

Petrified life

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How might we read temporality, that is, the psychical and social experience of time, as an index of the prevailing political and intersubjective impasses of the apartheid and post-apartheid eras? This paper explores three perspectives on this broad problematic. Achille Mbembe's thoughts on repetition and nostalgia provide, firstly, a means of understanding one characteristically post-apartheid mode of temporality: that of suspended history. Crapanzano's notion of waiting, elaborated as a means of grasping the white anxiety of the late apartheid period, allows us, secondly, to conceptualise the derealised experience of a muted or deadened time. A third source, an unpublished text contributed to the Apartheid Archive concerning a fantasised scene of violence, enables us to sketch a third form of temporal experience common to apartheid and post-apartheid experiences alike, namely that of imagined retribution. These ostensibly separate and distinct modes of temporality can be read as interlocking forms of "petrified life," a term I use to link temporalities of immobilisation characterised by suspension, stasis and fear.

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Waiting, the title of Crapanzano's (1985) influential ethnography of white South Africa in the waning days of apartheid, employs a single word to characterise the distinctiveness of this historical era. That Crapanzano (1985) chooses a signifier that qualifies the *experience* of time, is telling. It suggests that the myriad social and political complexities of a given era can be encapsulated in terms of a relation to time. His choice proves instructive for my concerns here. My objective in this paper is to explore how we might read temporality – that is, the psychical and social experience of time – as an index of prevailing impasses, both political and (inter)-subjective, that characterise a given historical situation. Put differently: I want to draw attention to how paradoxes and apparent distortions of temporality – or lived time¹ – might express a variety of underlying (psycho)social contradictions. Peter Osborne gives voice to this underlying research impetus in *The Politics of Time*:

How do the practices in which we engage structure and produce, enable and distort, different senses of time and possibility? What kinds of experience and history do they make possible or impede? Whose futures do they ensure? These are the questions to which a politics of time would attend, interrogating temporal structures about the possibilities they encode or foreclose, in specific temporal modes. (Osborne 1995, 200)

How then might we go about thinking the temporality of the post-apartheid era? Let me offer here, by way of a prelude, a series of initial improvisations on this theme, which, following work I have developed elsewhere (Hook 2013) attempt to isolate a series of post-apartheid “time signatures.”

It seems less than contentious to suggest that everyday post-apartheid experience is characterised by historical dissonance, by the continuous juxtaposition of forward- and backward-looking temporalities. Harber’s (2011) social history of Diepsloot, the settlement of 200,000 that sprung up north of Johannesburg in 1994, nicely captures something of this contradictory temporality:

Diepsloot [...] is a phenomenon of the new era, conceived in the old era, born on the very cusp of change from apartheid to democracy [...] It is a new settlement but represents also what is not new about this country, what is deeply embedded in the present from a troubled past [...] All of this history is written into the place, can be seen at every corner, in every house [...] even though the settlement itself is only a few years old. At the same time it is a place of the new South Africa, a place of hope and possibility [...] it does not share the tortured past of similar, older, apartheid settlements. (9)

As the apparent contradictions of this passage make clear, (post)apartheid temporality pulls simultaneously in two directions. There is the continual hope of transcending the apartheid past, the prospect of what a genuinely *post*-apartheid society may be. And, then there is the “pull-back” effect of the myriad instances where adequate structural change has either not come to pass or stalled, threatening in some cases to regress, to take on an intractably retrogressive trajectory. This double temporality is given eloquent expression in a passage drawn from Vladislavić’s (2011) novel *Double Negative*, which provides a first-person description of the experience of a returned expatriate, for whom the new South Africa is a bewildering place:

For a while I didn’t know whether I was coming or going. The parenthetical age had dawned, the years of qualification and revision, when the old version of things trailed behind the new ones in brackets, fading identities and spent meanings dogging the footsteps of the present. Sometimes the ghosts went ahead suddenly, as if the sun had reeled to the wrong horizon in a moment and left you following your own shadow down the street. (90–91)

We have here then transposed vectors of historical transformation and retrogression: an overlap of progressive and arrested histories. What both Harber (2011) and Vladislavić (2011) give us, in their own ways, is a sense of an uncertain conjunction of past and present in which various apartheid antecedents are resisted and yet nonetheless succeed in extending into, and overlaying, a future that has no clear or obvious precedent. The prospect of anxiety here is seemingly doubled: in addition to the possibility of an unsurpassed and returning past, there is the uncertainty of what an unwritten future might bring. Both the imagined past and the imagined future bring with them the prospect of a certain failure or dread. The ambiguity of any reference to “the post-apartheid” is a case in point, connoting both something that has been forever delayed (the genuinely *post*-apartheid) and something that has already happened (the honeymoon period of the Mandela era), that is already a dated – even lost – historical artefact relegated to the past.

There is also another way of understanding the often-paradoxical nature of post-apartheid temporality. It may be typified not only by its bi-directionality, but also by its vacillation between periods of stasis – as in the view of the interregnum

characterising the end of apartheid (Gordimer 1983) – and sudden shifts in the chronology of imagined progress. No better example might be supplied of this than that of Nelson Mandela’s apparent relation to time, as described by Barnard (2014):

While he was engaged in the dreary, inflexible routines of prison life on Robben Island, he occupied, in the imaginations of others, a kind of messianic time of suspended hope [...] [I]f, in the eyes of the world, Mandela had [...] a “marvellous, disconnected, time-machine aura” [then] the sudden acceleration of experience – indeed, of South African history – that followed his release was certainly equally strange for the man himself. Mandela’s fellow prisoner Ahmed Kathrada has described himself and his comrades as Rip van Winkle figures, for whom the world into which they were released was a kind of science fiction world: strange and unfamiliar [...] they had not yet encountered computers or fax machines, or even things like multi-lane highways, overhead bypasses. (6)

The post-apartheid period, then, is characterised not only by the double temporality present in the equivocal term “(post)apartheid,” but also by the staccato tempo of abrupt truncations and precipitate beginnings. The temporality of political transition here might be likened to the change of the psychoanalytic process. It is hard to fix: always too soon or too late, simultaneously precipitate and delayed, it seems always to defy that is expected. Frantz Fanon begins his *Black Skin White Masks* ([1952] 1986) by evoking the same sentiment in respect of revolutionary change: “The explosion will not happen today. It is too soon ... or too late” (7). Or, in the formulation offered by Ackbar Abbas, history, like love, “is never on time” (2011, 226). The time of political change, thus understood, is conditioned by desire: it never lines up in an orderly sequential fashion but is continually subject to missing its object.

Such a juxtaposition of temporalities breeds a proliferation of *times*, the production of a heterogeneous state of polytemporality (Browne 2014). We may ground this idea in a concrete experience: to pass through the various adjacent areas of any South African city is to move through not just different spaces *but through different temporalities* – it is to cut across multiple imaginary timeline domains of temporal experience. We have a view then not only of a turbulent and often discordant temporality, but of multiple intersecting temporalities. Forde (2011) puts it this way: in the interregnum that has engulfed the country, there is no long one South Africa, but several, “each one a product of various pasts and presents,” each of which is “tangled up in the process of trying to forge an identity somewhere between the old and the new” (226). This is a case then of different times *at the same time*, an instance of Browne’s (2014) polytemporality, namely a composite and internally complex form of historical time produced “through the intersection of different temporal layers and strands [...] combin[ing] [...] in distinct ways to produce particular experiences and discursive formations” (31).

