and varied, itself a living archive conducive to multiple interpretations and analyses. After processing all my research material, the arguments put forward in this chapter will be contained within what I consider my core deduction as well as the common thread connecting all my participants: that is, the introjection of an image of the Island of St. Helena as a nostalgic object that is simultaneously sacred and secular. This nostalgic introjection occurs first through memory recalled by immigrants, and later, with the passing of time, as mutated imaginaries inherited through narrative from ancestral memory which is then conjured and nurtured by their descendants who had usually never travelled to the Island.

In a strict sense, my 'methodology' entailed conducting in-depth conversational interviews with actual St. Helena immigrants who can speak directly to their transmigrations[264], as well as with some of the children and grandchildren of other St. Helena immigrants – the second and third generations of Saints in South Africa. I recognise that nostalgia is usually the prerogative (perhaps also the burden) of the older amongst us, those who have lived long enough to take stock of what has been lost, most of all, their 'running out of time'. However, I hope in the future to explore how nostalgia operates amongst the fourth generation descendants of Saints, myself included. I will present my 'findings'[265] starting with the direct St. Helena immigrants, from where I will progress and incorporate the effect of nostalgia on the identities of the children and grandchildren of Saint Helena immigrants. But I will begin this chapter with an overview of the applicable properties of nostalgia salient to my work.

(Peter) Solomons, Mervin Watson, Paul Alexander and Kamila Bennet (a collaborative interview with Daniel Yon). Robin Castell was the only participant who does not claim St. Helena heritage, but he is the leading producer of St. Helena visual historiography and offers useful insights into the allure of the Island for relatively privileged English folk. Lastly, I conducted ad hoc interviews at the Cape Town History Associations Family Day on the 19th of September 2015, where I interviewed Mogamat Kamadien, Merle Martin (the founder of the South African St. Helena Heritage Association) and Lionel Davids. Save for Davids and Stephen Caswell, who were either indifferent or critically suspicions of claims to St. Heritage made by South Africans, all other participants were deeply enamoured with the ideas they held of the Island of St. Helena.

[264] For these St. Helena immigrants, the shift was more than just geographic; it was also temporal and metaphysical.

[265] In all sincerity, these 'findings' are rather ruminations for further study.

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In reference to the photograph prefacing this chapter, it is my endeavour that this image instantiates part of my argument that the 'stillness' of nostalgia - for a fading image of the Island - provides continuity for my participants in the face of an otherwise tumultuous contemporary world characterised by the hastened pace of modernity. It signals a withdrawal into my participants' constructed and curated certainties of their pasts. In another's words, "[n]ostalgia inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of live and historical upheaval […] Nostalgia is rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress."[266] The excerpt inscribing the picture is a quote from Derek Walcott's poetic 1992 Nobel Prize lecture. It serves firstly to demonstrate the fragile nature of memory in retaining the pristine nostalgic object innate to one's sense of self. Secondly, it highlights this research project as a 'labour of love', so to speak - my patchwork experience in assembling the shards of memory and imaginaries with the hope of producing something meaningful for those interested in the historical relations between St. Helena Island and South Africa.

2. Theoretical framework: nostalgia and its contents

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The purpose of this section is to introduce the interdisciplinary theoretical framework in which my exploratory 'findings' are located. Although nostalgia is a ubiquitous sentiment, often inadvertently present in most narrative literature, subjecting nostalgia as a concept to critical analysis is still a developing intellectual enterprise.[267] Etymologically, nostalgia is a "pseudo-Greek" neologism created by a Swiss medical doctor named Johannes Hofer in 1688 to diagnose the ailing and debilitating longing of displaced peoples for a return to

[266] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), XIV & 3.

[267] Ironically, I join an array of other scholars who have made this point over the last decade. I believe this is partially due to the dearth of literature in which the central concept is nostalgia. As an analytical and critical concept though, nostalgia may not be established, but it certainly is no longer new to scholarly interrogation. See for instance, Dennis Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation and Memory* (New York and London: Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 2011), 4.

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their native home.[268] *Algia* is meant to denote a *longing*, while *nosto* means *to return*: nostalgia, therefore, is *a longing to return.*

A crude transcription of the erstwhile psychosomatic condition coined by Hofer would translate as "home sickness" – in German the 'affliction' is called *Heimweh*; in French, *Maladie du Pays,* and in Afrikaans, *Heimweë*. However, the 'ailment' has further antecedents and wider applicability, or, to paraphrase Laubscher, Hofer simply coined *nostalgia* in 1688 as a psychiatric pathology, as disease[269], but the 'condition' of yearning or "desiring", which has its craved material object rooted in the past, is indivisible from being human – it is an atavistic, timeless and universal human sentiment.

Notwithstanding, nostalgia, as a concept "counter-intuitively" having its origin in medicine and not as to be expected in "poetry or politics"[270], has travelled deeper and farther, infiltrating the consciousness of individuals and the collective consciousness (media) of contemporary society. Today nostalgia has proliferated across disciplines and saturates popular media with stock-images and motifs of the past to the point that it has become banal. As a means to wrestle the concept away from popular conceptions and rescue it from reductionist meanings, nostalgia has itself fairly recently become the object of theoretical study as a distinct "critical analytic category" that transverses "a range of contemporary cultural, social and psychological phenomena."[271] In the first instance, we are cautioned not to conceive of nostalgia in relation to memory as "trivialising romantic sentimentally"[272], although it can, indeed, be that too.

From first being circumscribed by the medical field as a curable disease, nostalgia is now theorised as an "incurable modern condition" or a " symptom of

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[268] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia,* 5.

[269] Lewin Laubscher, "Of Odysseus and Abraham: Nostalgia, Heimweë and the Ways of Home," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 18, no. 3 (2012): 215.

[270] Svetlana Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents," *The Hedgehog Review* 9, no.2 (Summer, 2007): 7.

[271] Norman Duncan, Christopher Sonn and Garth Stevens, "Introduction: Of Narratives and Nostalgia," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology,* 18, no. 3 (2012): 205.

[272] Nadia Seremetakis, 'The Memory of the Senses, Part 1: Marks of the Transitory" in *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity,* ed. Nadia Seremetakis (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994).

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our age, a historical emotion"[273], sometimes as ubiquitous, yet abstract, as the embedded concepts of love, fear or jealously. Another significant shift in the nature of nostalgia is that the object of nostalgia has also evolved from a longing for a return to a spatiality (home, in particular) to become a longing for a lost temporality – a yearning for yesterday.[274] A more accurate description of nostalgia however is that it is a pining for the hyphenated time-space. The nostalgic object is, therefore, a spatiotemporal object.

It has some bearing on my work, that the possibility of a return (*nostos*) must be foreclosed in order for nostalgia to operate optimally. "The alluring object of nostalgia is notoriously elusive,"[275] and this necessary impossibility of a return must remain an intrinsic property of nostalgia for it to function. The object of nostalgia is, therefore, spectral rather than a retrievable incarnate entity. Furthermore, absence of, and distance from, the nostalgic object enables the nostalgic narrative to flourish. In other words, nostalgia has to be "invisibility felt" and "absently present."[276] In short, it could be said, the etymological term *nostalgia* no longer directly encapsulates the concept in its contemporary incarnation, but rather it is itself a nostalgic placeholder for an amorphous condition of longing for a constructed ideal object rooted in the past, yet one that *must* remain elusive.

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Therefore, in its most quotidian contemporary sense, nostalgia has come to temporarily settle as a harkening and a yearning for the unrecoverable pleasures of the past, whether experienced or imagined. It is about the lament for the loss of such past pleasures, as well as for the sense of a loss of (perhaps perceived) wholeness and continuity - one's 'place' in the world.[277] Once past pleasure is committed to memory, however, nostalgia is a paradox in which the affective sense of loss can be recalled and revisited as an oxymoronic "mournful

[273] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, XIV & XVI.
[274] Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (London: Free Press, 1979).
[275] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, XIII.
[276] Lewin Laubscher, "Of Odysseus and Abraham: Nostalgia, Heimweë and the Ways of Home," 216.
[277] Dennis Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgias,"* 1-23.

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pleasure… stir[ed] up" by one's own "busy-meddling memory".[278] More precisely, nostalgia is a deep and longing pain to return to one's distant, lost, or in many instances, imagined home. And home does not necessary have to represent a place, but a 'state of being', a metaphysical place of rest and solace.

Of significance, though, is the realisation that a felt nostalgic desire cannot be satiated; the yearning cannot be resolved, as an idealised home cannot truly be reached. Laubscher's analogy that nostalgia is not about points of departure and (re)arrival, that the act of being nostalgic is more of a "wandering" - as instantiated by the figure of Abraham and his wayfaring, rather than a satisfying return as exemplified by the homecoming of Odysseus.[279] What can be read from the analogy is that an Odyssean return does not cohere with the functioning of nostalgia since it would imply that the nostalgic desire is satiable when, more precisely, nostalgia is a perpetual search of the ideal.

Furthermore, if nostalgia is a yearning for an idealised object constructed from selected memory, as I conceive of it, then neither will the nostalgic subject, nor the object he is nostalgic for, remain static during their period of separation. To return to Laubsher's analogy, then, it is improbable that Ithaca (home, as the nostalgic object *par excellence*) would have remained unchanged after Odysseus' decade-long absence. Moreover, Odysseus' experiences abroad would have altered his perception and expectation of Ithaca as place and, thus, his sense of 'feeling' (at) home. These are just some of the elements of nostalgia that inhibit a full recovery of a lost and elusive spatio-temporal object, and the absolute satisfaction of nostalgic desire.

It is acceptable, therefore, that nostalgia, having its force rooted in the ego, has an aesthetic dimension, since it is experienced as a lamented *pleasure*, an "enjoyment absolutely of [the self]."[280] In this comprehension of the

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[278] Olaudah Equiano, *The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavas Vassa, The African* (New York: Dover Publications Inc, 1999), 5.
[279] Lewin Laubscher, "Of Odysseus and Abraham: Nostalgia, Heimweë and the Ways of Home," 223.
[280] Ibid., 220.

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phenomenon, the pleasure principal is fundamentally what distinguishes nostalgia from melancholia.[281] Although both concepts are steeped in the sentiment of loss of an "unobtainable" object, melancholia is characterised by despair, whereas nostalgia holds a measure of enjoyment in the act of relishing "remembrances of things past." Furthermore, whether the object was experienced or imagined, the nostalgic is palpably aware and can identify (with) the object 'lost' in the past and to history. In the case of melancholia, on the other hand, the melancholic suffers debilitating despair for the loss of an unidentifiable object – a generic, pervasive and enervating sentiment of loss. Agamben, citing Freud, writes of the sentiment of melancholia as "a loss without a lost object… a loss without it being known what has been lost… an unknown loss or of an object-loss that escapes consciousness."[282]

Similarly, Laubscher suggests that nostalgic desire for a past lost 'something' that is ontological may be an inadequate substitute for that longing for a 'pure' metaphysical ideal object or state that cannot be known, but one 'worthy' of true desire, and 'for the sake of desiring':[283] *I know I miss something and that I long for it, but I don't know what IT is. Maybe I shall recognise it when I find it*. This, however, is more the workings of melancholia, as proposed by Agamben in his succinct chapter on "The Lost Object".[284] Unlike melancholia, nostalgia is not a sentiment of individual 'suffering' and can then be conceived as a 'reining-in' of melancholia's abstract, absent and distant object, since the object of nostalgia is more defined, historical, shared[285] and specific, which is given an affectivity and marked by a tinge of self-indulgence.

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[281] A more concerted effort was made to distinguish between the concepts of melancholia and nostalgia and how they operate, as analytic categories, in post-transitional societies. See: Maria Brock and Ross Truscott, "What's the Difference Between a Melancholic Apartheid Moustache and a Nostalgic GDR Telephone?," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 18, no. 3 (2012): 318-328. I limit my comparison to the saliency of my own research.

[282] Giorgio Agamben, "Stanza: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture," trans. Ronald L Martinez, in *Theory and History of Literature*, 69, eds. Wlad Godzich and Jochen Schulte-Sasse (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 20.

