wake work'⁵⁴ will be compared to that of another South African woman, Koleka Putuma.

⁴⁸ M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984). p. 6.

⁴⁹ Sharpe, *In the Wake*, loc. 126.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, loc. 156

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, loc. 400.

⁵² *Ibid.*, loc. 380.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, loc. 440.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, loc. 318 and further.

'Water'

The imagery in several poems in *grond/Santekraam* of a shipwreck rising to the surface (and upsetting white people, represented by the De Wit fish family) corresponds to line 23 of Koleka Putuma's poem 'Water': 'and the water, restless, wishes it could spew all of the slaves and ships onto shore'. Although the main repressed historical event explored in *grond/Santekraam* is the evacuation of Skipskop, the collection also contains references to the ocean as slave route. In this way, it also engages in a literary discourse of representing the ocean as metaphor for the repressed history and memory of slavery, 'a place where the haunting of the past overtakes the present subject' as Elizabeth DeLoughrey puts it.⁵⁵

I have already discussed the reference to the smell of St Helena in the hair of the speaker's grandmother in 'oorvertel 2' as symbolising her slavery. In 'na aan Klippenkust' (p. 23) ('close to Klippenkust'), oom Grootvis Visser, after having been relocated to Klippenkust, similarly reflects on his enslaved ancestors. He looks at the ocean and thinks about 'his grandfather's people with the Indian blood/they were also just removed from their land'.⁵⁶ A more explicit reference to slavery in *grond/Santekraam* can be found in 'eviction notice' (p. 24), which is written in the form of a letter from Jan van Riebeeck, the first Commander of the Cape under Dutch rule, to 'Herrie/Autshumao', the chief interpreter between the Dutch settlers and the indigenous Gorinhaikona community.⁵⁷ In this letter, written in an anachronistically 21st-century style, 'Jannie' describes the Dutch settlers' enterprise as a 'buy a male slave and rape a female for free' business deal.

Slavery is a significant aspect of the submerged history associated with the ocean in *grond/Santekraam*, but it is only mentioned explicitly these three times, and the main focus of the collection is the forced relocation of the communities of Skipskop. In contrast,

⁵⁵ E. DeLoughrey, 'Heavy Waters: Waste and Atlantic Modernity', *PMLA* (Publications of the Modern Language Association of America), 125, 3 (2010), p. 703.

⁵⁶ 'sy ouvader se mense met die Indiese bloed / hulle is ook net weggevat van hulle grond'.

⁵⁷ 'Autshumao (Herry the Strandloper)', *South African History Online* (21 September 2016), available at <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/autshumao-herry-strandloper>, retrieved on 16 June 2018.

when the speaker of Putuma's poem, 'Water', refers to a repressed history arising (like a shipwreck) from the ocean, she is primarily referring to the history of slavery.

Baderoon refers to claims by South African literary theorist and novelist Zoë Wicomb in saying that 'memories of slavery among descendants of slaves in South Africa have been comprehensively suppressed by the "shame" of that enslavement and sexual exploitation induced in indigenous and enslaved South Africans [...]. As a result, despite decades of historical scholarship, South African relations to slavery are marked by "amnesia"'.⁵⁸ It is partly this amnesia (relating to slavery) to which *Collective Amnesia's* title refers. In *Collective Amnesia* reference is also made to the continuing (and often suppressed) influence of South Africa's colonial and more recent apartheid past. The ways in which capitalist consumption, Christianity and the English language were utilised for colonial ends (and continue to exert a [neo]colonial influence) are especially highlighted.

In 'Hand-me-downs' (pp. 14–19) the speaker explains that, as a child, the desire for 'new' products at the start of every school year ('We side-eyed school shoes to see if they were a Toughee or Buccaneer./The boys who wore Grasshoppers were cooler than cool. [...]/Stationary was not complete until it came in a Waltons box') represented an aspiration to be white:

In our imagination,
we were brown bodies
living like kings in white people's houses.
We were superheroes and skinny models
with white faces.

The speaker implies that conspicuous consumption by black adults can also be related to an attempt to transcend racialised subjection, in stanza 19:

[a] six-hundred rand sneaker on the dinner table
was the manifestation of a hunger in us

⁵⁸ Baderoon, 'The African Oceans', p. 94.

that food could not fill.

The relationship between the ways in which this consumption is driven by racialised class aspirations and attempts to escape the historical cycle of black poverty, but actually perpetuates it, is foregrounded in stanza 21:

[t]he system has us in shacks, wrestling with a hand-to-mouth syndrome.
Has us driving around squatter camps in a Mercedes.
It is always showing us
what we cannot have,
who we cannot be,
and what has been stolen from us.