And yet, in contrast to what we might refer to as the heterochroneity of the post-apartheid period, there is another mode of temporality, which, while diverse in its instantiations, is less characterised by juxtaposition and proliferation, and more so by inertia and stasis. I have in mind here a type of immobilised or arrested time. Take, for example, Barnard’s thoughts on global representations of South African politics:

It has often been observed that the global imaginary tends to fix South Africa [...] in a kind of freeze-frame: the anti-apartheid struggle seems eternally captured in the photograph of Hector Pieterse, shot by the police in the 1976 Soweto Uprising, while

Mandela often seems fixed at the moment of his release in 1990, when he first lifted his fist in a power salute to greet the crowd. (2014, 4)

It is this particular theme, of arrested temporality, that I want to develop in what follows. While the many of the foregoing extemporisations are, hopefully, suggestive, they are less than unified, and they lack definition. I want now to develop a more refined thesis, and to do so by turning to a variety of forms of temporal delay indicative of both contemporary post-apartheid and late apartheid South Africa. I start by making reference to the work of Achille Mbembe (2008, 2013) whose thoughts on repetition and nostalgia provide instances of a characteristically post-apartheid mode of temporality: that of suspended history. I then discuss Crapanzano's (1985) notion of waiting. Elaborated as a means of grasping the white anxiety of the late apartheid period, Crapanzano's description of waiting allows us to conceptualise the de-realised experience of a muted or deadened time. Following this, I turn to an unpublished source, a narrative component of the Apartheid Archive Project (AAP). The analysis of this text – a fantasised scene of violence – enables us to sketch a form of temporal experience common to apartheid and post-apartheid experiences alike – the temporality of imagined retribution.

The critical resource I utilise in my engagement with the foregoing texts is that of Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalysis. In this respect, I am following the imperative mapped out in the discipline of psychosocial studies (Frosh 2011; Saville-Young 2011), that of isolating the psychical operations underling various social and political formations.² I should note here also that the notion of temporality I apply is not simply that of lived time, but also that of *fantasmatic* time, that is, the experience of time as articulated with the unconscious.³

Foreclosed futures

Mbembe (2008, 2013) provides two striking perspectives on (post)apartheid temporality. In the first (2013) instance, he focuses on difficulties in respect of temporal agency, indeed, on shattered time, on the problem of radically diminished expectations of what the future might bring. In the time of political and economic oppression, he avers, the possibility of the future is arrested; the prospect of development or escape is, as it were, “short-circuited,” locked into endless cycles of repetition. Musing on how the conceptualisations offered by Fanon might be transposed onto the (post)apartheid realm, Mbembe (2013, 29) points out that, for Fanon, one of the most severe injuries suffered by victims of white supremacy is an “inability to project themselves forward in time.” Thus, what is often understood as an issue of psychical and political agency is recast as a crisis of (subjective) temporality:

Crushed by the misery of the past [...] historical consciousness [has] [...] been severely crippled [...] a propensity [is developed] [...] for compulsive repetition and a profound disbelief in [...] [the] capacity to shape [...] [one's own] future. For Fanon, repetition was the way death inhabited thought and language. (2013, 29)

We might augment Mbembe's account by noting that what was true for Fanon in this instance is true also for Freud (1920); the death drive is, after all, evinced in patterns of repetition compulsion (Freud's *wiederholungszwang*). What is in question then, certainly from a Freudian standpoint, is not only the disabling of subjective agency. To this dire, political and historical situation must be added a further dilemma – that of how such a demoralising lack of subjective agency might itself be

the outcome of an incessantly repeated type of *unconscious* agency. Freud (1920) was initially perplexed by such repetitive behaviours lying beyond the horizon of pleasure, behaviours in which the subject is complicit in condemning themselves to repeat over and over distressing situations, and doing so at the expense of any hopes of cure (hence the notion of the “negative therapeutic reaction”). Attention to the libidinal economy of repetition explained in this Freudian way – via the notion of an unconsciously enacted compulsion to repeat – allows us to highlight an omission in Mbembe’s account.

Mbembe (2013) helps us understand that the deathliness of repetition holds not only for individual psyches but for broader states of historical consciousness also. We can appreciate via Mbembe that temporality is a means through which oppression comes to be enfolded within subjectivity. Moreover, resistance to historical change may take the form of – or be consolidated by – forms of temporal experience, conscious or otherwise. Crucial as these insights are, they leave the subjective and thereby ethical dimension somewhat under-developed. What remains unattended to here is the particular role of temporality in *the subjectivity of political change*⁴.

The point deserves reiteration. Mbembe’s (2013) comments suggest that the ongoing lack of structural change becomes tied to cyclical and self-confirming patterns in which no better future seems imaginable. Not only is it the case then that temporality is related to political agency; each repeated instance of non-change adds to a climate – indeed, a belief – of disaffection.⁵ *Temporality lived as stasis* starts thus to make a revised future impossible. All this is well and good, it helps us grasp something of the subjectivisation of social structure via temporality. This however enables us to foreground an elusive but vital political question – which makes for a conspicuous absence in Mbembe’s account – namely: how might one go about the *de-subjectivisation of such structures*? Mbembe’s apparent de-prioritisation of individual subjectivity seems symptomatic of this broader problem.

Nostalgic fixation

In addition to the foregoing description of the temporality of repetition, in which subjects remain tethered to the past and are unable to move forward, we now turn to examine an inhibited temporality in which historical progress is impeded by profound investments in the past. In an earlier analysis, Mbembe (2008) invokes the lag of nostalgic experience, discussing how dislocations of time, materialised in the forms of architectural imagination, put a hold on the temporality of progress, that is, on the time of political change. Focussing on a style of cosmetic architecture that attempts to evoke other times and places, Mbembe speaks of “a mode of erasure [...] accomplished against the duties to memory ritualized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission” (2008, 62). The mode of effacement instantiated by such architecture relies on an escapist art of verisimilitude, as in the case of the Montecasino entertainment complex north of Johannesburg, which aims to invoke the atmosphere and feel of a rural Tuscan village. What results is a paradoxical inscription of time: “the built form has to be constructed as an empty placeholder for meanings that have been eroded [...] rather than remembered” (62).

Such buildings manifest as signs of forgetting, of the failure of the city to assimilate the passage of time and the changes brought by it. Hence Mbembe’s description of an “architecture of hysteria” that reiterates the “pathological structure and hysteria

inherited from the racial city” (2008, 62). The Freudian allusion here is well founded; the idea that “hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences” (Freud 1893, 7) – that is, from blockages of unprocessed subjective history – speaks to the retroactive time evinced in such architectural forms. Nostalgia, realised here as decorative formal element, works to ward off the movement of time, to elide the pace, the reality, the *necessity* of political change:

The architecture of hysteria in contemporary South Africa is the result of a painful, shocking encounter with a radical alterity set loose by the collapse of the racial city. Faced with the sudden estrangement from the familiar resulting from the collapse of the racial city, this architecture aims to return to the “archaic” as a way of freezing rapid changes in the temporal and political structures of the surrounding world. It is an architecture characterized by the attachment to a lost object that used to provide comfort [...] [I]t allows the white subject to hallucinate the presence of what has been irretrievably lost [...] the hallucination has its origins in a form of white nostalgia. (Mbembe 2008, 62–63)

Mbembe aptly stresses how the post-apartheid injunction to remember is replaced with different and more comforting imperative – that of investing in a nostalgic time that (effectively) never was. What is brought to light here is the “drag effect” of a resistant temporality in which a changing historical constellation is forever delayed. But we can go further here, by noting the fetishistic component of this architecture. The gaucheness of such attempted fixations in (with) the imaginary past is hard to deny; the factor of kitsch, that is to say, must feature as a factor in our analytic considerations. We can supplement Mbembe’s characterisation here by drawing on Freud’s (1950) theorisation of screen memories. Such memories, typically vivid in nature even if they appear focused on an apparently trivial facet of experience, are a compromise between repressed elements and defences against them.