[283] Lewin Laubscher, "Of Odysseus and Abraham: Nostalgia, Heimweë and the Ways of Home," 220.

[284] Giorgio Agamben, "Stanza: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture," 19-21.

[285] Boym differentiates melancholia from nostalgia as follows: "Unlike melancholia, which confines itself to the planes of individual consciousness, nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory." See: Svetlana Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents," 8-9.

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Notwithstanding the distinction between melancholia and nostalgia, the latter's force remains in the conundrum where desire cannot be redeemed and the nostalgic cannot reunite with the perpetually evasive object of his/her longing. The effect of this absent and distant quality of the nostalgic object promotes the personal constructive dimensions inherent in nostalgia. The contradiction, thus, of lamenting a loss of a past while simultaneously enjoying remembrances of that past, gives nostalgia its generative and constructive narrative power. Nostalgia may have a basis in historical experience and exploits repertories of historical material, but it is partial invention - through selection, embellishment and distortion of a past - to satisfy a present unfulfilled desire.

Nostalgia, as an affective experience, provides the space for constructed narratives that privilege 'origin' to emerge using non-sequential stock images from memory. The process of nostalgia is autobiographical, or more precisely, memoir, in the sense that one assigns a convenient meaning to the past that buttresses a desired self in the present. As the *zeitgeist* of the now, nostalgia is not just a feeling of being removed (displacement) from where one belongs, which ironically can only be felt once removed from a perceived 'site' of belonging (this can be place, time, place-time or a social hierarchy). It is also a process of taking control of personal re-emplacement within history. The implantation of the desired nostalgic object may have occurred in the past but it seeps into the present.

Often nostalgia is a conflating of memory with desire, and experience with imagination. It can function as an active voluntary preoccupation and attachment with the object of nostalgia or as an involuntary memorative reflex triggered in the present by a sensorial encounter that 'throws one back in time' and leads to a re-experiential savouring of a past pleasure. The latter would suggest that the nostalgic moment is unpredictable and apprehends or besets one like a seizure, which is predominately how nostalgia is currently theorised. The former, which is what I have experienced with my participants, however, proposes that the nostalgic is presently active in invoking the object of his/her nostalgia, or at least

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that s/he 'takes control' of an unpredictable reminiscence, seizing the seizure - what Proust referred to as "voluntary memory, the memory of the intellect."[286]

However, nostalgia is not synonymous with memory, although it is dependent on memory – whether re-memory is triggered or actively recalled in the capacity of the personal or cultural-collective. According to Pierre Nora, "[m]emory is absolute [and] installs remembrance within the sacred."[287] Nora's argument can also be read as an exposition on the relationship between memory and the erosion of a continuity in communal identity: "[m]emory is life borne by living societies founded in its name… a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to an eternal present… as it is affective and magical, only accommodate[ing] those facts that suit it [and] is blind to all but the group it binds."[288]

To remember is to recall events or incidences of the past, whereas nostalgia is to invest certain selected (and often distorted) memories with affection and intensity, in other words to cathect memory, to make memories affective. To be nostalgic is then not simply to remember an event or an incident, but to recollect a feeling from the past linked to an event or time – the feeling of safety, warmth, belonging, community, etc. In other words, nostalgia is 'feel-good' re-memory. Memory, in turn, is contingent upon the physical senses – the auditory, gustatory, ocular, olfactory and tactile – that interfaces and links the human consciousness to materiality. If "[n]ostalghia speaks to the sensory reception of history" and memory serves as a "meta-sense"[289] - a sensorium or an accretive site of feeling and re-feeling - then the significance of nostalgia lies in the realisation that a past object cannot entirely be lost after all.

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Nostalgic sentiment for that which one has never experienced with one's own senses is yet another apparent contradictory quality of nostalgia. This diachronic dimension of nostalgia – the memorative functioning of a historical object of

[286] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume 1: Swann's Way*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), 59.
[287] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 9.
[288] Ibid., 8 & 9.
[289] Nadia Seremetakis, "The Memory of the Senses, Part 1: Marks of the Transitory," 4 & 9.

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nostalgia across (life)time(s) - is open to a greater degree of examination, since here is where the concept of nostalgia becomes counter-intuitive: it now delves into the realm of historical and political 'senses' rather than personal experience. This is the case with the first, second and third generation of St. Helena descendants I have interviewed. Through their interviews I will explore how the inherited object of nostalgia is appropriated in the present.

What is retained of British imperialism with some potency, are convictions about its cultural and civilisational superiority, which can be claimed – in the case of this study, via St. Helena - without posing any real political risks in terms of any negation of a national identity. A nostalgic recovery of retrospective British respectability, hinged on its past imperial power, can assume an authenticated veneer, despite an unequivocal parallel subjection to a national identity as (South) African. Borrowing from Judith Butler's theoretical propositions - in which she manages to reconcile the external (political) and internal (psychic) effects of power on identity[290] - nostalgia, I propose, as a psychic motion, is a form of submission and subordination to the object of one's own nostalgia; it is a "passionate [and] stubborn attachment"[291] to the nostalgic object and its associative properties on which, for instance, a St. Helena ancestral identity is dependent.

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Nostalgic resuscitations of dated English colonial distinguishability and current subsequent (re)"investments" in this identity, are an example of an "attachment to subjection"[292], a eulogistic self-subjection to an historic power that has preserved its cultural imprints. However, with the proliferation of liberalism, a vigilance around political correctness and the right to claim whatever identity one desires and can convincingly perform, self re-subjection and claims to a defunct colonial subjectivity on the nostalgic's own temporal terms may be more comprehensive, permissible and tenable than it probably had been during colonialism. This would be the case more so for those racialised 'coloured', who

[290] Judith, Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (California: Stanford University Press, 1997).
[291] Ibid., 6-10 & 31.
[292] Ibid., 102.

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may encounter less public ridicule and vituperation when making claims to English descent and respectability. Moreover, the necessary impossibility of an actual return (to empire), inherent in reflective nostalgia[293], allows for this kind of subjection - to the vestiges of an historical power - to unfold in a benign manner, as a heuristic way of 'controlling' time and one's place within it.

Nostalgia becomes political when a shared longing for an association to the same nostalgic object (Saint Helena Island) serves as the grounds for the formation of an imagined community.[294] In South Africa, Cape Town in particular, this community is held together by regular gatherings and annual fellowship of individuals and families who commemorate and celebrate their mutual St. Helenian ancestry.[295] In many instances, they undertake collective genealogical research that seeks to confirm and affirm their St. Helena heritage. This collective nostalgia functions as a political activity - a motion in subject formation through the process of self-subjectification to a mutually affective nostalgic object - that binds this community. However, identifying as a descendant of Saints does not negate a national identity as South African nor contravene a racial identity as 'coloured' or white, but is meant to accentuate and supplement a national and racial identity, colouring in its otherwise delimited and perforated contours.

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Nostalgia, as a politic of hope and desire, is also a sub-textual remark on the contemporary: it is a response to despondency and disenchantment with the present, predicated on disillusionment with ideal past promises and possibilities unrealised in the now. Bradbury's framing of nostalgia as "backward-looking hope" is best encapsulated when she states, "[p]erhaps nostalgia is not only a

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[293] See explanation below with reference to Boym's distinction between two primary types of nostalgia.

[294] I borrow this term for Benedict Anderson's seminal work in which he argues for a direct causal link between the formation of national identity, and the technological developments and proliferation of mass media communications, specifically in print, that attempts to homogenise a group politically by promoting nationalism using common parlance. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism,* 2nd rev. edn (London, New York: Verso, 1991).

[295] The Society I am more familiar with is the South African St. Helenian Heritage Association, run by Merle Martin, who has been supportive of my project and agreed to partake in it as a participant.

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longing for the way things were, but also a longing for futures that never came, or for horizons of possibilities that seem to have been foreclosed by the unfolding of events."[296] Her conception of nostalgia as presently prolific political sentient of hope, no less so in transitioning South Africa, is on the mark: bolstered by her invocation of the "Ghanaian mythical bird, Sankofa, [which] flies forward while facing backward to gather the wisdom of the past" she proffers an allegory for her citation of "Kierkegaard's proverbial saying, 'We live forward but understand backward.'"[297]

Seremetakis, who theorises the connections between time and memory for the senses, writes of her lament for the disappearance of a local Greek fruit – a peach - she enjoyed in her childhood and its replacement with homogenised European Union standardised fruit. As metaphor, she aims to highlight the supplanting of the local by the universal(ising) logic and imperatives of a global(ising) world and to make the point that the "present [for the nostalgic] is characterized as *ánosto*" (a tasteless present), for "nothing tastes as good as the past."[298] Boym's conception of nostalgia in relation to time is the most insightful; she postulates nostalgia as an ubiquitous temporal sentiment of the present, a nostalgia that is not necessarily progressive nor retrospective, but a sheer longing for an alternative present, based on past utopian hopes for the, then, future:

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> The twentieth century began with utopia and ended with nostalgia. Optimistic belief in the future became outmoded, while nostalgia, for better or worse, never went out of fashion [...] The fantasies of the past, determined by the needs of the present, have a direct impact on the realities of the future [...] While futuristic utopias might be out of fashion, nostalgia itself has a utopian dimension—only it is no longer directed toward the future. Sometimes it is not directed toward the past either, but rather sideways. The nostalgic feels stifled within the conventional confines of time and space.[299]

[296] Jill Bradbury, "Narrative Possibilities of the Past for the Future: Nostalgia and Hope," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 18, no.3 (2012): 342.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Nadia Seremetakis, "The Memory of the Senses, Part 1: Marks of the Transitory," 8 & 1.
[299] Svetlana Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents," 7, 8 & 9.

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Furthermore, the politicisation of nostalgia is theorised as its shadowy side. In this regard, nostalgia may be evoked to mobilise a people politically. But it can also be divisive. In as much as a collective nostalgic object or idea can unify and rally a community together, it can simultaneously be appropriated as a means to set that bonded community against another. The Zionist return of Jews to Israel or the Hilterian illusion of returning central and west Europe to the exclusive abode of some idealised and imaginary superior Aryan race, could be understood as political projects inspired by enduring and intense nostalgic sentiment. Boym resolves this paradox innate to the condition of nostalgia with her distinction between what she calls "reflective and restorative nostalgia":

> Restorative nostalgia puts emphasis on *nostos* [the return] and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps. Reflective nostalgia dwells in the *algia*, in the longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance [...] Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past, while reflective nostalgia lingers on the ruins, the patina of time and history, of the dreams of another place and another time.[300]

As a framework, I can only locate my finding within Boym's theory of a reflective nostalgia on the basis that none of my participants, especially those direct immigrants, harbour any idea of a restorative nostalgia. There is no desire on their part for a permanent return to St. Helena of the present, nor do they advocate for a recovery of St. Helena, as a place, to some static idealised moment in history. They simply pine for the specificity of their spatiotemporal ancestral home lost to time, which they can only access through amorphous memory. My participants, all reflectively nostalgic, accept the impossibility of a temporal return, despite the possibility of a spatial return for some. Being able to return to a space, but not to a time they have invested with affection, fosters their reliance on the psychic motion of re-memory to hark back 'home' in their minds as an authentic mode of 'homecoming'.

[300] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 41.

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Occasional vacations and short-term visits to St. Helena appear to temporarily sate the desire for some existential return, but, in most instances, it serves primarily as trigger memory - for those who are actually St. Helena immigrants - to hark back and relish their pleasurable pasts. For those descendants of Saints, a visit to the almost mythical St. Helena Island is construed as pilgrimage (a sacred tour) to the hallowed home of their ancestors, often to engage in genealogical research to 'find their roots'. But this does not imply that a reflective nostalgia is devoid of political impetus; as I have argued multiple times above, it does coalesce a group around the core of a shared nostalgic object and adds weight and substance to their senses of self.

In a sociological sense, nostalgia is then an inter-subjective experience: it may be rooted in individual lived (or inherited) experience, but the shared experience of being nostalgic for the same object is a collective undertaking. I will refer to this type of nostalgia rooted in personal sensorial experience, archived in memory, as a synchronic nostalgia (within the 'moment' of a lifetime) when reflecting on my interviews with immigrant St. Helenians.