As in Kamfer's *grond/Santekraam*, that which has been stolen from the black figures described in the collection includes abstract concepts such as humanity and dignity but also the concrete theft of land. This theft is the theme of the poem 'Mountain' (pp. 102–5). This poem describes the attempt of the speaker and her friends to visit a mountain in Namaqualand. They are, however, turned away by an 'old white lady in her pyjamas', who in Afrikaans says, '*You are on **private property** ...*'. This prompts the speaker to reflect:

I question why I understand what she has said
And the mountain she calls private.
You can't go up the mountain without going past my property,
She says.
I asks if she owns the mountain
And she says she owns this land.
Namaqualand?

The rhetorical question ('Namaqualand?') indicates the irony of the white woman claiming to own land in an area, the name of which literally translates as 'land of the Nama people'.⁵⁹ The first line of the above quotation, in which the speaker questions why she

⁵⁹ F. Frescura, 'Namaqualand', *South African History Online* (27 April 2018), available at <http://www.sahistory.org.za/place/namaqualand>, retrieved on 17 June 2018.

understands the woman's Afrikaans words, relates to a motif that recurs throughout *Collective Amnesia*, namely that colonialism and subjugation also occur through language.⁶⁰ In this case, the subjugating language that the speaker understands is Afrikaans, the official language of apartheid South Africa. During apartheid, all South African pupils, regardless of their home language, were expected to learn Afrikaans at school.

This, presumably, is why the speaker of 'Local' (p. 107), considers her 'mother tongue' to be one of the things 'stolen' from her by colonialism. In this poem, Putuma explores the irony of writing in another colonial language, English, because her mother tongue does not provide her the 'space to pack/or unpack my histories or my selves'. It is worth noting that since the publication of *Collective Amnesia*, Putuma has directed an isiXhosa children's play, *Mbuzeni*, explaining:

I want to explore the story in a language that would encompass the nuances of our culture and that we as young black girls speak to and relate to each other. There are certain experiences of growing up as a black IsiXhosa speaking girl child that cannot fully be articulated or expressed in English. And so it felt obvious to make the work in IsiXhosa.⁶¹

The poem 'Mountain', in which the speaker wonders at her ability to understand the Afrikaans for '*You are on private property*', is followed by another poem that relates the language of Afrikaans to apartheid and also implies that the concept of 'private property' is a contemporary continuation of the apartheid term 'Slegs Blankes' ('Whites Only'). This poem is entitled 'Kakstad' (p. 106). The title, which literally translates as 'Shit City', is a play on the Afrikaans name for Cape Town, Kaapstad. The poem reads as follows:

South Africa has an old intimacy with

⁶⁰ C. Haith, "'I Question Why I Understand What She Said": Language and Decolonial Justice in Koleka Putuma's Debut Poetry Collection *Collective Amnesia*', *MoveableType*, 10 (2018), p. 43. See also A. Pieterse, 'Knowledge and Unlearning in the Poetry of Koleka Putuma and Sindiswa Busuka-Mathese', *scrutiny2*, 21, 1 (2018), p. 39.

⁶¹ Putuma, quoted in N. Spowart, 'Mbuzeni Play Explores the Place of Women in South Africa', *The National* (21 May 2018), available at http://www.thenational.scot/culture/16238123.Mbuzeni_play_explores_the_place_of_women_in_South_Africa/, retrieved 17 June 2018.

'Slegs Blankes'

Slegs Blankes in Hout Bay

Slegs Blankes in Camps Bay

Slegs Blankes on Table Mountain

Slegs Blankes on the Promenade

For more information visit social media

or

www.whites-trespassing-since1652.co.za

The reference to 'social media' makes it clear that this historical demarcation of some areas for the use of 'Whites Only' still has an influence in the present. Like *grond/Santekraam, Collective Amnesia* explores the effects that events of the past still have. When read in conjunction with 'Water', the reference to 'social media' in 'Kakstad' can also be interpreted as referring to the specific racist comments made by white realtor Penny Sparrow, who on Facebook described black beachgoers as 'monkeys' after 2016 New Year's celebrations.⁶² With the exception of Table Mountain, the places deemed for whites only in 'Kakstad' are namely beaches and a seaside promenade. 'Water' also starts with a reference to '[t]he memory of going to the beach every New Year's Eve', which the speaker says she shares with her cousins and 'most people raised Black'.

Some parts of the poem relay indignation at the racist mocking of black people visiting the beach, considering that during apartheid most beaches were forbidden them, and apparently some people (such as Penny Sparrow) still consider these beaches as spaces for 'Whites Only':

[a]nd I often hear this joke
about Black people not being able to swim,
or being scared of water.
We are mocked
and we have often mocked ourselves

⁶² J. Wicks, "'It's Just the Facts' – Penny Sparrow Breaks her Silence", *news24* (4 January 2016), available at <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/its-just-the-facts-penny-sparrow-breaks-her-silence-20160104>, retrieved on 17 June 2018.

for wiping our faces the way that we do when we come out of the water.