Part of what is so interesting about screen-memories is the amplification of formal features they present. Screen-memories entail a type of stasis: one scene within an associative train has been accentuated, made “extra-memorable,” so as to lock out a less acceptable memory or implication. Such memories are over-compensations by means of *form* for what cannot be retrieved. A similar logic holds in fetishism, where there is likewise a “hyper-cathexis” (of the fetish object/activity) working to the ends of defence. In the screen-memory, the cathexis (libidinal investment) is realised in embellishments of formal features. The secret of the function of such nostalgic architecture thus lies in its form: its very artificiality – vulgarity, some might say – holds the clue, evinces its role as simultaneously contrivance and shield. Such architectural features are there to distract out historical attentions, to disrupt the capacity of our historical imaginations, to hold back time.⁶

What is in question here is not simply a temporary defensive manoeuvre, a regressive attempt merely to slow the time of transformation. The invocation of a fantasised past has ambitions of permanence, of fixity, of change forestalled indefinitely. It approximates rather the description Lacan (1994) gives of the cherished fantasmatic scene, which he compares to a scene in a film that has been frozen so as to prevent the next image – that of castration – from taking place.

What then is the time of fantasy, and how might such a conceptualisation allow us to further augment Mbembe’s analysis? The time of fantasy is that of stasis. It is the temporality of fixity, of suspension, but also, one should note, of anxiety, of apprehension. A dual operation is involved here. There is the mechanism of delay, which, like the screen memory, extracts a scene from the sequence to which it

belongs, thus deferring any progressive working through, effectively obstructing the flow of time. This does not mean that all of time grinds to a halt; the work of arresting movement often entails a bifurcation. The slowing of time requires the double-time of hastened labours, the need, for example, to ceaselessly repeat a scene, to rework it, constantly revise it, tinker with its details; this is the anxious work of procrastinating elaboration.

This links interestingly to the idea of fetishistic time, a mode of temporality that is both protective and reiterative, a time of endlessly repeated circuits of enjoyment, indeed, of masturbatory *jouissance*. And this seems precisely the way to develop upon an apparent shortcoming of Mbembe's discussion. While Mbembe stresses the factor of hysterical reticence (a pushing back of the future) he neglects to discuss a related affective component, namely that of a *loving* commitment to what was (the pull of the past). What is involved in nostalgia then is not only, as in fantasy, a type of active evasion – in this case the alterity of the present (psychoanalytically, an instance of castration), but the reiteration of profoundly loving ties to the past. The fantasy, psychoanalytically, is a shield against castration, and yet also a vehicle of *jouissance*, a type of masturbatory prop, which easily enough incurs powerful affectionate bonds. We might put it this way: if, psychically, one option is frightening, then one will likely experience a “spontaneous” affection for an option which to some degree screens out the threatening scenario. Love itself can here be considered a defensive formation. Under such circumstances, the subject of fantasy will come to experience a host of affects that have less “essentially” to do with the loved object itself than what it enables one to avoid, bypass. This is missed by Mbembe: the fact of an erotic (“libidinal”) relation to the past.

Although Mbembe (2008) does not use the word, what comes most forcibly to mind in the course of his depiction of post-apartheid temporality, be it via traumatic history locked into cycles of repetition or through the proliferation of regressive schemas of nostalgia, is a sense of *petrification*. As we will see, this is a term that applies equally well to Crapanzano's (1985) analysis of the apartheid era.

Deadened time: the de-realised present

In the opening pages of *Waiting*, Crapanzano (1985) shares an anecdote. One of his research participants, a man who had recently emigrated from South Africa, offered the following: “I left South Africa because I couldn't stand the waiting any longer for something, anything to happen” (1985, 43). This was the oft-repeated refrain that provided a degree of unity to the many stories, written accounts and personal narratives he had been collecting – *Waiting for something, anything, to happen*. The theme of immobilisation, of temporal limitation is thus apparent in both Crapanzano (1985) and Mbembe (2008, 2013), despite both the varied disciplinary perspectives and the historical distance separating their respective analyses.

The waiting that Crapanzano's attention was drawn to was not waiting in the most literal sense, but waiting as – to drawn a term from contemporary affect theory – a general *atmosphere* (Anderson 2009) of consternation. This was not waiting as pedantic activity, but a far more encompassing state of agitation and unease. Temporal experience here becomes a shorthand figure for a variety of anxious affects – dread, angst, guilt, a sense of being overwhelmed – none of which, in and of themselves, were enough to encapsulate the state of malaise he was struggling to articulate. The banality of waiting, the everydayness of the experience, furthermore,

works well to counteract any metaphysical or melodramatic connotations to this characterisation of temporality. Waiting understood in this way – and the parallels with Mbembe (2013) are again striking – involves a kind of incapacity toward the future, and a de-realisation of the present:

Waiting means to be oriented in time in a special way. It is directed toward the future – not an expansive future, however, but a constricted one that closes in on the present. In waiting, the present is always secondary to the future. It is held in expectation [...] It is a sort of holding action – a lingering. (In extreme forms waiting can lead to paralysis). In waiting, the present loses its focus in the now. The world in its immediacy slips away; it is derealized [...] It is numb, muted, dead. It's only meaning lies in the future – in the arrival or non-arrival of the object of waiting. (Crapanzano 1985, 45)

The paradoxical temporality of waiting is wonderfully described here. On the one hand waiting means that the present is very much premised upon the future; placed in parentheses by it; made subjunctive to it; even, perhaps, undermined, *virtualised* by it. Its “substantiality” is eroded. Yet on the other hand the immediacy of the now – Crapanzano nicely distinguishes between the generality of “the present” and the specificity of “the now” – is heightened, underscored by the tension between the future *as expected* and the present as thus diluted.

What is perhaps uncomfortably apparent here is the degree to which Crapanzano’s characterisation of late-apartheid temporality chimes with that of the post-apartheid era. In both such cases, the anxious interchange of an unstable present and an unknown future seems crucial, as does a type of affective de-realisation. We can bring a different analytical framework to bear here, both so as to stress an apparent blind spot in the Crapanzano’s analysis – the past is not particularly stressed in his thoughts on the futurity of waiting – and so to further develop the factor of anxiously virtualised experience.

I have in mind here Freud’s (1950) notion of deferred action (*nachträglichkeit*), that is, the psychological temporality of the retroactive, which disrupts linear or chronological time. Historical events, from this perspective, remain latent, effectively incomplete, subject to the contingencies of later circumstances through which they might be reactivated in unexpected ways. The ambiguities of Freud’s notion are multiple, particularly so in cases of concatenated or “overrunning” histories such as that of the post-apartheid era. There is, firstly, the idea that the true significance of a past event will only be realised in a subsequent future, once retroactively triggered. Neither static nor consolidated then, the fragmentary residues of lingering histories themselves constitute latent modes of the present. What this ensures – a second important point – is the virtual quality of the present which, underscored by an as-of-yet-indefinite past, remains itself precarious, open to further re-articulation. To speak of apartheid *nachträglichkeit* means then that this history has not as yet been fully resolved, that it underlies the present, conditioning what it – and its prospective futures – have *not as yet become*. We need add to this, thirdly, the prospect of the movement from the future to the past, the retroactive “determination” of *what has been* by *what is to come*. This aspect of deferred action means that we are caught within the anxious possibility that the re-visioning of our past will necessarily change what “we will have been.” Waiting thus is not merely an anxious state by virtue of how it relates to an indeterminate future; its anxiety is also the result of the as-of-yet-uncertain influence of *the past* on what is yet to come.