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The rest of this chapter will be dedicated to reflections on several of the key themes that emerged in interviews with my participants. Of these themes, the hypothesis that nostalgia is a method to countervail the alienating effects of modernity comes through most strongly. My initial intention was to write synoptical reviews of the experience of my participants and the effects that their experiences exerted on their sense of selves, their identities. However, as insightful as that may have been, it demands a capacious scope I'd not be able to adequately fulfill in a single chapter. However, such an undertaking is not foreclosed to future research. By the same token, I am hesitant to reduce the lives of my participants to footnotes and will do so sparingly. It should, therefore, be noted that I am extracting only fragments of my participants' life narratives conveyed to me in conversational interviews and, in a sense, abstracting these experiences to relate to my chapter's key theoretical concepts: those of nostalgia and identity.

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3. Introjecting the spatiotemporal: "It's my birthplace [that's] in me"[301]

Mrs Benjamin was recruited on the Island of St. Helena during World War II by a said "Lizzy Pritchett"[302] to serve as a caregiver to the two children of the Burnside family residing in Mazabuka, Northern Rhodesia (now part of south-east Zambia). She departed St. Helena in 1941, at the age of twenty-two, and en route to Mazabuka, she first arrived in Cape Town via the *Llanstephan Castle* ship along with five other St. Helena immigrants. Mrs Benjamin, who was the "love child"[303] of a local St. Helenian woman and a Scottish soldier named Harry Papler stationed at the Island during World War I, was one of thousands of Saint Helenians compelled to emigrate as soon as she reached working age.[304]

While interviewing Mrs Benjamin[305], I was first struck by her incessant and unsolicited repetition – as if she was chanting a sacred incantation: "If you are born British, you will die British" […] "they can never take my birth-right from me"[…] "It's my birthplace what's in me" [….] "I was born under the British flag."[306] Her clear articulation signifies the poignant introjection of a distant cultural home – a distance marked by the Island's spatial remoteness and partial inaccessibility,[307] as well as by a temporal distance bridged solely by her then diminishing memory.

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[301] Ivy Gwen Benjamin, interviewed by Damian Samuels, Bonteheuwel, Cape Town, June 27, 2015.

[302] A woman said to have trained local women on the Island in embroidery work, but who also fulfilled the dual function of recruiting 'coloured' St. Helenian women for servile work within British colonies and the metropole itself.

[303] I use this term as quoted from another participant when he refers sarcastically to the offspring born of native St. Helena women and imperial British soldiers. Kamedien, Mogamat, interviewed by Damian Samuels, Wynberg, Cape Town, September 19, 2015.

[304] See my arguments in the previous two chapters.

[305] Mrs Benjamin is one of only two surviving St. Helena immigrants I had the privilege of interviewing.

[306] Gwen Benjamin, interviewed by Damian Samuels, June 27, 2015.

[307] By partial inaccessibility, I refer to the mode of travel – until October 2017 the only way to reach the Island was by means of a five-day sea-trip – as well as the cost of travel charged in pound sterling, which, given the disparate exchange rate, most descendants of Saints cannot afford. Although a flight to St. Helena takes only four hours, the new cost of travel by air, even at special reduced rates, is marginally more expensive than the most affordable, now decommissioned, option by sea.

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Her home, St. Helena, was not simply a spatiality, but a representation of an idea of herself as a member of a global Anglophone community. And by extension, her avowal through an act of nostalgic recuperation of what Boym refers to as nostalgia for the "Ancien Regime"[308] – a dynastic time where subjection to a 'divinely sanctioned' imperial monarch would emplace one with a measure of certitude in the world and where notions of belonging and identities were presumably less ambiguous and fragmented.

Like Mrs Benjamin, the only other St. Helena immigrant I had interviewed, Mrs Ethel Feils (formally Ethel Bruce), began our interview by exhibiting her personal collection of photographs of the British royal family's visit to the Island of St. Helena in 1947 before proceeding to show me a series of personal family photographs. She believed I would relate to this, as a descendant of a Saint myself, and went on to affectionately recount, in vivid detail, the dresses worn by then Queen Elizabeth, and princesses Elizabeth and Margaret.[309] Her proclivity for identifying by subjection to the imperial power of the past was clear. Mrs Feils made the unequivocal statement that St. Helena Island is "very much my home", a home to which a permanent physical return was foreclosed, but a home she was able to visit on occasion "just to look", mournfully, at how it has changed. Pertinent however, was her impossibility of a temporal return to the 'good' of her childhood home, that for which she truly yearned.

Indeed, being my first two interviews, I was immediately intrigued by what was comparatively at stake for Mrs Benjamin and Mrs Feils in making such impassioned assertions demonstrative of a "stubborn attachment"[310] to their place of birth. I subsequently learned that Mrs Benjamin had never returned to the island after living in South Africa for over seventy-four years before her

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[308] Svetlana Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents," 10.

[309] Ethel Feils, interviewed by Damian Samuels, Sonstraal Hoogte, Cape Town, June 20, 2015. Mrs Feils' family were white St. Helenians of Scottish descent who were well respected on the Island. She arrived with her mother and brother in South Africa in 1948 at the age of sixteen. Her first job in South Africa was in the employ of Woolworths. Later, she opened her own successful lingerie shop in Durbanville. She naturalised as a white South African citizen and lived a comparatively privileged life to that of Mrs Benjamin. She had physically returned to the Island several times.

[310] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection,* 31.

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passing in 2016. Making sense of her profound attachment to St. Helena Island underlies much of the impetus for this chapter. Moreover, Mrs Benjamin's memories of home particularly, as she relayed them to me, were complex and marked by ambivalences that would unsettle many of the romantic conceptions of life on the island.[311]

Nevertheless, once one's place of birth is affectively internalised, it becomes home, irrespective of whether experiences of home vacillate between pleasure and displeasure; it is an attachment often bound for life and hardly ever met with indifference. Memory of home, thus, can manifest as a form of topophilia or topophobia, or as varied configurations between these two extremes. What is certain is the intensity of its inscription on individual consciousness, as the case may be with Mrs Benjamin and Mrs Feils.

Being born *in situ* of place usually inscribes on the individual her/his first political identity – a citizenship - and the reverence for one's place of birth is normally expressed as a celebration of a specific nationality. It is, therefore, often taken for granted that nation and home are coterminous concepts, a composite state of belonging. Belonging, in turn, commences with the intimate - to a family. Belonging is then rationalised outwardly, becoming increasingly abstract - to a family within a community (my people, a culture). Lastly, a community settles as constituent of a country, a nation. However, in the case of St. Helena, citizenship is a rather vague and fluctuating concept.[312] Although St. Helenians are often

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[311] Raised by her grandmother, Mrs Benjamin was particularly affected by her family's class status as "poor Islanders" and her mother's effective abandonment of her at the age of two in search of a better life in South Africa, after it became clear that her Scottish father was not going to secure her mother's access into Great Britain. Mrs Benjamin's mother married a white "Cornishman", and once settled in Lansdowne, Cape Town, she secured her access into dominant South African society. In inadvertently acknowledging Gwen's existence on the Island, her mother referred to her as "cousin Gwen". She only reunited with her mother after twenty years and discovered she had (white) siblings she was unaware of.

[312] St. Helenians are considered British citizens since the Island was classified by an act of parliament in 2002 as a British Overseas Territory. We are reminded of the precarity of British citizenship for Saints as evinced by their approximately twenty-year loss of citizenship in 1981, after the passing of the British Nationality Act. In effect, St. Helena is still run from London by a Governor whose appointment remains the prerogative of a nominal monarch on advice given by British government. Undisputedly, St. Helena is a living relic of a former imperial time; it should not be surprising that resident Saints and the St. Helena diaspora have a peculiar attachment to the British Ancien Regime, a historical fact that binds an international community of Saints.

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enamoured with their home Island and consider themselves Saints first and foremost, this sentiment does not translate into a national or political identity, considering that St. Helena is not a sovereign or independent land. To all intents and purposes, resident Saints are precarious British citizens estranged from their metropolis. In addition, the St. Helena diaspora have become naturalised citizens of their respective host countries. Yet there is a freedom in not having to conflate origin and nationalism, a splitting that would allow for an unusual separation of a secular identity (nationality) and a subjection to a nostalgic object vested as sacred (place), specifically a distant and elusive place of birth construed as home.

In the climate of global retroaction towards autochthony[313] as elementary to one's identity, national pride and political belonging are predicated on one's *place of origin*. Birth and its regular conflation with origin is considered the natural induction of the self and is not simply a mythopoeic matter. States still concede there is no better criterion for recognising an individual's citizenship (political belonging invested with rights and obligation to a particular state) than the citizen's place of birth, the primal attachment to (a) place.

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Since origin and to an extent destiny have been secularised and usurped by nationalist sentiment and ideas of nationhood, the history of the place and its autochthonous culture, in turn, affects the politics of belonging to place and serves as the base from which this citizenship – and by extension political belonging - is derived, assigned and negotiated. However, once origin and nation can be divorced, there is room for all kinds of identificational creativity and performance. As the case may be, the relationship to nation and nostalgia that has emerged in my study is one in which all my participants accept the banal fact that they are South African. However, they expressed dissatisfaction with the inadequacy inherent in the idea of belonging fortuitously to this nation. Yet, their efforts were not to negate their South African citizenship, but to relegate its centrality, foregrounding in its stead, origin, their St. Helena descendancy, as

[313] Peter Geschiere, "Autochthony, Citizenship, and Exclusion - Paradoxes in the Politics of Belonging in Africa and Europe," *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 18, no.1, article 14 (Winter 2011): 321-39.

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epitomised by Mrs Benjamin. They possessed no real power in defining what it means to be South African, but they could set the parameters for constructing nostalgically the value of a St. Helena identity.

Anderson's work on the emergence of nationalism, or the nation as an "imagined" community, is applicable here.[314] In the wake of religion's retreat, after enjoying centuries as a dominant social constructive force and explanatory framework for existence, he argues, something had to take its place. With the "ebbing of religious belief", the upshot was a

> [d]isintegration of paradise… mak[ing] fatality more arbitrary and the [a]bsurdity of salvation … mak[ing] another style of continuity more necessary… What then was required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning.[315]

In other words, the loss of a belief in a utopian future, an existential continuity and a commitment to a higher ideal that religion afforded, is the true tragedy of modernity's secular rationalism, to which Anderson proposes:

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> … [f]ew things were better suited to this end than the idea of a nation (yet) [i]f nation-states are widely conceded to be new and historical, the nations to which they give political expression loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future. It is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny.[316]

His proposition is that nationalism provided the opportunity for the secular sequestration of a religious group's cultural fervour formally dedicated to the sacred, inevitably imbuing the nation with a hallowed quality. I interpret Anderson's proposition to be partly based on nationalism's larger appeal to sentiment, rather than reason. Like *a religion, a nation* can be visibly instituted and materially expressed. Moreover, both these forces are centered on the

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[314] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism,* 2nd rev. edn (London, New York: Verso, 1991).
[315] Ibid.,11.
[316] Ibid.,11-12.

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supposition that people need to submit to ideals greater than themselves. These ideals, in turn, offer a purpose for which individuals are prepared to die and kill, with the hope that their continuity will take shape in some form of nationalist public memory. Unlike other political ideologies, for instance liberalism and fascism,[317] which are construed as 'new' responses to modernity, nationalism has its constructive elements in an immemorial past, but has its sights on the future – a destiny.

But what happens when in post-colonial nation-states[318] belonging to a nation is not always interchangeable with notions of cultural home and origin, and no longer amenable to the realisation of past utopian promises, which, with the passing of time, seem far less plausible? When despondency and disenchantment with the contemporary set in, and nationalism begins showing signs of abating, losing its sacred aura,[319] what shall be its replacement? Nostalgia is proposed to have replaced utopian optimism in the future,[320] reticulating new communities around a shared nostalgic object, while nationalism, with the advent of multi- and transnational arrangements and internationalist[321] aspirations, is slowly becoming unsettled as central to identity.