As implied in this excerpt, the mockery and forbidding are not only being done by white people. The speaker relays being forbidden by

the elders [...] from going in too deep
to giggle, to splash in our black tights
and Shoprite bags wrapped around our new weaves,
forbid us from riding the wave
for fear that we would be a mass of blackness swept by the tide
and never to return,
like litter.

As in 'oorvertel 1' and 'slot Klippenkust' in grond/Santekraam, the attitude of white people to the ocean is contrasted with those of the poems' 'coloured' or black speakers. These, previously mentioned, lines from 'slot Klippenkust'

'them' 'they' who come on holiday 'they' who paint pictures and
take photos 'they' who think national heritage site means something 'they'
who eat fish in the restaurant and will never see how his mother cried

are very similar to lines 35 and 36 of 'Water':

[f]or you, the ocean is for surfboards, boats and tans
and all the cool stuff you do under there in your bathing suit and goggles.

In 'slot Klippenkust', the white people's recreational view of the beach is contrasted with the Klippenkust fishing community's displacement from the ocean, the source of their livelihoods. In 'Water' the views of white people are contrasted with the history of slavery and the arrival of colonialism that the black beachgoers associate with the ocean:

[t]he audacity to trade and murder us over water
then mock us for being scared of it.

The audacity to arrive by water and invade us.

The ocean is not only associated with painful memories in *grond/Santekraam*, but also with a history of a subsistence enabled by an intimate relationship with the ocean. Similarly, in 'Water' the ocean is not only represented as an 'archive of stories'⁶³ storing the history of slavery and colonialism, but also has religious connotations, implied in line 38: 'we have come to be baptised'. The word baptised is associated with Christianity, but as in other poems in *Collective Amnesia* (most prominently 'Growing up Black & Christian' [p. 23], 'No Easter Sunday for Queers' [pp. 25–33], 'Index' [pp. 71–2] and 'Sunday' [p. 110]), 'Water' interrogates the ways in which Christianity is entwined with colonialism and patriarchy. In stanzas 6 and 7 the speaker explains:

[t]oo many white people out here acting God.

Too many white people out here doing the work of God.

And this God of theirs has my tummy in knots.

Him and I have always had a complicated relationship.

This blue-eyed and blond-haired Jesus I followed in Sunday school
has had my kind bowing to a white and patriarchal heaven

Apart from pointing to the way Christianity normalises the worship ('bowing to') of whiteness and patriarchy, the speaker also criticises the ways in which Christianity is used to 'other' queer and transgender people. She explains that she is not against religion or the concept of God as such, but is critical of how white people

[...] have taken the liberty to colonise the concept of God;

gave God a gender, a skin colour,

and a name in a language we had to twist our mouths around.

Blasphemy is wrapping slavery in the gospel and calling it freedom.

Blasphemy is having to watch my kind use the same gospel to enslave each other.

⁶³ Samuelson, 'Sea Changes', p. 15.

When she refers to 'we' ('most people raised Black') going to the ocean to be baptised, she is therefore not just referring to those Christian denominations that perform baptisms in the ocean. She is also referring to a broader spirituality associated with the ocean:

[w]e have come to stir the other world here.

We have come to cleanse ourselves here.

We have come to connect our living to the dead here.

Our respect for water is what you have termed fear.

The reference to 'the dead' include those slaves, who along with slave ships, the ocean wishes to spew 'onto shore' in line 23, with these 'slaves and ships' being a synecdoche for the repressed history of slavery in general. Like Kamfer and Philip, Putuma is therefore participating in the 'wake work' described by Sharpe, by surfacing the history of the slave trade and its enduring influence. The reference to 'the other world', though, implies that 'the dead' not only refers to murdered and brutalised slaves, 'the wasted lives of modernity',⁶⁴ but also to the ancestral realm. In this way the ocean, as represented in 'Water', relates to what Astrida Neimanis calls (when discussing the spiritual connotations of water) 'cosmologies with a stronger sense of intergenerationality [than] Western atomized ontology'.⁶⁵ The speakers in 'Water' (in contrast to the white 'they') do not visit the ocean to use it for their pleasure, but rather to pay their respects to the dead and to connect with a spiritual realm.

The poem ends with the claim that after the confrontational conversation that the poem represents, 'we can all [...] wash this bitter meal with amnesia./And go for a swim after that/Just for fun./Just for fun' – the implication being that traumatic history has to be drowned and forgotten once again, for the ocean and the beach to represent a space of 'fun' for the speaker, as it does for white people.

⁶⁴ DeLoughrey, 'Heavy Waters', p. 704.

⁶⁵ A. Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (London, Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 51.