The pertinence of the psychoanalytic notion of retroactive causality to the post-apartheid context seems immediately evident. One might contend that the simultaneity of two eras – as signified by the ambiguous contraction “(post)apartheid” – provides us with a case in point of historical *nachträglichkeit*, the sobering possibility, that is to say, of “the post-apartheid” being viewed as apartheid’s deferred action.

Waiting, is, clearly, an inclusive term, spanning an array of experiential phenomena; it is, moreover, a complex mode of temporality. Aware of the need to more carefully qualify the concept, Crapanzano appeals to a series of theoretical resources including, perhaps most importantly, psychoanalysis. The psychical dimension of waiting – and, by extrapolation, of modes of temporality more generally – is stressed when Crapanzano insists that waiting is “infused with desire” (1985, 26).

We can hence distinguish between waiting in its positive polarity – waiting as happily expectant state, as *longing* – from its negative polarity, in which one awaits not something desirable, but rather something that is dreaded. Psychoanalytically we might add that such polarities of desire represent not separate conditions, as much as different facets of a single ambivalent complex of affects. The proximity of wishfulness and the nightmarish in dreams is perhaps enough to make the point: desire and dread exist in an intertwined form. This seems to do justice to the fact that agitation features even in happily expectant states of waiting, and to the presence of disturbing forms of arousal – of *jouissance* – even in conditions of dread. This overlap of affective states is an indication that we are, once again, in the terrain of fantasy. This is not a point registered by Crapanzano, and it is linked to what I shall go on to identify as a crucial shortcoming of his account.

None of the above is to suggest that a general affective atmosphere doesn’t prevail in a given populace. Moreover, a variety of adjacent (socio-economic or racially designated) groups, each of which is affected by the same broadly suspended sense of time, may nonetheless manifest different relations to a dominant mode of temporality.⁷ Crapanzano is alive to such complexities, noting that dominant and dominated alike are subjected to the affective climate installed by apartheid: “Both the dominant and the dominated are equally caught within [the system of apartheid]” (1985, 20). South Africa as a whole, he affirms, “is caught in a deadened time of waiting” (1985, xix). However,

For most whites, waiting is compounded by fear; for most Blacks, however great their despair, waiting is illuminated by hope, by a belief that time is on their side. For coloureds and Asians, there is both fear and hope in waiting. (1985, xix)

This remark once again points to the role of temporality in the subjectivity of political change. Hence no doubt the degree to which temporality often features as such a vital feature of political rhetoric. Staying with the South African context, we might take as an example the idea, often asserted by Pan-Africanists, the likes of Robert Sobukwe, and proponents of Black Consciousness, that time – indeed *history* – was most definitely on their side, that historical change in South Africa was inevitable, and was – to use yet another resonant phrase – “only a matter of time.” Such a political rhetoric of temporality is itself often paradoxical, both encouraging a sense of subjective agency, and yet also locating agency in history itself.⁸ Or differently put: meaningful political agency means stimulating not only a broader structural sense of temporal agency but animating also a subjective temporal imaginary alongside it – precisely what, according to Mbembe (2008, 2013) is being impeded in many post-apartheid contexts. This links us back to the terms of the foregoing

discussion: one means of desubjectivising structures, of transforming a subjective relation to oppressive structures, lies precisely in formulating an alternative temporal imaginary.

Expectancy ... and dread

Crapanzano makes sustained reference to psychoanalysis in considering the particular temporality of the oppressor, distinguishing here between phenomena of fear and anxiety. The longstanding psychoanalytic distinction is well known: phobia has a clear object – something one is afraid of – whereas anxiety, by definition, is free-floating, cut adrift from a prospective object which cannot be located (Freud 1926). The difference between a well-founded fear, say a clearly defined scene of disaster, and a potentially far more disconcerting and undefined *atmosphere* of anxiety is apparent in one of Crapanzano's chief conclusions:

[T]o wait for something that is undetermined is a terrible kind of waiting, worse [...] than to wait for something specific. To make waiting more specific, those who wait can postulate a symbolic object to reduce anxiety, but they risk 'sacrificing "reality" to "psychic need".' (1985, 46)

Crapanzano's argument here, developed via a paraphrasing of key Freudian concepts, will prove important in the narrative extract I introduce in the next section. It suffices here to flag two important ideas. Firstly, that states of anxiety may vacillate with periods of more clearly defined phobia. Secondly, that subjects may prioritise a phobic scenario, and, more than this, that they might play their part in actively (if unconsciously) constructing just such a scene. Simply put: those who are subjected to the dread of ominous waiting may prefer to convince themselves of the terrible inevitability of a projected object of fear rather than give themselves up to an ever-undefined condition of anxiety.

The idea that Mbembe gives such forceful expression to the above, the notion of subjective incapacitation as mediated by temporality, is likewise present in Crapanzano's analysis. The act of waiting taxes the imaginative and intersubjective capacities of such subjects. They lose the ability to temporarily negate their identities, to "be imaginatively open to the complex and never very certain reality around them" (xix). By contrast, they close off, and "create a kind of psychological apartheid" (xix).

Crapanzano's speculative account is subsequently supported by a layering of empirical details pertaining particularly to the lives of apartheid's dominant class:

The life of those white South Africans with whom I talked [...] impressed me as somehow truncated. I found signs of anxiety, helplessness, vulnerability, and rage that were not very far from the surface. Their experience was not open-ended, expansive, and adventurous. It did not elicit optimism and positive excitement. It was limited. Their present seemed devoid of the vitality that I associate with leading a fulfilling life. It seemed mechanical, numb, and muted [...] It was infused with uncertainty or at times what appeared to me to be a compensatory overcertainty, a stubborn and harsh pragmatism. (1985, 44)

The indefinite delay of extended waiting produces a hardening; in the place of receptivity and "negative capability" there is instead rigidity, indeed – to draw on the metaphor I introduced above – a *petrification*, in both prospective senses of the term.

One further aspect of Crapanzano's (1985) account is worth stressing: the factor of the missing – or difficult to locate – object of fear. We have already made the psychoanalytic qualification that anxiety is ostensibly objectless. Yet, while apparently endorsing such a qualification, Crapanzano nonetheless persists in speaking of fear rather than anxiety. This, moreover, is a paradoxical and shifting type of fear which is not what it at first appears to be, and that seems to avoid encapsulation in any definite object:

I came to understand something about [white] South African society. Fear is pervasive [...] it is not [...] the fear of change: the loss of power, status, and wealth, “the good life” [...] It is, I believe, a much more primordial fear that comes from the absence of any possibility of a vital relationship with most of the people around one. It is unspoken, pervasive fear that has its source in apartheid and that maintains apartheid in all its virulence. (Crapanzano 1985, 21)

This is perhaps the least-satisfying aspect of Crapanzano's analysis. True enough, he offers an articulate description of the role of fear in the libidinal economy of apartheid society, a society which can quite rightly be understood along the lines he offers, as a type of deadened and deadening life.⁹ Yet while his commentary pinpoints the impasses of (inter)subjectivity (“the absence of vital relations”) that surely did and that *do* characterise apartheid and post-apartheid realms respectively, it is nevertheless a conceptual dead-end to point to a type of “primordial fear” by way of a final explanation. Virtually any fear or aversive behaviour could be explained away in this fashion; and such a prototypical (or, indeed, “primordial”) affect that potentially explains all fears, actually effectively explains none. An important piece of Crapanzano's conceptual puzzle remains missing.