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Furthermore, a nation, as a "style" of "imaging and create[ing]" a political community, is "both inherently *limited* and sovereign."[322] Nationalism's ubiquity may be attributed to the fact that it transcends cultural specificities, and to the

[317] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities,* 5.

[318] This is much like South Africa, which is a hodgepodge of multiple atavistic 'nations' and naturalised immigrants from elsewhere (descendants of both former master and slave) all cobbled into one state. Despite South Africa being a young nation-state, barely 22 years old, many citizens have long given up on romantic notions of a rainbow nation.

[319] Notwithstanding the temporal difference for the emergence of nationalism in the colonies versus its European metropolises, the nation in both contexts can be considered secular *and* sacred for different reasons. Anderson's explanation holds for why the nation is deemed sacred in Europe, 'the West' and to some extent in 'the East'. Since the precepts of nationalism are ironically inherited from imperial European powers, the sacredness of a nation in the post-colony can be linked to its liberatory functions, being *the* progressive political ideology for supplanting imperialist political organisation in the colonies.

[320] Svetlana Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents," 8 & 9.

[321] I am critical of this term since I believe it means an assimilation to dominant globalised cultural norms. I also refrain from using cosmopolitism; my view is that this term signifies an accommodation of a multiplicity of different people in a delimited place (usually, country), which is not what I mean by an *affective sense* of a community that emerges from, and transcends, space.

[322] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities*, 6.

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fact that its proliferation is contingent on the propagation of an ideology that has as its key tenet spatially definitive bordered communities, which paradoxically defies ideological and cultural barriers. But it remains a spatially contained (limited) and fragmented political unit, albeit sovereign, which produces multiple diverse polities arising from a singular ideological framework; for beyond the border of each nation, is an increasing number of *other* nations. Identities constructed nostalgically, on the other hand, are often characteristically uncontained, superseding fixed territories, especially if they link with attachments to former empire.

Mrs Benjamin was capable of delicately reconciling her racial, legal and cultural subjectivities. According to her, she was racially 'coloured', South African legally or "by law", culturally British and "St. Helena born"[323] by origin. But what is salient in her constitution of herself, was the mutual exclusivity of these subjectivities. Instead of viewing her identity as a composite of all those imbricated historically constructed subjectivities, she viewed them as separate and independent categories seeming in competition with each other – a farrago rather than a blend. Furthermore, I sensed that her varied subjectivities were independently evoked and performed in certain contexts and situations. Crucially, of all her fragmented and discontinuous subjectivities, *origin* - distinguishable from *nation* here - is the one she underlined to hold the most value for her. It was the very marker of identity most conducive to mystification, and, therefore, favourable to beatification.

I would later encounter a similar longing desire - for a pristine edenic past image of St. Helena - among other participants, some of whom were the children and grandchildren of immigrant Saints who had never visited the Island of St. Helena. Mr Mervin Watson, one of the fortunate St. Helenian descendants who managed a sojourn on the Island in December 2001,[324] pointedly recounted to me his arrival on the Island as one of his life's most inimitable experiences, exceeding

[323] Interview with Mrs Benjamin, June 27, 2015.

[324] Mr Watson is the only member of his family to have 'returned' to the Island after accessing the means to travel to the Island once a retirement policy matured at the age of sixty. Prior to this time, he possessed the desire to return, but not the means to do so.

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his expectations. He described St. Helena Island as "mystical, enchanting and charming".[325] Of greater significance, though, was Watson's hesitance in relaying to me a particular incident, which his wife, Lynne, meaningfully introduced in our interview:

> I was about to step ashore, when in front of me Mervin, having landed, quite unexpectedly sort of made as if to kiss the ground and say, 'I've arrived, I'm back, I've landed on St. Helena.' Not only to me, [but] to the whole surrounding company. It was very unexpected, but obviously a very emotional moment for Mervin. So, I remember that so clearly.[326]

Watson's return to the Island is significant, not only to himself, but as redemption for his entire family: "I was so pleased, at last, one person of our family had got back to St. Helena."[327] It is profoundly peculiar that he speaks of a return to a place he has never before experienced, but what is more illuminating is the fact that his return was conceived as the sacred homecoming to the hallowed Island, the island of his ancestors. The overwhelming sense I got during this interview was a sacrosanct sentiment best articulated as *our Island, which art in the South Atlantic, hallowed be thy Ground*.

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As a descendant of Saints, Watson's physical return to the island can be understood as an otherworldly experience or as holy pilgrimage. In contrast, the temporary return to an ancestral home for Watson is quite a different type of nostalgic satisfaction to that experienced by direct immigrants, like Mrs Feils, for instance. Firstly, Feils was able to witness the changes to the place of her childhood, which she had introjected as affective memory through her physical senses. This I called a synchronic nostalgia – a yearning for what one experiences as a loss in one's lifetime. On the other hand, Watson's diachronic nostalgia – a

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[325] Mervin Watson, interviewed by Damian Samuels, Diepriver, Cape Town, August 6, 2016. Mr Watson is a family genealogist *par excellence*; he has managed to research his family heritage in impressive detail and could determine that six of his eight great-grandparents had St. Helena heritage (a fact he is proud of). He has subsequently self-published several books detailing his own family history. Mr Watson had proven to be one of my most knowledgeable participants on St. Helena-South Africa migration history.

[326] Lynne Watson, in interview with Mervin Watson. Interviewed by Damian Samuels, Diepriver, Cape Town, August 6, 2016.

[327] Mervin Watson, interviewed by Damian Samuels, August 6, 2016.

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form of nostalgia transferred and mutated over generations – was sated by his visit to the Island. Watson's experience of St. Helena was influenced by his inherited historical sense of the place, which was laced with mystique and romanticism intensified by the temporal distance between immigrant and descendant. Yet, both forms of nostalgia are subjected to the same impossibility of a permanent return to the beloved Island of their fantasies and memories.

The partial inaccessibility of the Island and the impracticality of pursuing a fulfilling economic life there, for those who must earn a living, may inhibit a permanent return to the Island. But this very necessary impossibility of a permanent return for immigrants and their descendants simultaneously endows the Island with a fragile inviolability that the encroachment of globalism is seen to threaten. Temporary returns to an alterable spatiality, however, are affectively experienced as pilgrimage, tantamount to the manner Muslims and Catholics respectively visit Mecca or the Vatican City. The elusiveness of the Island due to its remoteness, the economic impractically of living there, and the delayed onset of modernity, all compound to invest the Island of St. Helena with an intrinsic sacredness. That is to say, if St. Helena could be resettled by the descendants of emigrant Saints, chances are it will not retain its hallowed aura enabled by this spatial and temporal distance.

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Sacredness of the past, as instantiated by place - St. Helena Island, in my case – is indeed a vestige of a longing for a utopia. But instead of undertaking the arduous task of creating new utopias, or the easier option of simply deferring it to the after-life, the focus shifts to discovering a hidden utopia as a natural place untouched by modernity - a place innocent, good and whole. This apparent compromise seems to entangle the sacred with the secular where that which is sacrosanct can find true instantiation in place and time. This sanctification is given weight by the fact that romantic fantasies and enchantment with the Island are not restricted to St. Helena immigrants and their progenies, but similarly expressed by those relatively privileged and socially well-connected metropolitan residents who sought refuge or simply temporary respite from

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modernity's bitter fallout. Robin Castell's[328] confessed despondency with Britain's changing demographics during his youth (1950s-1960s) is suggestive of the Island's valence for some British conservatives:

> When I was about eighteen or nineteen, I got a bit fed-up with the United Kingdom and decided I wanted somewhere else to go where it was peaceful and quiet, no crime and everything was absolutely fine. So I studied the world map and I particularly wanted to be able to continue speaking English. I wanted somewhere where the sun shone and it wasn't anywhere that the Germans would want to bomb again. I wanted to get away from horrendous politics, taxation, traffic, cold weather, everything negative [....] The place [England] was filling up with immigrants from Jamaica and everywhere else, and there were Muslims with say three wives and ten children. So it wasn't getting better, it was getting worse [....] I decided that it [St. Helena Island] was definitely the place for me. I enjoyed it there because there were hardly any tourists, you never had to lock your doors, no crime, and one very important point was that the fishing was good.[329]

In Castell's utopian conception, the Island was[330] a paradise on earth that could in fact be reached, provided one possessed the means (cultural, financial and social capital) to overcome the nautical distance. His notion of the Island as an *English* paradise is indicative of a general sentiment that St. Helena retained all that is good about wholesome, unsullied English culture. Moreover, Castell was exceedingly critical of what he considered St. Helenian naivety of worldly affairs external to the Island's insular rhythms, but his critique of St. Helenians' 'natural myopia' is ironic since he was lured by the very prerequisites producing the

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[328] Robin Castell was born in Buckinghamshire, England, in 1941. He is a white Englishman who now lives in Simons Town, Cape Town. He owns property on St. Helena Island and moved freely between there, the United Kingdom and South Africa.

[329] Robin Castell, interviewed by Damian Samuels, Simons Town, Cape Town, July 18, 2016. Castell has self-published widely outside the strictures of academia on St. Helena visual history. See, for instance, Robin Castell, *St. Helena: A Photographic Treasury 1856-1947* (St. Helena: The Castell Collection, 2008); and Robin Castell, *St. Helena Illustrated: 1502-1902* (Cape Town, South Africa: National Book Printers Group, 1998). However, elitist literature on the Island is often produced within various 'Friendly Societies' by those privileged who are charmed and enamoured by the Island and see themselves as responsible for the well-being of local St. Helenians. Castell's work, although valuable, does not escape some critique of having itself immersed in a history and tradition of British paternalism of the Island.

[330] I use the past tense because Castell shares the sentiment that the newly constructed airport is a harbinger for the loss of that which is positive and desirable about the island of St. Helena.

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purported St. Helena insularity: its remoteness and distinctly archaic English cultural and architectural character.

However, the fact that he *chose* and could choose St. Helena as his new reclusive home, registers more about privilege than it does about agency, unlike the duress of having to emigrate as experienced by thousands of St. Helenians who settled in South Africa. Both Castell and emigrant Saints - Mrs Benjamin and Mrs Fiels in particular - were appreciative of the Island's "natural beauty", but to these emigrants, St. Helena is a paradise lost to time and circumstance, while to Castell it is a paradise gained in time; two contrary responses to the encroachment of modernity's econocentric impulses.[331]

Of course, here class distinctions between the privileged of the metropole, represented by Castell, and the relative privileged of Saint Helena, represented by Mrs Feils[332], provided the opportunity for a meaningful analysis. More so, in relation to their relative proximity to the engine of empire and Castell's elitist attitude shared by a small minority of the resident metropolitan privileged towards the welfare of the estranged St. Helenian British subject. But such an analysis requires the attention and extensive coverage my study does not necessary allow. Besides, my focus is on nostalgia as an impetus for different kinds of physical and psychic 'movements'.

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Modernity's manifold meanings and manifestations can be unwieldy, but within the context my study, I have contained the concept to describe encounters with unprecedented difference, previously unbeknown, and rapid social change due to the mass migrations of people to new lands, as experienced by my participants. Such convergences with difference and confrontations result in new processes of acculturation and subject-formation, but these responses are multifarious. On the one hand, Castell's voluntary centrifugal movement away from a changing metropolis may not be construed as a nostalgia desire for St.

[331] Here I mean the gradual replacement of the waning imperial driven mercantilism with the waxing completive nation-state market capitalism.
[332] Both raced as white anywhere within the British Empire. Feils' family was considered respectable white Saints. Her father was one of the first St. Helenians to own a car on the Island.

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Helena per se, but for an edenic English place-time that St. Helena offered to satisfy. Rather than choosing to adapt himself to Britain's social demographic and political changes as a result of the contraction of empire and its inability and unwillingness to contain racial types to its former colonies, Castell opted for a retreat in the form of a temporary relocation to St. Helena. His despondency with the changing British state, his apprehensions for potential encounters with the 'other' and the complexities change brought, underly his nostalgic response to grasp on to that which he felt he was losing: 'the proper English way' and the incipient unsettlement of the privileged place inhabited by an English man in a reconfiguring world. To Castell's disenchantment of *his* Britain of the mid-twentieth century, his notion that the Island offered an idyllic spatial and temporal escape from the maladies of modernity is unequivocal.