Most of the poems in *Collective Amnesia* that are discussed in this article ('Water', 'Mountain', 'Kakstad' and 'Local') can be found in the section entitled 'Postmemory'. As Phalafala explains, 'Postmemory' represents 'a conscious act of addressing those traumas that lie latent in the personal and national subconscious'.⁶⁶ The prefix 'post-' in 'Postmemory' does not seem to signify a time after memory, but rather the types of memory that need to be resurfaced in times that are supposedly 'post-': post-apartheid and postcolonial. As in *grond/Santekraam*, in 'Water' the ocean, and those wrecks that need to arise from it, symbolise traumatic histories that still influence the present, in the wake of colonising vessels and slave ships.

In comparing these related oceanic depictions in the Afrikaans poetry of Kamfer and the English-language poetry of Putuma, I am also participating in the interdisciplinary dialogue between comparative literature and oceanic studies. This is done through my implicit situating of their work in the black Atlantic,⁶⁷ through the references to Sharpe's work on the transatlantic slave trade. *grond/Santekraam* can also be read in terms of cultural exchanges related to Indian Ocean trade routes,⁶⁸ due to the reference to oom Grootvis Visser's ancestors in 'na aan Klippenkust'. This situatedness of the poetry within oceanic routes is suggestive of further possible avenues of research – for example, the comparison of their poetry with other work from what Meg Samuelson and Charne Lavery call 'the oceanic South'.⁶⁹ This includes literature from and on not only the Atlantic, but also the rest of 'the Southern Hemisphere's blue expanses', thus contributing to 'south-south connectivity' and challenging the hegemony of the global North.⁷⁰

The concern of this article is, however, the comparison of South African literature written in different languages. Because of apartheid's reification of different ethnic groups and the languages with which they are associated, as well as the influence of other (social and literary) forces, the comparison of literature written in South Africa's different languages

⁶⁶ Phalafala, 'Collective Amnesia', p. 253.

⁶⁷ P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London, Verso, 1993).

⁶⁸ Isabel Hofmeyr, among others, has done important work on the relationships established between South Africa (and its literature and other cultural products) with other parts of the globe through the Indian Ocean and its historical and present passages. See, for example, I. Hofmeyr and M. Williams, *South Africa & India: Shaping the Global South* (Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand Press, 2011).

⁶⁹ M. Samuelson and C. Lavery, 'The Oceanic South', *English Language Notes*, 57, 1 (2019), pp. 37–50.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

is relatively scarce.⁷¹ Reflecting on the seeming lack of relationships between different southern African literatures, Stephen Gray famously compared the literary system to an archipelago: 'The islands with their peaks [representing southern African literatures written in different languages] protrude in set positions, even if one does not readily see the connections between them beneath the surface'.⁷² In noting the similarities and differences in the representation of the ocean in the poetry of Kamfer and Putuma, I am not so much participating in the work on planetary oceanic routes, but rather considering the ocean as a (shared) subject matter that allows for a traversing of different islands of the archipelago that is South(ern) African literature.

Conclusion

In the poetry of Kamfer and Putuma, the ocean symbolises repressed collective memories. In this way, their work relates to a trend Samuelson identifies in 21st-century South African prose in which the ocean represents repressed histories. While both poets refer to the ocean as a route of slavery and colonisation, the ocean is a broader metaphor in Putuma's poem 'Water', encompassing the repressed history of slavery, colonialism and apartheid. In the poems of Kamfer's *grond/Santekraam* the focus is mostly more specific, namely the enforced relocation of the coloured fishing community of Skipskop and the ways in which the destruction of the community's relationship with the ocean still influences the present.

In the poems of both Putuma and Kamfer black and 'coloured' people's relationships with the ocean (which are influenced by the above-mentioned traumatic histories) are also consciously contrasted with the touristic and recreational meanings most white South Africans associate with the beach. In 'Water' the ocean is also accorded a spiritual meaning, as it is associated with baptism and with connections to 'the dead' and 'the other world'. In *grond/Santekraam* the ocean is not described in specifically spiritual terms, but the speakers relocated from Skipskop to Klippenkust respect the ocean as the source of their livelihoods. In 'onder water' and 'de diep' a mythological space is also created, through which Kamfer can comment on the way in which the traumas of the past still

⁷¹ J. Wade, 'Introduction: Disclosing the Nation', in J.A. Smit, J. van Wyk and J. Wade (eds), *Rethinking South African Literary History* (Durban, Y Press, 1996), p. 1.

⁷² S. Gray, *Southern African Literature: An Introduction* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1979), p. 14.

affect the present. In this way, Putuma and Kamfer's poetry is also in dialogue with a South African literary discourse in which the ocean, according to Samuelson, is associated with ways of knowing repressed by colonial enlightenment rationality.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the American Council of Learned Societies, whose African Humanities Program postdoctoral fellowship and an accompanying residency at the University of Ghana afforded me the time to complete this article.