Apartheid “immortality”

Thus far I have relied on existing literature in order to highlight a series of related modes of (post)apartheid temporality. I want now to examine an extract from a narrative contributed to the Apartheid Archive (<http://www.apartheidarchive.org/site/>). My focus in what follows changes accordingly, from the domain of broader political and ethnographic social theorisation to a more confined empirical example. My analysis will extend many of the ideas introduced above – particularly Crapanzano's (1985) notion of anxious waiting – while adding several additional components. I have selected the text not only because it resonates with many of the notions of temporality already discussed, but also because it links aspects of apartheid and post-apartheid temporalities. The text itself occupies an intermediary position: while it is of an apartheid experience, it has been recalled and reformulated in a post-apartheid era. The same is often noted of the Apartheid Archive's collection of narratives more generally: while they ostensibly aim to shed light on the apartheid era, these texts are often far more revealing of the priorities and injunctions of the post-apartheid context (Eagle and Bowman 2010).

A brief description of the AAP will contextualise the narrative. The AAP (see www.apartheidarchive.org) is a collaborative research group that aims to collect narrative accounts from a wide range of South Africans about their experiences of racism during apartheid. A key objective of AAP has been to document the experiences of “ordinary” South Africans whose accounts may not otherwise have been recorded. The project has aimed, moreover, to explore how such lingering

experiences of racism, social division and racialised oppression remain important – if often unspoken – factors in the constitution of the post-apartheid present. As is noted in the project’s original research document: “[apartheid’s] pernicious effects on our inner-worlds; on memory, identity and subjectivity, continue to constrain the promises of a truly post-apartheid South Africa” (<http://www.apartheidarchive.org/site/>). The agenda of the project has not simply been to record and collect narratives accounts, but to engage thoughtfully and theoretically with the narratives (see Bowman, Duncan, and Sonn 2010; Duncan, Stevens, and Sonn 2012; Hook and Long 2011; Stevens, Duncan, and Hook 2013; Stevens and Laubscher 2010). As such, the AAP encourages both a commitment to personal remembering and a joint intellectual commitment to investigating narratives rather than accepting them at face value (Hook and Long 2011).

The narrative that I move now to discuss is notable in several respects. It very powerfully invokes a sense of suffocating or *never-moving* time, a fact rather cryptically alluded to in the given title of the piece: “immortality.” The narrative, furthermore, which depicts a scene in the life of a boy growing up in 1980s Johannesburg, conforms largely to the literary genre of the short story. It succeeds in conjuring up a child’s sense of a white suburban household in which something is vaguely amiss. Rather than cite the entire (rather lengthy) narrative, I have opted, in the following section, to summarise the story’s opening scenes.

In an attempt to alleviate his boredom, the young protagonist of the story finds his way into the neglected and uninhabited “maid’s room” that exists as an extension to home in which he and his parents live. The room, usually locked up and out of bounds, has, on this occasion, been left open by his mother, and the boy wastes little time in exploring this prohibited space. He notices his mother’s neglected sewing things – needles, bolts of fabric, a large pair of black scissors – but these do not hold his attention for long. He is marginally more interested in the contents of a discarded toolbox. Gradually the range of objects he unearths become more ominous, as do the memories and prohibitions associated with them. He finds an axe, a Stanley-knife, a rusted saw with a jagged blade. He recalls his father’s warning that dangerous tools must always be locked away, a warning that upon reflection poses the question: “Why?” Although he is initially reticent, sensing that he is about to break some unspoken family taboo, he peers inside a series of old packing-trunks and finds “a series of discarded African curios, a hide-covered Zulu shield, a short assegai, a knobkerrie and [...] a policeman’s truncheon, made of ebony”.

What is striking up until this point in the narrative is the degree to which the story is being told through objects rather than people, via the depersonalised world of things. Also, whether the author has intended it or not, the scene of the boy’s rummaging around in the dusty, neglected trunks, works perfectly to symbolise his search through the contents of the family’s repressed history. Similarly noteworthy is the succession of objects, which, in the movement from the mundane and domestic to the more overtly threatening and “negrophobic,” effectively unpeels the layers of white (un)conscious preoccupation with the figure of the black intruder. What comes to the fore here is the anxious white South African preoccupation – something arguably exacerbated rather than diminished in the post-apartheid context – with the spectre of black violence.

The last in this series of objects – the assegai, truncheon and knobkerrie – particular – elicit a stream of images in the boy’s imagination. In the ensuing epiphany, he succeeds in piecing together fragments of a family history that had often before

been hinted at, but that had never been fully revealed to him. He pictures what he takes to be a pivotal moment before he was born, a scene in which his father, who had been a policeman, aggressively assaults a black man. Let us turn now directly to the text:

The image that he attaches to the truncheon is surprisingly vivid. It is an imagined memory, of his father as a policeman, striking a black man, delivering a shattering blow to the back of the man's head. This imagining brings with it a texture, the projected sensation of what the back of this man's head would have felt like, the scratchy surface of thinly curled black hair, the opacity of the deeply-pigmented skin [...]. He can't place the "memory"; it must be a fabrication, but so vividly is he able to picture it, so palpable the sensations, that in some or other way, it must have occurred.

The tangle of suspicions, the morass of unasked questions about his family's past is now clear. The disarray of incoherent ideas and misgivings, the clutter of naïve presumptions, avoidances and fears [...] has now assembled into a whole truth. This is what had come before him [...]. His father had delivered a blow to a man's head, a blow whose consequences could not be undone [...]. And now he understands: they will live in a condition of suspended guilt, in a state of subliminal fear, for the reprisal that may never come.

We could read this anxious time as a variation on Crapanzano's (1985) conceptualisation of waiting. Yet it would be misleading to do so; this expectant condition is different in several important respects. It is a state of unconscious expectancy for a retaliation that seems forever delayed yet. True enough, it is predicated on an awful yet unclear vision of the future, and thus shares something of the futurity emphasised by Crapanzano. It is however more fundamentally anchored in the past, and it entails a dreadful sense of inevitability ("consequences [that] could not be undone"). It is, essentially, a form of dread made so by the forever-suspended threat of retribution that has made it an immortal, unending condition. This is different to Crapanzano's notion of waiting, which stresses the de-realisation of the present via an anxiety-provokingly open-ended future.

One has in the narrative a sense of the gradual advance of traumatic material. As in the clinic, a repressed traumatic nucleus is nowhere directly evident, yet its displaced presence is nonetheless apparent in a fragmentary and distributed manner, in many of the arbitrary objects and features of the surrounding domain. This is why so many of the household objects in the narrative take on an ominous quality. In such a state of repressed fear, each such object, from the tools to the African souvenirs, is a potential weapon, an instrument of violence. This time of suspension is made all the worse inasmuch as the fear – that of attack by one or more mistreated or maligned black men – is itself largely repressed, leaving an undefined anxiety in its wake.¹⁰

This attention to mechanisms of repression – to how fear is displaced, redistributed, made diffuse – opens a fresh perspective on the above-noted shortcoming of Crapanzano's (1985) analysis, i.e. his characterisation of the "primordial" aspect of white apartheid fear. This is what Crapanzano aims at: a description of a type of fear-in-waiting that shades in and out of anxiety; that is at the same time non-definitive and elementary; which is so primal as to avoid concretisation in any one object. I have already argued that if we are to adequately grasp the anxious de-realisation of waiting, we need to take into account the factor of the past, or, more accurately, the dimension of deferred action (Freud's *nachträglichkeit*), which destabilises both what the present and the future might be. The foregoing textual example makes this,

the factor of the weight of the past, abundantly clear. It profits us, furthermore, to emphasise the role of fantasy alongside that of deferred action here; both such concepts stress the role of the particular subject's past as a frame of sorts – a type of suspended disposition – for how the present and the future will come to impact them. Yet this is not the only way to improve upon Crapanzano's account. The complex notion of fear he describes is surely better conceptualised by exploring how it animates and deploys prevailing societal stereotypes, and, furthermore, by stressing its repressed dynamic and unconscious aspects.