On the other hand, Feils' and Benjamin's movement towards the closest colony at the Cape[333] occurred under economic duress. There was no question of their need to change and reconfigure their identities. They had to brace themselves against the forces of change brought by a late modernity in the post-colony and make unavoidable adjustments. Significant about Mrs Benjamin's arrival in South Africa was her first encounter with difference in the "larger colony". She was confounded by her encounter with "Africans, moffies[334] and Muslims", especially perplexed by the thobes worn by Muslim men, which she referred to as "dresses".[335] The juxtaposition of St. Helenian insularity with stark alterities at the Cape, disrupted her perceptions of gender, race, religion and sexuality, for instance, which profoundly unsettled her, an unsettling that was necessary for her to make new physic accommodations if she were to live in a cosmopolitan South Africa.

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[333] At the time when Benjamin and Feils immigrated to South Africa, in the 1940s, the country was technically still a Union (a type of federation between white settlers and colonisers) in form, but the Cape was an English colony in character.
[334] An offensive term used to denote effeminate gay men who are usually 'coloured'.
[335] Gwen Benjamin, interviewed by Damian Samuels, June 27, 2015.

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Mrs Feils, who arrived at the Cape in 1948 at the age of sixteen, related similar experiences regarding her first encounters with difference in South Africa. But what stuck out for me the most was the following she recounted:

> When I came here (Cape Town, 'Africa'), I actually thought, you know, through history and geography you learn that there's animals and palm trees. But when we came here, we arrived here about seven o-clock in the evening and all you saw was lights, lights, lights everywhere. I said to my brother, 'this is fairyland, look at the lights'. It was a town, you know, all the lights were sparkling and everything was absolutely mind-blowing, you know, for us because we were waiting to see animals walking there on the sand or something.[336]

Associating 'Africa' with "fairyland" is a completely antithetical conception one would normally hold of a colonial pre-apartheid South Africa. What sense can then be made of Mrs Feils' astonishment at entering modernity by coming to Africa?

It can be argued that their movements signal temporal shifts as well. Crudely stated, while Castell voluntarily ran from the changes now collated and comprehended as modernity, Benjamin and Feils reluctantly headed toward it. Although Castell's movement to St. Helena from the metropolis, and Benjamin and Feils' movement towards the larger colony, were physical transferences across space, they have different psychic drives and effects. Castell's drive was a nostalgic search for a lost English paradise, which he found instantiated by St. Helena. Benjamin and Feils, however, lost their paradise and had to introject St. Helena, appropriating it through affective memory (nostalgia), which, with time, evolved into a pious sanctification of their beloved Island, lost to them as a cherished space-time. But not lost all together, for memory is a form of retention, and nostalgia is a way to relive the pleasures of the past, as I have argued above, and which is so aptly expressed by Boym:

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[336] Ethel Feils, interviewed by Damian Samuels, Sonstraal Hoogte, Cape Town, June 20, 2015. At the time Mrs Feils left St. Helena in 1948, the Island had not yet undergone general electrification.

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> Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy. [Paradoxically though,] [n]ostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship [where] [t]he alluring object of nostalgia is notoriously elusive.[337]

Mrs Benjamin related to me a reoccurring dream she had of a return home, but this dream was immediately punctured, deflated by her lament for a lost spatio-temporality – the home of her childhood:

> But there is nothing more like that now, there are more cars there now than people, I believe [...] St. Helena is no more the St. Helena that I know [...] All my friends are gone...there is no reasons for me to go back [...] I would not want to die there.[338]

Nostalgia is an artefact of this "temporal irreversibility".[339] The foreclosing of a return is a necessary condition for nostalgia to exist. For Mrs Benjamin, this necessary impossibility of a return home presented the opportunity for multiple conceptions of home. Her notion of a home in South Africa is strictly secular – a place where she 'so happens' to reside now as a citizen along with her family. On the other hand, St. Helena is her arche, the place of her inception, one she venerated and invested with spirituality. Mrs Benjamin held dichotomous images in her mind of St. Helena as a place of birth (her genesis) that is otherworldly, and South Africa as a worldly place where she will meet her end (a place of death, a fatality). This juxtaposition she expressed primarily as a lament. But a third, more complex, conception of home was revealed to me in her statement: "I went to the wrong place, I should have gone *home* to England, but I was *sent* to Africa... amongst all those Africans."[340]

This slippage in her reference to England as 'home', although she has never been to Britain per se, should not be understood as a *faux pas* in the performance of her desired identity, but as a parapraxis that alludes to her unfulfilled latent

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[337] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, XIII-XIV.
[338] Mrs Benjamin, interview by Damian Samuels, June 27, 2015.
[339] Svetlana Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents," 10.
[340] Mrs Benjamin, interview by Damian Samuels, June 27, 2015.

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desires for a return to an estranged homeland she is yet to encounter. While residing in St. Helena, England served as her aspirational cultural home, yet once in 'Africa', St. Helena is reclaimed as her estranged home(land) as she moves further away from the centre of Englishness. Her lament for her luckless draw in being 'sent' to 'Africa' could only be consoled by the new life she has made of herself in South Africa – a life given purpose by her own family, especially in the form of her dedication to her two daughters.

What binds these three participants is their tendency to romanticise the distant and different place. Race has to be factored into my discussion, which I do in the next chapter. For the moment it suffices to say that the changing world was favourable to Mrs Benjamin; it presented the possibility and opportunity to reside in the motherland of her dreams.[341] But, for Castell, a changing world was largely perceived as repugnant, a risk or threat to what he held dear. With the fracturing of empire, the migration of people and the intensification of competing nations within the commonwealth framework arises a cosmopolitism characterised by more complex, yet nuanced, social hierarchies in both the colonies and the metropole.

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I conclude this chapter with some of the insights obtained from another of my participants, Paul Alexander, who asserted: "for me, through going through a lot of documents of my ancestors, letters and so on, I've connected with their nostalgia, their nostalgia back to a simpler, easier life on the island, although I think it was somewhat idealised [...]"[342] In other words, he was being nostalgic about his ancestor's nostalgia for St. Helena, *after* they immigrated to South Africa. Other than his articulation that captures the heritable force of affective ancestral narrative, Alexander held no reservations about delving into the arcane when I asked how he explains his affective attachment to St. Helena Island,

[341] Although, in the end, she found herself in South Africa, not England.

[342] Paul Alexander, interviewed by Damian Samuels, Woodbridge Island, Cape Town, July 24, 2016. Paul Alexander's family was part of the privileged and respectable coffee-growing, land-owning class on the Island of St. Helena. He acknowledges with much shame that his family owned slaves. His great-grandfather pioneered the technology for building slam dams during the early stages of the mining industry in South Africa; the company Fraser Alexander remains a reputable company within the South African mining industry. At the time of my interview, Mr. Alexander was fifty-four years of age.

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having never experienced the place personally. In a Jungian vein, Mr. Alexander expounded on what he considered a type of phylogenetic memory inherited from ancestors, a cache memory which predisposes their descendants to venerate and enamour the Island of St. Helena:

> […] that past is very deep, and very rich and somewhere in fibre and DNA of us […] My explanation is that it's deep within our genes, and somewhere the place [St. Helena] is in our blood and somewhere there is a connection. I believe that stuff travels through generations and we may be shaped by our past much more than we understand. [343]

But, are all my participants, as articulated by Walder on the functioning of nostalgia in the postcolonial context, 'migrants', who along with their descendents, experience "the present as a place marked by a trail of survivors searching for their roots, for a home, in the ruins of history"?[344] Are these complex grapplings with a postcolonial identity the unfortunate debris and residue of empire formation? And if so, why the penchant for relapses to the Ancien Regime, to imperial pasts?

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Earlier I have argued that nostalgia is not exclusively a retroaction, but permits for the blending of both progressive and the antecedent elements with the aim of constructing alternative desired senses of self within a specific present. To this end, I have thus far sought to explain *how* St Helena Island as a nostalgic object is cathected and introjected through affective memory (nostalgia), and then invested as a sacred nostalgic object that binds the descendants of Saints as a community in South Africa, but I have simply alluded and not explained *why* that may be the case. In the next chapter, which should be read as a continued discussion of the key themes of this chapter, I attempt to address the question of what may be at stake in present proclamations that function as a celebration of St. Helena ancestry, with the purpose of producing an inimitable identity. The following chapter also includes more comprehensive conclusions for both chapters.

[343] Paul Alexander, interviewed by Damian Samuels, July 24, 2016.
[344] Dennis Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation and Memory*, 2.

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Chapter 4

Race and Respectability: Nostalgic Associations and Disassociations

Histories of oppression for marginalised peoples can be depressing and humiliating, promoting the idea that it is rational to look forward instead of backward, since the future 'must' hold for them better promise and prospects. But for those who put their trust in the future, what happens when it forecloses on these promises? What nostalgic recourses exist for historically marginalised people when they, too, become despondent with the present? What is there to be nostalgic about for them?

In contrast, it is presumed that nostalgia works 'painlessly' for those who were favoured by history, who feel, in the present, that they have lost power, privileges or status, or, that their culture and homeland had become tainted by the presence of the 'other'. For them the past should be a resource of delight, and harking back to a romanticised past must surely be an effortless aesthetic recourse. However, nostalgia does not work in this neat antithetic manner; it is marked by ambiguities, contradictions, particularities and pluralities. Nor is there a clear racial binary between the nostalgic and the optimist, those who are subject to either racial group can simultaneously be nostalgic and optimistic.

Furthermore, it is understandable for autochthons – those who have managed to retain vast elements of their culture and tradition, as well as their formative narratives and religious beliefs - to conceive of an idealised 'pre-modern' time before colonialism. These cultural assets can coalesce and be leveraged in decolonisation projects to offer alternative ontological models, even if these alternatives make provision for a syncretic and hybridised synthesis to racial dialects of ontology. But, how does nostalgia operate amongst the historically marginalised who experienced major ruptures and lacunae in their historical continuities? What are the affective investments in memory for the descendants

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of those who have experienced slavery and deracination, along with colonialism and apartheid?

In the South African context, there is but a single book directly addressing the relationship between race and nostalgia – Jacob Dlamini's *Native Nostalgia*.[345] Dlamini demonstrates in his critical memoir that one can be nostalgic – that is, deriving pleasure from memory and thinking back with fondness on one's own past, especially one's childhood – despite being black and structurally oppressed during apartheid. The significant point to take away from Dlamini's *Native Nostalgia* is that formal structures of oppression, like apartheid, do not over-determine lived reality, which is primarily constituted of a web of affective interpersonal relations.

Dlamini sets out to subvert grand totalising and generic narratives that tend to homogenise the black subjects' experiences of colonial and apartheid oppression. He argues for the recognition of the ambiguity, complexity and multiplicity of the black experience under apartheid, experiences that cannot be simplified and reduced solely to that of uniform political struggle, which is in the main reactionary. We learn from Dlamini's affirmation of his 'happy childhood', as a black subject under apartheid, that nostalgia is an all-inclusive human condition, not the exclusive domain of the privileged and powerful, especially when it is felt that such power and privileges have been lost during political transition.

If nostalgia, as affective memory, is a constituent element of human agency, the subtext to Dlamini's proposition suggests that if one is deprived or denied the right to be nostalgic, it is an assault on one's humanity. The other deliberate theoretical examination of the concept of nostalgia in a South African context

[345] Jacob Dlamini, *Native Nostalgia* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd, 2014). Although nostalgia is not directly mentioned as a concept, there are many other autobiographical narratives that do similar work: for instance, Chris van Wyk, Shirley, *Goodness & Mercy: A Childhood Memoir* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Picador Africa, 2006). Another insightful article that examines the legacy of apartheid racial subjectification and the "ambivalent identification with the parental figure [that] becomes the object of a nostalgia that oscillates dialectically between the dystopian realities of apartheid racism and utopian remembrances of the family", see: Kharnita Mohamed and Kopano Ratele, "'Where My Dad Was From He Was Quite a Respected Man.'" *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 18, no. 3 (2012): 282-93.