The repression in question is of course partial, it is – and the story illustrates this point very nicely – intermittent, continually in the process of coming undone. Emphasising this – the fact of a never fully secure repression – gives us a sense of the mobility, the haziness, the omnipresent haunting quality of the fear that Crapanzano (1985) hoped to capture by referring to “the primordial.” The uncertain relationship between fear and anxiety can likewise be illuminated in this way. When the conditions of repression are in place and the related defences are working well, then the phobic object recedes and a more general state of anxiety – itself varying in degree – arises. In more precarious conditions however when these defences are weakened, or when a series of discomforting signifiers come to light, then a more overtly fearful condition comes to the fore.

We can be more precise yet. The atmosphere of a vague and undefined dread that the story sketches is the result of at least two operations of the unconscious. It has, for a start, been partially separated off from its most direct phobic object, that of the dangerous and violent black man. This is of course one variant on Fanon's phobogenic object in *Black Skin White Masks* ([1952] 1986): the violent and rapacious black criminal. Signifier and affect have thus been – however provisionally – detached. The psychical operation of displacement is in effect here; in a way similar to obsessional rituals, a series of anxious activities (locking up the outside room, securing the household tools) has taken the place of a dreadful thought that cannot be confronted directly. Secondly, the affect itself, a composite of fear and guilt, has been attenuated, such that it is not directly experienced as such, but occurs rather as a cloud of unease, a sense that something – something difficult to pinpoint – is amiss. Such a redistribution of affect brings with it pros and cons: the severity of phobic experience is diluted; yet virtually everything becomes a vaguely and potentially fearful object as a result. (We might note, incidentally, that the feeling conveyed by the story, the sense of stagnancy, of social and subjective malaise, is not dissimilar to Crapanzano's (1985) description of the inhibition of creativity, enjoyment and social intercourse brought about by oppressive states of waiting.)

I noted earlier, following Crapanzano's (1985) paraphrasing of Freud, that the attempt to reduce anxiety often results in sacrificing “reality” to “psychic need.” This seems precisely the relation on display in the extract, where a fearful eventuality is, as it were, “actively” constructed, “willingly” made, even if in a largely unconscious capacity. This perhaps helps to explain why such dreadful scenes of vengeful and racialised violence are believed in, why racist caricatures of black criminals are constantly (if, for the most part *tacitly*) affirmed and reiterated in the white post-apartheid imaginary. Such stereotypical figures are believed in, because – as is the case with all fantasy – they are “more real than real,” and because a clearly delineated phobic object is invariably preferable to an objectless state of anxiety.

There is a further conceptual gain in qualifying the fear as unconscious, subject to repression. Here it pays to underline that the story, and the fantasmatic scenario it

includes, is of childhood. Likewise worth noting is the fact that not all of what is remembered within the context of the narrative is overtly anxious or fearful. Take for instance the last lines of the story, in which the character of the boy dwells of the memory of an ornamental wooden box (a smaller version of the trunks? another repository of family secrets?) in his parents' bedroom:

This box, with its unpolished brass hinges, its unfinished, grainy interior, will stay with him forever. Whatever location it may be moved to, it will always pull him back to the open window in his parents' bedroom that overlooks the back garden where the dogs play, where the leaking tap feeds the sprinkler, on a Saturday afternoon.

It is not only the temporality of dread that is contained within the story. The narrative speaks also of the endless persistence of memory that lives on, as sharp and bright as the moment it was first experienced. This unconscious preservation of childhood and early family experience underlines for us the potential indestructibility of the fear – and guilt – in question. It stresses, moreover, the *inter-generational* quality of what is being conveyed. (What is indestructible can here be read as that which is continually past on, never fully processed or “worked through”). To bypass this facet of the repressed is to miss out on a fertile avenue of analysis, one that is both empirically-rich and more historically-grounded than the murky postulate of “primordial fear.” The concept of transgenerational guilt would, incidentally, provide a novel perspective on the narrative discussed above, drawing attention to those facets of the child's environment and future life haunted by a political past that has been inadequately symbolised, or “de-repressed.”¹¹ What such a possible research agenda alerts us to is the possibility that white guilt (unconscious or otherwise) may yet be ripening and may yet be more vividly expressed (or repressed) by a subsequent generation of white South Africans.

The above narrative benefits in another way also. Contrary to Mbembe's (2008, 2013) more general theoretical speculations on the sociality of temporality, this account is anchored in the texture of a given subjectivity. Whilst this might sometimes be considered a problem – a reduction of the complexity of the social to the parameters of the merely subjective – it may also represent a genuine analytical opportunity, certainly so if we allow that the domain of individual experience can, under certain circumstances, reflect with heightened clarity aspects of broader repressed social experience. A more general conclusion can be offered here. If one takes seriously the hope of the *de-subjectivisation* of social structure, the aim, that is to say, of overturning constrictive or inhibiting forms of temporality, then we surely cannot forego that which psychoanalysis has always prioritised: the sustained engagement with the particularities of individual subjectivities.

Super-egoic temporality, or the time of retribution

Does the above narrative contain a moral, perhaps about how racism engenders its own fearful sense of future recrimination? The disturbance of temporality in question here is the result of racist social structure, and more specifically, of an instance of racist violence – real or imagined – that has produced its own fearful sense of the inevitability of recrimination. Importantly – and this is crucial to appreciating the psychoanalytic contribution to (post)apartheid temporalities – the temporality in question is mediated by fantasy, by the realm of unconscious belief. Of course, the idea that racism generates its own anxieties in an endlessly self-perpetuating way

not a new thesis; this idea is easily enough found in Bhabha's (1994) early essays. Nonetheless, stressing how this facet of racism results in a particular experience of time – the temporality of retribution – does constitute a contribution to thinking the temporality of the post-apartheid. The story evokes this dimension of temporality subtly, but effectively; it arouses a sense of the stagnancy and heaviness of time that refuses to pass, a congealed time, whose intimations of recrimination are permanent, ineradicable.¹²

What cultural tropes might help us further articulate the state of fearful expectancy invoked in the above narrative? As already noted, what is in question is not merely waiting, but a time of *suspended judgement*. A host of mythical themes converge here. The passage invokes themes of purgatory, of being placed in limbo, the idea of a Judgment Day, a time of reckoning, and the biblical injunction – particularly apt given the above narrative – that the sins of the father must be paid for by the son. This alerts us to a further consideration not explored by Crapanzano (1985). It is not just a sense of the inevitability of change that underscores the anxiety of white waiting during (and after) apartheid, but all the mythical – and hence fantastic – resonances set in play by the ideas of fate, by the presumption that there might be a balancing of the scales of justice.

It is often remarked that South Africa's transition was secured without a blood bath or a civil war (du Preez 2013). This observation is sometimes accompanied by the remark that apartheid's white beneficiaries were never made to pay, that they were not held accountable for the past (Twidle 2013). True as this may be, one should not overlook the fact that the suspension of punishment, much like the proverbial Sword of Damocles, often brings with it a psychological punishment all of its own. Pilger's (1996) political pronouncement that "apartheid did not die" is given a new inflection here: the guilt for apartheid has not died either. That is to say, there are presumably those within the broad mass of apartheid's beneficiaries who feel guilty for the past, who believe – perhaps despite their conscious selves – that they deserve punishment, some, furthermore, who maintain the unconscious conviction that such punishment will, at some indeterminate point, arrive.

There is something of the terrorising logic of the superego to this experience of delayed retribution. One's anxiety is increased the more a promised punishment does not materialise; by being forever delayed, the punishment is indefinitely extended, because the penalty cannot be paid, the scales of justice cannot be balanced. Perhaps the best psychoanalytic description then of the temporality described in the above narrative would simply be: the time of the superego.

To say that whites were not made to pay for apartheid is not of course to say that this idea was never muted in some or other form, or indeed, that such a possibility has not featured as a(n unconscious) possibility within the minds of many white South Africans. Quite the contrary – the idea, even in its more subtle forms, proves to be a reoccurring motif in South African public culture. One might cite here Desmond Tutu's muted "wealth tax" to be imposed on whites; the performative role of Julius Malema as a type of white folk-devil (Falkof 2014); the Economic Freedom Fighter's (EFF) alleged assertion that "the honeymoon is over for white people in South Africa" (Boraine 2014, 137); or the EFF promise to redistribute the country's wealth, to expropriate land without compensation, and to nationalise mines and banks, etc.

Might this delayed fear of retribution provide a novel perspective on the ever-present phenomenon of white crime fear in South Africa? It is routinely noted that

middle-class white fears of crime seem disproportionate – even if not wholly irrational – given that it is often poor and working-class, which is to say *black* – South Africans suffer the most debilitating effects of crime.

In a brief discussion of “Some Character Types Met with in Psychoanalytic Work,” Freud (1916) speaks of subjects who suffer from oppressive feelings of guilt and who appear to seek out forms of punishment that will allow them a sense of relief from such a free-floating sense of guiltiness. In “Civilization and its Discontents” (1930) Freud remarks: “there are types of patients who are not aware of their sense of guilt, or who only feel it as a tormenting uneasiness, a kind of anxiety” (135). The punishments that the subject subsequently unconsciously gravitates toward may take on a variety of different forms, from accidental acts perpetrated against the self, to putting one’s self in dangerous situations, to reckless behaviours. Interestingly, for Freud, there are many such subjects who remain unaware of their sense of guilt, Freud (1930) insists “who only feel it as a tormenting uneasiness, a kind of anxiety [...] a sort of *malaise*” (135). Counterintuitive as it may appear then, it is perhaps not so odd that such guilt-affected white South Africans might unconsciously conspire in orchestrating – or wishing for – the circumstances of their own punishment. To explore a variation on the same conjectural point: feverish paranoia about crime might then be said to be highest in those who carry a repressed sense of guilt for apartheid, the belief that they deserve punishment.

The link that I have treated somewhat tenuously, and subjected to a psychoanalytic reading – that between crime-fear and punishment – is given a far more direct expression by Pretorius (2014), who comments that white crime fear in South Africa has been produced in discourse precisely “as a way for blacks to make whites pay for apartheid,” after all, this was something blacks “were denied the chance to do by the formal negotiation and the Truth and Reconciliation Process” (2014, 29). This factor of discomfort at not being punished, is given eloquent expression by Antjie Krog, a journalist and poet who offered one of the most heartfelt and searching engagements with South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

White people were prepared for the worst at the hands of a black government. What they weren’t prepared for was to be forgiven. It made and still makes whites deeply uncomfortable [...] [for] we understand hatred [...] we admire revenge. (2009, 206)

In closing this section let me cite a literary example that perhaps provides a more eloquent expression of the unconscious dynamics of retribution (the wish for, or relief in, punishment) in the post-apartheid context. I have in mind the figure of Lucy in Coetzee’s (1999) *Disgrace*, who resignedly accepts the violent attack and rape she is subjected to by the black men who had previously worked for her. The fact that she wishes no form of retribution on her assailants is incomprehensible to her father, David, who himself is horribly wounded in the attack. The difference of response of these two characters can be read as indicative of two “guilt-positions,” that is to say, two subjective orientations – and, indeed, two associated modes of temporal experience – relative to white post-apartheid anxieties of retribution. We should add here that even though Lucy has endured a horrific ordeal, the point could nonetheless be made, psychoanalytically, that this event entails a paradoxically consoling quality, inasmuch as it implies a balancing of the scales, the enactment of a brutal punishment that will alleviate the anxiety of further retribution and guilt.¹³

Conclusion

I have argued elsewhere (Hook 2013) that the temporality of South Africa's (post) apartheid period of political transition is unique, a time in which accelerations and apparent "slow-downs" and reversals of history co-exist alongside anxious periods of stasis, suspension and retroaction. Apt a characterisation as this may be, it is hard, particularly given the preceding discussion, to avoid a predominant motif in the analysis of (post)apartheid temporality, namely, that of a type of arrested time – or petrified life – whether this be understood along the lines of repetition, nostalgia fixity, the suspension of anxious/fearful waiting, or the time of guilt.

What then have we learnt as a result of the juxtaposition of the foregoing contributions to the conceptualisation of (post)apartheid temporality? Well, we have, for a start and as a result of adopting a psychoanalytic perspective, been able to foreground a series of missed analytical opportunities in the literature. This is true both at the level of particular concepts (repetition compulsion, screen memories, libidinal attachment, deferred action, repression) and in terms of a series of associated *areas* of analysis that a psychoanalytic perspective would accordingly prioritise (the material of individual subjectivity, the domain of fantasy, the dynamic operation of the unconscious, and, potentially, the dimension of intergenerational affects).

Secondly, we have been confronted with the somewhat jarring realisation that the contemporary post-apartheid exhibits a series of striking similarities to the temporality of the late apartheid era. Crapanzano's (1985) concepts of deadened time and de-realised experience correspond notably with Mbembe's (2008, 2013) ideas of the deathliness of repetition and the virtuality of nostalgic fixity, a fact which allows us to consider the disturbing prospect, that the post-apartheid present is the deferred action of apartheid itself. This suggests that the temporality of suspension that characterised the closing months of apartheid is not unique. Nor is it separated by a radical discontinuity from select aspects of post-apartheid experience. Indeed, the "futurity" of Crapanzano's account, and the anxious interchange of an unstable present and an unknown future, could be said to pertain in many ways as much to the contemporary post-apartheid as to the late apartheid context. In this respect one cannot but recall Gordimer's (1983) Gramscian declaration that in South Africa the "historical coordinates don't fit life any longer" (22), that the late apartheid era was tantamount to a period of interregnum. This points us in the direction of a future research project, one which investigates how post-apartheid experience, like that of late apartheid, might still be qualified as a type of interregnum, a period where – thanks again to Gramsci – the old is still dying, the new is still struggling to be born.

I made brief mention above of Browne's (2014) notion of polytemporality, that is, the idea of a complex of varied intersecting modalities of temporality that result in the production of particular experiences and discursive formations. As fascinating as the literature on adjacent or combined temporalities is (Bastian 2011; Chakrabarty 2000; Fabian 1983), it often leaves unspecified the specificity of the relation between the temporal modes in question. This leads to the third speculative conclusion of this paper, which is best phrased as a question. Might it be the case that the varied forms of arrested temporality discussed above (repetition, nostalgic fixity, the deadened experience of anxious/fearful waiting, the unending time of retribution) come to work in tandem, in a combined or mutually supportive manner? The benefit of the conceptualisation of petrified life is apparent here: these ostensibly separate

and distinct modes of temporality can be read as interlocking forms, as linked temporal modes, each of which plays its part in engendering a type of historical immobilisation characterised by states of suspension, stasis, or fear. This would suggest that the historical categories of oppressor and oppressed – apartheid’s beneficiaries and victims alike – each (perhaps unintentionally, unconsciously) potentially play their part in forms of temporal resistance to structural change. While we do not have enough evidence to convincingly mount such a claim here – the focus of the current discussion is, admittedly, predominantly on white experiences of temporality – we may allow it stand in the form of a hypothesis: are there varying forms of arrested time, of petrified life, that unite what may otherwise be understood as distinct or even oppositional social or political groupings?