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was undertaken by the Apartheid Archive Project research initiative and presented in a special issue of the *Peace and Conflict Journal of Psychology,*[346] from which I cite generously throughout this chapter and the previous.

In setting out to explore the entanglement of race, nostalgia and place, this relationship I restrict mainly to the contemporary connection between 'coloured' people and St. Helena Island. However, it must be stated that the intensity of this relationship is felt and expressed commensurately amongst 'coloured' *and* white South Africans of St. Helenian descent. For instance, I asked two 'white' participants –Alexander and Watson - why they clench on to a St. Helenian identity and what value the attachment holds for them? Both responded that a St. Helenian identity is something "special, different and unique,"[347] a rare almost enigmatic identity, worthy of emphasis and celebration. It is their 'something extra', their existential inflection.

I have received similar responses from my 'coloured' participants. In all cases, except for one participant who was indifferent to his parentage[348], possessing St. Helena ancestry is the accentuating feature of my participants' identities, endowing them with inimitability. Despite being South African citizens, somewhat raced in opposition, for all my participants their St. Helenian heritage was evoked as *sui generis*, as their mystical *je ne sais quoi*; their hailing from a mythical elsewhere that no secular identity can circumscribe or eclipse.[349] But for 'coloured' participants, however, this identity carries additional weight in that it offers them a form of historical continuity, along with certain claims to respectability, that serve to countervail what they experienced as a lack of continuity and an enduring affront to their belonging and respectability on the basis of race.

[346] "Of Narratives and Nostalgia," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 18, no. 3 (2012).
[347] Mervin Watson, interviewed in Diepriver, August 6, 2016; and, Paul Alexander, interviewed in Woodbridge Island, July 24, 2016.
[348] Steven Caswell, interviewed by Damian Samuels, Retreat, Cape Town, July 20, 2015. Steven Caswell is my grandmother's younger brother, son of Edward Caswell, my great-grandfather from St. Helena. He was one year of age when he lost his parents and has no memory of them. It is for this very reason that he constantly refers to himself as "a self-made man."
[349] This was the principle argument in my previous chapter.

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I will now discuss what extra investment possessing St. Helena heritage may have for those 'coloured folk'[350] who foreground this ancestry. While being cognisant that I cannot generalise to all 'coloureds' or even more narrowly to 'coloured' people with St. Helena lineage, I do assert that the 'problem' their invocation seeks to address is a common sentiment among 'coloured' people.

1. The 'coloured problem'

It is customary to find oneself in the company of fellow South Africans of confluent cultural heritage and polygenetic origins[351] (some may call this métissage and creolisation) where a considerable number of them would make declarations such as: "Ah, my grandmother was from *the* Island"; "You know, I had a great-aunt who was St. Helenian"; "Really, my great-granddad was a Saint too." Claiming one or more St. Helena ancestor is a point of pride, often an immodest assertion made gratifyingly, reverberating with similar claims to European ancestry so prevalent amongst South Africans of mixed and multiple heritage.

Complex and sophisticated efforts exploring what it might mean to be 'coloured' in South Africa had been undertaken elsewhere[352], nor has the undeniable contribution of 'coloured' politics in the service of the South African liberation

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[350] This term, 'coloured folk' may seem inappropriate, but I use it intentionally at times to connote the active construction of a mythology of origin by a people still forming their 'sense of self' in the present.

[351] I prefer these descriptions to the term 'coloured', but practically they can be cumbersome to use and may not covey the political particularity of the inscribed racial identity in South Africa. I am, therefore, inclined to use, as a familiar placeholder, the term 'coloured' with single inverted commas to highlight that I find the term problematic but I am yet to find an acceptable shorthand term. I have similar reservations about using the term mixed-race as it centres race as the over-determining definer, when in fact, culture – which encompasses the composite of class, language and religion - has a more powerful bearing on process of self-identification.

[352] For instance, see: Mohamed Adhikari (ed.), *Burdened by race: Coloured Identities in southern Africa* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2009); Mohamed Adhikari, *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial Identity in the South African Coloured Community* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005); Zimitri Erasmus (ed.), *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identity in Cape Town* (Cape Town: Kwela Books and South African History Online, 2001); Zimitri Erasmus, *Race Otherwise: Forging a New Humanism for South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2017).

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struggle gone unnoticed.[353] But for the purposes of my study, by 'coloured', I accept that we are South Africans who, in the first instance, have our progenitors originating from African, Asian and European parentage, those who have been genetically commingled through varied permutations of miscegenation during early Dutch colonial settlement and slavery at the Cape. But, the trajectories of formation and the contested meanings that colonial history has produced of 'colouredness', framed by the socio-political construct of race, are my conceptual interest. Throughout South African history coloured people have culturally creolised – albeit at times privileging the diffusion of European and Asian cultural practices and values - but it is their political status and subjection as an intermediate and peculiar brand of black or "blacks of a special type"[354] that has over generations solidified the group as recognisably distinct.

The conflation of ethnicity, race and class and its collapse into a single 'caste-like' status during colonialism and apartheid augmented the formation of coloured people as a distinct political group in much the same way it hardened other ethnic and racial subjectivities. Spatial segregation during colonialism and its more overt variation enforced by apartheid legislation, which further entangled race and community, meant that those classified 'coloured' married and socialised almost exclusively amongst 'themselves', which adds credence to conceptions of their specificity and distinctiveness as *a* people in South Africa.

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Although this group is certainly not monolithic, and arguably the most heterogeneous in South Africa, the racial marker persists in denoting a real 'category' of people. Under apartheid the classifications became concretised as a fixed legislated racial subjectivity to constitute those who are not 'obviously' black (tribal autochthons, 'exclusively' of Africa descent) or 'obviously' white (settler-citizens, 'exclusively' of European descent), reifying a facile, if not fictive,

[353] Gavin Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall: A History of South African Coloured Politics* (Cape Town & Johannesburg: David Philip Publishers, 1987); and, Richard van der Ross, *In Our Own Skins: A Political History of the Coloured People* (Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2015).

[354] Zimitri Erasmus, "Introduction: Re-imagining coloured indentities in post-Apartheid South Africa," in *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identity in Cape Town,* ed. Zimitri Erasmus (Cape Town: Kwela Books and South African History Online, 2001), 19.

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similarity that sought to eradicate multiple other alterities within the group. In other words, coloured people were reduced and defined in a race-centred society, by what they *are not* – black (African) or white (European) - rather than by what they are, which itself remains a complex, ambiguous and an unresolved process, as is naturally to be expected from grappling with post-colonial identity bequeathed by slavery, colonialism and apartheid.

In one of the first post-apartheid intellectual exercises to confront the discursive denigration of 'coloured' people and to redress 'coloured' identity as constructively positive, Erasmus correctly diagnoses and attributes the interstitial coloured identity to apartheid and colonial policies bent on enforcing "racial hierarchies" through the strategy of "differential racialisation":

> [C]olouredness as an identity [has never been] understood and respected on its own terms […] it has always been understood as a residual, in-between or 'lesser' identity – characterized as 'lacking', supplementary, excessive, inferior or simply non-existent. It has been negatively defined in terms of a […] remainder […] which does not fit into any classificatory scheme […] coloured people [are] the leftovers […] after the nations were sorted out.[355]

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Erasmus further problematises tendencies towards promoting the canard of racial purity "that can be traced to nineteenth century European eugenicists", arguing that "cultural formations involve borrowing from various cultural forms, and thus all identities should be seen/read as culturally hybrid."[356] This articulation of colouredness - as a formulation of cultural hybridity that manages to reconcile extreme differences in compressed time and under oppressive conditions - decentres race and foregrounds the cultural formation of 'colouredness'. It restores agency, affords credit and bestows respect to 'colouredness' as that which is not principally the outcome of "race-mixture" but rather of "cultural creativity under conditions of marginality."[357]

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[355] Erasmus, "Introduction: Re-imagining coloured indentities in post-Apartheid South Africa," 15-16, 17, 18 & 19.
[356] Ibid.,16.
[357] Ibid.

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However, negative deterministic biological conceptions of ‘coloured’ people as those people who are inadequate, marred and unrealised, through the ‘contamination of their blood’, continue to force ‘coloured’ citizens to the political margins. They are a complicated and often conceived as a complicit minority that cannot fit neatly into essentialist reductions, making it hard to design political messages tailored for them, which may not be worth the trouble anyhow; it’s often easier to ignore or dismiss their particularity all together. The consequence of this is that many ‘coloureds’ internalise chronic sentiments of alienation in conceiving of themselves as a social residuum to varying degrees dependent on their class status.

The liminality of ‘colouredness’ arises from a composite cultural-political-racial identity, one construed as sundry and “residual”, where many who are subjected or subject themselves to the identity continue to feel, as a numerical and political minority group, their place in South Africa is unstable, if not volatile. This liminality mirrors the ‘in-between’ space of the Island of St. Helena as somewhere between Africa(n) and Europe(an). It is an empirical fact that despite a clear political subjection as black, ‘coloured’ cultural relatability is markedly ‘western’. In the arena of identity politics, a politics centred particularly on notions of racial purity and atavistic cultural authenticity, the political precarity of ‘coloured’ people is premised on the historical fact that they are of transnational origins.

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Their multifarious origin - deriving from many places[358] – seemingly dilutes their claim to a single specific place of origin, posing a threat to their autochthony. Thus, it is perceived to unsettle their secure sense of belonging and thwart their historical continuity. In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, claims to indigeneity remain the premium political currency that validates belonging. Responses to assaults on ‘coloured’ indigeneity have been controverted by assertions to ‘coloured’ people’s partial descendancy from the autochthonous nomadic and pastoral peoples of Southern Africa. These counter-responses are

[358] ‘Coloured’ families are usually quite aware of their multiple origins and can trace their genealogy to many places. It is not a matter of ‘coloured’ people *not knowing where they are from* as they are so frequently accused of.

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credible and have genetic veracity, but, instead of the contrary, 'Khoisan' identity, as a mode of claiming indigeneity, is often uncritically subsumed under 'coloured' identity. Furthermore, these claims do not escape the repetitive game of avowal playing out – where belonging is predicated on autochthony,[359] as a form of politic underwritten by nostalgia - and offers no potentiality to forge a new humanism as invoked by Erasmus' latest book in which she argues for a double-politics.[360] That is, to be simultaneously cognisant of an inherited racial coloniality while seeking to decentre the importance of race in defining who we are as South Africans, and by extension, as human.

Compounding the marginality of coloured identity is the deepened humiliation - one from which other 'race' and ethnic groups are largely spared - in acknowledging that a vast number of the ancestors of those considered 'coloured' were initially 'deposited' as chattel at the Cape. The allochothonous origin (deposited from elsewhere), and the haunting fact that some of our ancestors were brought to Africa as slaves against their will is often leveraged to undermine and unsettle their belonging in South Africa. If indigeneity is the political currency of 'the African', then the onset of modernity and 'civilisation' in Africa, signified by the presence of whites, rationalises, though not uncritically or without problematisation, European colonialism and justifies the place of those of European descent in Africa.

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Those raced as 'coloured' do seem to fall through the fissures drawn by these two binary representational modes of autochthony and modernity in claiming belonging.[361] Their heterochthonous origins and attachment to South African

[359] For a useful reading on the resurgence of autochthony's "self-evidence", as central to claims to political 'belonging' (citizenship), read: Peter Geschiere, "Autochthony, Citizenship, and Exclusion - Paradoxes in the Politics of Belonging in Africa and Europe," 321-339. Geschiere's key argument raises the present political paradoxes inherent in autochthony's countervailing existence with neo-liberalism in a 'globalised' world. More critical readings on 'new nativism' and its antipodal relationship to neo-liberal globalism can be found in the works of: Achille Mbembe, "Ways of Seeing: Beyond the New Nativism (Introduction)," *African Studies Review* 44, no.2 (September, 2001), 1-7; and, Mahmood Mamdani, *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity* (London: Harvard University Press, 2012).