Before closing, it is worthwhile pointing to an apparent limitation of the above approach. Despite the benefits of analytical appraisals of how modalities of time become operative in relation to specific historical situations (“apartheid,” the “post-colonial” etc.), do such attempts not implicitly lend themselves to normative understandings of how time properly or realistically unfolds?¹⁴ The implicit presumption is that outside the range of various political forms of disturbance, temporality would be somehow neutral, evenly paced, lacking in defensive distortions. Perhaps the only satisfying response to this challenge is simply to note that psychical time – presumably much like psychical experience itself – is never merely neutral, objective. Temporality thus understood cannot exist in a state evacuated of fantasmatic contents; it is always an exception to what might be considered purely symbolic time. What psychoanalysis maintains of fantasy – that is, the necessarily perspectival framework through which we have access to experience – is true also of temporality. Should we succeed in removing all the distortions and idiosyncrasies concerning how reality is effectively framed, we would not have a pristine objective reality (or temporality), but no access to reality (or temporality) at all. Differently put: temporality exists only in distorted forms (as “time-out-of-joint”), there is no normative model.¹⁵

There are of course those who would contest the suggestions offered above, namely that late apartheid and contemporary post-apartheid temporalities are under-differentiated, that the post-apartheid era is a period in which the (genuinely) new is still struggling to be born. To this we might point to an apparent failure of the post-apartheid social imaginary, and ask: what is it that comes *after* the post-apartheid, and why does it seem so extraordinarily difficult to provide a convincing answer to this question?

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Notes

1. I am here indebted to Browne's (2014) argument that historical time should be approached and theorised as a form of *lived time* so as to guard "against the reduction of historical time to the realm of pure textuality" and "opposed to scientific and metaphysical approaches that are interested in time as an objective condition or phenomenon" (26).
2. Saville-Young (2011) provides a useful description of the discipline. A psychosocial studies approach, she says, questions the traditional division of the personal and the social, undermining notions of an inner reality (the psyche) and outer reality (the social), and arguing instead for a psychosocial zone whereby the social and the psychological are both involved in the simultaneous and ongoing construction of one another. What for certain disciplinary perspectives is viewed with the suspicion – a continuous movement between social and psychical registers of analysis (between historical and individual consciousness, as we might put it) – is thus treated as a necessity within a psychosocial studies approach. I should add here that a psychosocial studies approach is not unaware of the epistemological risks inherent in such a criss-crossing of different domains of theory and practice (realms of "the social" and "the psychical," the move from psychoanalysis to group psychoanalysis). Such a "border-crossing" is not performed under the aegis of positivist social science, but rather – at least in my own work – in a conjectural manner, as a way of prompting the speculative work of social critique.
3. I mark here some distance to Browne's (2014) notion of lived time that has otherwise proved so influential to me. Whereas she expresses reservations about the reduction of historical time to "the realm of [...] the imagination" (26), my psychoanalytic interests clearly lie with considering precisely the fantasmatic dimension of time.
4. I should qualify the use of "ethical" here. The term is meant in the clinical psychoanalytic sense, i.e. as pertaining to what assists change in the subject.
5. Worby and Ally similarly (2013) highlight the issue of disaffection in characterising the "the sense of impassés and despondency that seems to hang like a cloud over the current South African affective landscape as people wrestle to make [...] emotional sense of the historical present" (473).
6. Much the same argument is made by the literary scholar Medalie (2010) in respect of instances of nostalgia in post-apartheid literature. In opposition to intricate forms nostalgia that open up the possibility of "reinvention and the fashioning of the new," he notes a type of unreflecting nostalgia that fails to subject the past to adequate interrogation. He interestingly notes, furthermore, how given formal features – stereotypical, unimaginative narrative components, flatness of characters, evident artifice, – might be read precisely as an index of the failure of more creative and critical uses of the nostalgic impulse.
7. This, the question of how variant temporalities relate to one another within an overarching shared temporal mode, represents a point of considerable debate in the literature on political temporality (Bastian 2011; Chakrabarty 2000; Fabian 1983). I have found Browne's (2014) notion of "complex coevalness" suggestive in this respect. This is the idea – clearly pertinent to the post-apartheid context – that we exist in a state of temporal entanglement, a condition in which "different historical temporalities [...] may interrelate and intersect [...] [without being] 'additive' parts of a greater totality or whole" (Browne 2014, 41–42). Such a sharing of time, does not, however presume an ironing-out of temporal differences, or an expunging of political differences (Browne 2014).
8. An interesting example of this is to be found in Steve Biko's defiant assertion, offered as part of a defence of Black Consciousness comrades accused of treasonous activities in an apartheid court of law, that "[W]e, as blacks, must articulate what we want, and put it across to the white man [...] We have analysed history. We believe that history moves in a particular logical direction, and in this instance, the logical direction is that eventually any white society in this country is going to have to accommodate black thinking. We are mere agents in that history (Biko, cited in Woods 1978, 185)." Although these words are spoken several years before Crapanzano's study commenced, they provide supportive evidence of sorts not only for his emphasis on a temporal

imaginary in apartheid, but for his suggestion that waiting assumes the quality of hope for those most oppressed under apartheid.

9. We might refer here, again, to Biko (1978) as a means of corroborating Crapanzano's assertion. In "Fear – an important determinant in South African politics," a chapter within his *I Write What I Like* (1978), Biko speaks of how the fear of white brutality "erodes the soul of black people in South Africa," of the racist *swart gevaar* (or "black peril") nurtured by whites, and, furthermore of how "[T]his interaction between fear and reaction sets on a vicious cycle that [...] makes meaningful coalitions between black and white totally impossible" (1978, 77).
10. If we were to adhere more strictly to the technical vocabulary of psychoanalysis we would need to stress how the fear has in effect been *displaced*, which is to say that it has been (at least partially) disconnected from a given idea, differently distributed, and, in this case, attenuated. Strictly speaking, and as Freud (1924) affirms, affects cannot be "repressed" (made wholly unconscious) although repressive measures – precisely such as that of displacement – play their part in relocating the affects in question, in de-attachment them to certain signifiers and re-attaching them to others. I retain the use of "repressed" and "repression" here in a general descriptive sense and so as to invoke the dynamism of the psychological mechanisms in question.
11. The idea of transgenerational guilt represents an important area of psychoanalytic enquiry – see Fogelman (1988), Rothe (2012), Stierlin (1974) and Wiseman, Metzl, and Barber (2006) – which, unfortunately, I cannot pursue further here. Suffice for the time being to say that the concept provides a promising means of extending the current study of post-apartheid temporality.
12. This, of course, is a hallmark of Freud's (1933) notion of the unconscious, that its contents are indestructible, "immortal."
13. The same of course cannot be said for Lucy's father, whose recalcitrance in respect of his own guilt – arguably the principal theme of the novel – remains unresolved.
14. I owe this point to one of the anonymous reviewers of this paper.
15. The methodology of the psychoanalytic clinic proves instructive here: to note distortions – highly differentiated forms of temporality, say – does not necessarily tie one to an ideal reference point. The epistemology of psychoanalysis is distinctive in this respect: clinicians aim at grappling with the particularities of psychical reality (fantasy) without constant reference either to the benchmark of actual "objective" reality or to those of normative social ideals.

Notes on contributor

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