[360] Erasmus, *Race Otherwise*, xxiv.

[361] This is despite the fact that 'coloured' people can call no other place, but South Africa, home. They share this fact with their 'Bantu' compatriots and to some extent white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans who consider themselves indigenous South Africans based on the premised that

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slave history is often met with scepticism and pushes 'coloureds' to the periphery of South African politics. The implication, as argued by Adhikari, amongst others, is that those raced as coloured continue to pose a constant contaminant threat to the ideals of African and European racial purity, and clear antithetic conceptions of African autochthony and the European foreign settlement's imposition of a particular modernity in Africa.

Considering the multiplicities of origin and the imbricated subjectivities that converge to produce 'colouredness', along with its present political anxieties and vulnerabilities summarised above, how do we begin making sense of why St. Helena heritage is foregrounded, embellished, and even celebrated, while other antecedents (especially African) are relegated to the margins or emphatically negated through their very silences. Exactly what value proposition does the nostalgic foregrounding of St. Helena ancestry offer those who emphasise this heritage? How does it differently emplace 'colouredness' (as a peculiar brand of blackness), if at all, in the South African context?

No matter how nebulous and distant the St. Helena heritage is, I have found, it remains the strand many 'coloured' South Africans extract, affirm and emphasise as their existential arche. This is especially rife amongst 'coloured' South Africans who are educated and English-speaking. Why? My research findings steer toward the suggestion that once inherited nostalgic narratives of St. Helena are cathected and internalised, this nostalgic image of the Island is then appropriated and invoked as a mythical home*land* for those raced as 'coloured' in South Africa who are knowledgeable of their St. Helena ancestry. I present at least four reasons justifying my proposition, which I support with elucidations derived from interviews with my participants.

2. St. Helena: part of the imperfect 'coloured' solution

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they too can call no other place home, even though they are aware of and accentuate their composite Dutch-French-German ancestry. This is not the case with many English speaking white South Africans who can hold or can apply for dual British-South African citizenship or at least apply for an ancestral British passport/visa; their possibilities and opportunities for movement are far less restricted.

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Firstly, St. Helena's remoteness and size elicit attempts to locate the Island with greater cartographic and memorative precision, compared to similar, imprecise, efforts made to trace places of origin within larger continental territories where there is generally perceived to be a lack of geographic and memorative accuracy.[362] Despite its virtual inaccessibility and elusiveness on account of its minute size and isolation in the South Atlantic, St. Helena, unlike other places of derivation, can be pinpointed with exactness as *the* geographic place of origin, albeit simply *a* strand of origination among many for 'coloured folk'.

This geographic and historical accuracy is used as leverage to refute Afrocentric and Eurocentric accusations that 'coloured people do not know where they come from' because they hail from multiple, distant and ill-defined places that had only 'come into history' with the advent of European (Dutch and English) empire formation.[363] In other words, this pointed exactness to a place of derivation is a rebuttal against any affront to belonging on the grounds of 'coloured' people's allochthonous and heterochthonous origins exercised by 'autochthons' who conflate indigeneity with racial purity and true citizenship.

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Secondly, aided by the relative recentness of the St. Helena immigration history, the Island is already shrouded in mystery and simultaneously wrapped in a rich nostalgia for the Island passed down through generations. This nostalgically mysterious and elusive island enables a mystification of origin that most enduring nations often share, expressed as a form of mythology needed to give a

[362] 'Coloured folk' may be aware that some of their non-European ancestors hail from 'regions' like Bengal, East Africa, India, Indonesia, Madagascar and Malaysia. But they will usually possess scant or simply no knowledge of which 'village' their ancestors were from or to which clan they belonged. This type of detail is usually absent compromising these ancestral bonds and, consequently, a sense of historical continuity. Normally, 'coloured' person's European ancestry is preserved over other antecedents for a number of reasons: its aspirational links to respectability and the fact that the master class has prescribed cultural norms and dominated historiography; and, white colonial families kept more accurate family records and celebrate their proud family histories. Furthermore, with processes of creolisation, some former cultural practices will either be adapted or, in extremes cases, even lost.

[363] The irony is that St. Helena, as a spatiality and cultural construct, is empirically a historical product of British imperialism, but it is invoked as mythology. The other continents' histories exist and predate their entanglement with European imperialism, but the import of oral histories from these other places of origin is more tenuous amongst 'coloured folk'.

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deeper historical continuity to a people. In this way St. Helena is susceptible to being invoked as a form of mythopoeism, and therefore sacred,[364] for those considered 'coloured' in the contemporary South African context. The underlying objective is to unsettle, or at least supplement, the secular and historicist narratives that 'coloureds' are simply the biological products of miscegenation with no unique traditional culture of their own. In this regard, the Island serves as the mnemonic device for affirming a historical continuity perceived to be lacking due to a history of deracination and slavery within the context of empire formation.

To illustrate my first two points above, I take, as an example, the case of Mr Solomon, one of my participants well into his eighties, who appropriated his St. Helena ancestry as his single point of origin, simultaneously, but unintentionally, negating his other strands of lineage. This phenomenon appeared with all my participants, but Mr Solomon's consistent references to St. Helena as his sole ancestral home was most acute and impassioned. His nostalgic infatuation with Island was expressed as a conduit connecting him to his ancestors as a means "to satisfy [his] craving for [his] people."[365] This clear tactical construction is meant to counteract the historical discontinuity he believed he suffered as a person who identifies as 'coloured' - a member of a people who presumably lack 'the' clear, uninterrupted and consistent narrative of origin.

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In response to his passionate lament for what he articulated as their general ignorance of and disinterest in their ancestry, Mr Solomon went as far as suggesting *all* 'coloureds' of the Western Cape were the "offspring of St. Helenians" and should know their genealogy.[366] Although plainly inaccurate and wishful on his part, the implication of his statement highlights that an absolute claim to a St. Helenian ancestry offers a clear nodal link within the clutter of historical ambiguity, a way to trace and map a lineage one "should take pride in

[364] The sanctification of St. Helena is another salient point I argued for in my previous chapter.
[365] Mustapha Solomon, interviewed by Damian Samuels, Bergvleit, Cape Town, January 31, 2016. Mr. Solomon was born on the 4th of February 1932. He was eight-four years old at the time I interviewed him.
[366] Ibid.

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[…] the way Indians or Malays[367] do, [after all] we don't grow from a tree, out of the ground."[368]

Furthermore, Mr Solomon's inherited family narrative pertaining to St. Helena operates as orature imbued with an historical inventiveness that differentiated him from the rest of my participants. His inherited family narrative is constructed along the following lines: *Queen Victoria personally escorted and disembarked 860 Saint Helenians from the Island at St. Helena Bay on the west coast of South Africa on the 21st of May 1879 and decided to rename the then called Steenberg's Cove, St. Helena Bay, after the Island and in honour of 860 resettled Saints meant to work there as labourers in a newly established fishing factory*.

Despite the specificity of Mr Solomon's story, there is no other oral or archival evidence to authenticate his nostalgic family narrative. In fact, there is no archival evidence in either St. Helena Island or Cape Town that suggest such a large migration of Saints to South Africa.[369] Furthermore, it is highly implausible that such an enormous case of migration - by St. Helena standards it would by far be the largest - would have gone unnoticed or undocumented.[370]

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[367] Interestingly, 'Cape Malays' are normally subsumed under the racial category 'coloured' due to their historical links with Cape-Dutch slavery. But Mr. Solomon makes a distinction between 'coloureds' and Malays, as often is the case. What this really illustrates is the disparate senses of history and discontinuity *within* the purported 'coloured' racial group.

[368] Mustapha Solomon, interviewed in Bergvliet, January 31, 2016.

[369] The immigration of two hundred Saints to Durban in mid-September 1873 currently stands as the largest single St. Helena immigration event. See page 64.

[370] My own latent desire was for Mr. Solomon's story to ring true. Encouraged by the details of his recount - and his 'lead' that the Anglican church there was in possession of a letter stipulating a labour procurement agreement between St. Helena authorities and a local fishing interest in the Bay, mediated by the Church - I spend considerable time in archives and conducting interviews in St. Helena Bay trying to corroborate this migration event. I doubted I would find evidence for the single migration event of 860 Saints, but what appeared to me as highly probably was the possibility of a small number of Saints settled there as boatmen, fishermen and fish factory workers, as the case was with the emigration of 50 boatmen for Port Elizabeth in August 1872. Unfortunately, I turned up no evidence to substantiate Mr Solomon's intriguing story. Moreover, the link between St. Helena Bay and St. Helena Island is arbitrary. In fact, there appears to be no link at all, yet the two places are often erroneously conflated and used interchangeably during discussion with people who usually lack the basic knowledge to distinguish between the two places. However, Mr. Solomon may be touching on something important: it could be that many more 'coloured' people have St. Helena ancestry, but have distorted their family stories by misconstruing some of their ancestors originating from the 'Bay' and not the 'Island'. Of course the inverse could also be true.

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It would be more accurate to say that St. Helena was home to one of Mr Solomon's ancestors – his great-grandmother, Eva – and plausible to suggest that she, possibly along with a few other Saints, fortuitously made their way from Cape Town to the West Coast including to the town of St. Helena Bay to make new homes for themselves, forming a small cohesive community of Island Saints living in the Bay. It is not hard to imagine the flourishing of a nostalgic narrative under these circumstances. But such cold rationalisations do not speak to the warm affective power of the nostalgic narrative that, admittedly, is far more enticing. The key illumination from Mr Solomon's interview was the scale and detail of his inventiveness, and the depth of investment into a narrative that is embellished to the point where it acts as a mythology of origin, a type of constructive nostalgia that serves as a panacea for severe sentiments of displacement and historical discontinuity.

On this point, one may argue that descendants of white St. Helenians make similar claims to St. Helena as ancestral home. For instance, Paul Alexander was reflective of his own nostalgia when he conceded that he was in fact being nostalgic about his ancestors' nostalgia, a direct synchronic nostalgia he could access through reading his great-grandfather's letters in which he wrote affectionately about the Island.[371] However, in Alexander's case, as with every other case where I interviewed a participant raced as white, they could hark back further in time to when their ancestors arrived at St. Helena from other specific territories[372] within their native homeland; places like Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh, London and Yorkshire, for instance, which were territories within an already defined and established imperial polity – the United Kingdom.

For white South African descendants of immigrant St. Helenians the Island functions in their genealogical narratives as a mystical stop-over from one defined place of permanence in the metropole en-route to another defined place of permanence in the colonies where greater economic prospects could alter

[371] Paul Alexander, interviewed in Woodbridge Island, July 24, 2016
[372] Paul Alexander held knowledge of his first St. Helenian ancestor, Richard Alexander, who arrived on the Island in 1674 as an illiterate settler-farmer from the poor area of St. Gilles in London.

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their lot in life. For 'coloured' descendants of Saints, the retrospection and genealogical enquiry often begins and ends with St. Helena, presenting a narrower and younger genealogy.[373] Any attempt to look back further means delving into an ambiguous history of slavery and derivation from ill-defined places.

The ramification is such that, while both 'coloured' and white descendants of Saints claim St. Helena as ancestral home, coloured descendants of Saints commit the additional investment in claiming the Island as home*land,* precisely because the narrative of derivation does not permit further accurate retrospection; it appears to break and dissipates after St. Helena. White descendants of Saint Helenians, however, can detach the two place of derivation and assert a European *and* St. Helena ancestry, where in the latter place their St. Helenian ancestors were members of the privileged class. There was no irreparable break in their historical continuity since their ancestors hailed from the motherland as representatives of hegemonic culture and race, notwithstanding their own insular differences and internal hierarchies, which become less conspicuous when met with radical racial difference in South Africa.

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Thirdly, and certainty in relation to my arguments above, the deceptive historical discourses found in St. Helenian colonial records constructing the "coloureds" of the Island as 'native' - imposing a quasi-indigeneity on mixed-raced Saints – contribute to and promote the notion that St. Helena is the 'natural' home of the 'tanned Anglo'. This fictive interpellation to an ersatz autochthony and 'nationality' was necessary to differentiate the 'locals' from the white metropolitans seconded to the Island to perform various forms of skilled labour and administration, as well as to distinguish between the descendants of the white paramilitary settler-farmer class and those partially descended from slaves (the tainted).

Inherent in these discursive distinctions was the assigning of status connoting the dualistic associations of indigeneity to servant-subaltern and the

[373] Notwithstanding, this 'stunted' genealogy asserts its associated affiliation to Britishness.

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metropolitans to master-civiliser. At times, this false indigeneity was internalised and evoked by 'coloured' resident Saints as a means to distance themselves from freed African slaves who took up domicile on the Island[374], further concretising the category 'coloured'. In much the same way the formation of 'colouredness' as a liminal 'race' unfolded in South Africa, encounters with the 'other' on both sides of the racial spectrum on the Island entrenched 'St. Helenianess' as indivisible from 'colouredness'. To put it crudely, the 'native' St. Helenian is, culturally speaking, clearly English, yet not white, but certainly not black or African.

In Chapter Two I argued that the Union administration of South Africa applied St. Helena Island as "Place of Origin" exclusively to "non-European" immigrant Saints; white Saint Helena immigrants were classified as "British Other."[375] While white and 'coloured' Saints lived with these differential racial categories on the Island in asymmetrical class relations prior to immigration, they retained a shared affinity for the Island. Once in South Africa, however, the Union government applied these racial distinctions with an extraordinary kind of perversion, legitimising, centering and entrenching race as deterministic of an individual's future prospects.

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In so doing, this publically shared affinity to place was detached and separated along racial lines, only to be reattached again in the present. The reason for this temporary interstice in the publicly shared affinity for the Island is on account of the aforementioned spurious discourses, which generate a false nativity for Saints and cements the association of 'colouredness' with the Island. St. Helena is popularly construed as the 'coloured' *homeland,* the natural home of the English creole. But these associations often had undesirable derogatory consequences for the direct St. Helena immigrants.

[374] Hundreds of former slaves remained on the Island after being freed during the period of active British slave abolition operating from the Island between 1840 and the early 1860s. Refer to my introduction.
[375] See my arguments in chapter two under the subtitle 'Union of South Africa'.

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Mervin Watson would relate to me how the once cohesive diasporic community of Saint Helenians in central Durban, committed to their common welfare, fragmented along racial fault-lines after World War II and in anticipation of the imminently crude apartheid segregation policies.

> They were a very tightly knit community. In Durban itself they actually formed the Mutual Society, which was there to help anyone who was indigent in the community. And periodically families were in really dire straits and that and they would be supplied with food or clothing or whatever [...] and I think they found a measure of strength in being such a tightly knit community. Unfortunately, as time went by, and especially after the Second World War many of the Saints had gone up North and fought for the British forces in Egypt and Italy and elsewhere. Those who signed up and gone up North were fighting alongside the white community who had been in South Africa [...] and when they came back they did not know where they were really and they decided to live as white because things were so much better for whites at that point. It caused great splits in families. Even today some of those rifts have not been healed. Families were just divided down the middle, brother not greeting brother and things of that nature was going on [...] It was that kind of thing that was very hurtful and caused a big split in the community. And as a result of that kind of split many of the Saints, well certainly those who lived as whites, did not want to and still don't recognise their heritage in that regard, which is most unfortunate.[376]

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Due to the connotative associations of 'colouredness' with St. Helena it was often detrimental for white English-speaking South Africans who were descendants of Saints to preserve narratives relating to their St. Helena heritage. Moreover, it was imperative for those immigrant Saints and their early progeny, who could *pass* as white, to be unequivocally raced and streamed accordingly in order to take full advantage of opportunities reserved exclusively for whites during apartheid. In this context, where something as arbitrary as pigmentation determined one's fate, the St. Helena narrative had to be often sacrificed and silenced. It is only in the present that these nostalgic narratives are beginning to resurface and flourish, where proclamation of St. Helenian lineage is

[376] Mervin Watson, interviewed in Diepriver, Cape Town, August 6, 2016.

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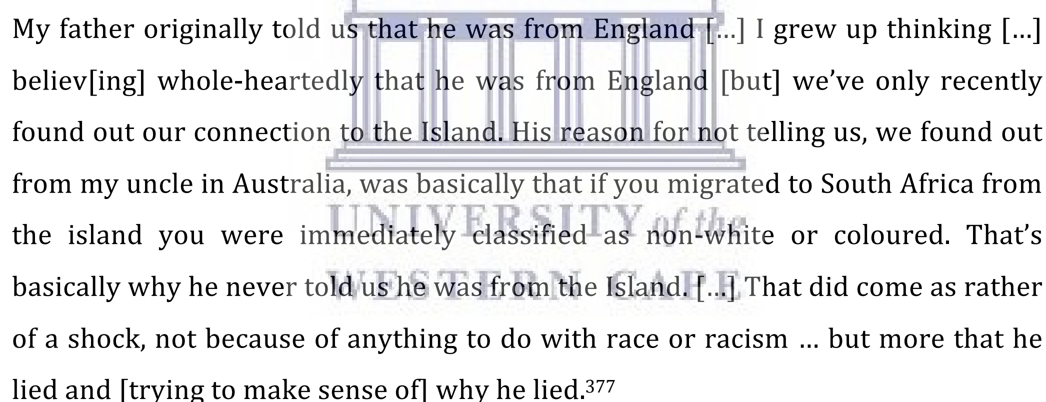
rearticulated as prestige and celebrated by descendants of immigrant Saints irrespective of their racial identifications.

In the contemporary South *African* context this hailing from an English Island is appropriated as cachet. But this was not the case with the initial St. Helena immigrants who resisted being classified 'coloured', knowing full well that such a marker would impede their economic and marital prospects. Some even employed creative ways to circumvent the racist application of 'coloured' on their identities, constructing new selves and histories of derivation. By way of example, and in contrast to Mr Solomon's appropriation of the island as his single ancestral homeland to access prestige in the present context, Melissa Joseph's father, Mr Neville Joseph, employed inventive methods to negate his St. Helena origin in an attempt to be classified white, more specifically as English, in South Africa:



> My father originally told us that he was from England [...] I grew up thinking [...] believ[ing] whole-heartedly that he was from England [but] we've only recently found out our connection to the Island. His reason for not telling us, we found out from my uncle in Australia, was basically that if you migrated to South Africa from the island you were immediately classified as non-white or coloured. That's basically why he never told us he was from the Island. [...] That did come as rather of a shock, not because of anything to do with race or racism ... but more that he lied and [trying to make sense of] why he lied.[377]

In order to obviate being classified 'coloured' Mr. Joseph concealed the truth of his derivation from his immediate family, a secret that only came to light some time after his passing when his son unsuccessfully tried to apply for a British ancestral passport. Melissa's poignant sentiment of betrayal emanated from the interview, a betrayal by her father for guarding and maintaining the secret of his origin, which she believed would have enriched her own sense of identity. The purpose of the lie, I infer, was initially to enhance his own economic and marital

[377] Melissa Joseph, interviewed by Damian Samuels, Bothasig, Cape Town, September 21, 2016. This participant asked to remain anonymous. Melissa Joseph is, therefore, a pseudonym, as are the names applied to father and grand-father.

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prospects and later maintained for fear that he may jeopardise his children's life chances. Furthermore, Melissa's mother most acutely felt this sentiment of betrayal, having shared a life and children with a man who was supposedly 'coloured' in a society where race is so embedded it determined who one was allowed to love. But what struck me as salient was some of the detail, the exactness, of Neville Joseph's narrative of origin, one he stencilled out of his nostalgia for England:

> I remember him telling us a story that his father took him to a pub in St. Just.[378] And he explained this little pub, this lane he had to walk through to get to this pub. What was kind of odd was that a friend of my mom's went to St. Just and this pub was exactly as he explained it … this little alleyway, how to get there. So he must have done some research on this pub, as I now know he had never ever set foot in England.[379]

Neville Joseph's relationship with his parents and brother had to be sacrificed so no doubt could be cast on his performance as an Englishman from England.[380] Interestingly, his father, Mr Peter Josephs, was classified as a "white foreigner", which may imply that the act of persuading whiteness was one taken as a tacit family decision, although there may have been disagreements about the extent and intensity to which the family secret was guarded.

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Although Watson has spoken generally about the fracturing effects on the community and identities of immigrants Saints and their descendants - engendered by an increasingly racialised South Africa of the 1940s - the Joseph narrative is unique to my study owing to the fact that it is my sole case evincing the strategic negation of St. Helena heritage by an immigrant Saint. This disavowal of origin was necessary as a socio-subjective strategy employed by some immigrant Saints to obviate marginality and to secure the social prestige associated with whiteness, itself a tactic to enhance marital prospects and socio-

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[378] St. Just is a small town in Cornwall, England.
[379] Melissa Joseph, interviewed in Bothasig, Cape Town, September 21, 2016
[380] Melissa lamented the fact that her grandparents had been in South Africa her entire life, merely a few kilometres away, but she grew up without them, believing they were in Australia as her father had told her.

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economic opportunities within the apartheid temporal context. Neville Joseph's active disassociation from the Island and his nostalgic associations to England functions as a defining nostalgia intent on reshaping identity in line with yearnings for the cultural motherland, a nostalgia similarly expressed by Mrs Benjamin.

I now make my last of four points in an attempt to explicate why many 'coloured' descendants of immigrant Saints emphasise their St. Helena heritage. St. Helena is unarguably a British Island in terms of administration and culture, a place endowed with the English cultural capital that gives it definition and distinction. Therefore, links to British respectability can be made relatively uncontested since there are (and were) no commensurate competing cultural or political systems on St. Helena Island, as the case may be in the larger British post-colonies, that would undercut or disrupt British culture as dominant and ubiquitous. English values and cultural associations to respectability were preserved and handed down relatively uncontested on the Island.

Once immigrants made new homes for themselves in a multi-ethnic, multicultural South Africa they soon recognised themselves in this new context as distinctively English and, subsequently, precarious members of a hegemonic culture. 'Coloured' descendants of Saints in South Africa may not always be able to account for their white predecessors as a means to display respectability, but they can make certain claims to being descendants of respectable 'coloureds' from the English Island of St. Helena. In other words, English respectability can be asserted more confidently via their ancestry to St. Helena.

For all the reasons mentioned above, St. Helena, as a home*land*, is a desirable appropriation for 'coloured folk' as a place of derivation because it is less culturally ambiguous, geographically tenuous and historically fragile than making claims to other places of origin.

3. Laments, miscalculations and consolatory performances in St. Helenian propriety

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It is a logical point to grasp that claims to St. Helena ancestry serve as a mode to access and assert British respectability[381] while simultaneously extending a sense of historical continuity for many 'coloureds' of St. Helena descent. These claims emerged - sometimes as latent, at other times overtly, but they were always the pervasive undertone - in interviews with all my participants. Yet, I can offer no better example than Mrs Benjamin since she exemplifies the unequivocal case of what was both lost *and* gained by immigrant Saints classified as 'coloured' under apartheid:

> Look, many years ago the St. Helenian people went as white, but when I went for my ID, they put on there *coloured* so I didn't worry, I left it like that. It didn't make any difference to me whether I was white or coloured, as long as I'm a person. I wasn't going to fight for white, to be white.[382]

On the one hand Mrs Benjamin, in holding a higher moral ideal espousing a common human community that ostensibly transcends race, did not resist being classified 'coloured' and consequently lost the possible opportunity to contest being classified white. It is not clear whether her initial dismissiveness was because she believed it a lost cause[383] or an unworthy fight to undertake. I sensed it may be for both reasons but, principally, that she would not demean herself for what she considered an unwarranted, unsophisticated classification, since any resistance of that nature would mean she recognised herself in the state's attempt to objectify her, ceding her power to the state to define and oppress her.

However, Mrs Benjamin may not have fully anticipated the magnitude of its effects or the extent of its malevolence since her values were precocious and her expectations anachronistic within the context in which she found herself. She did not comprehend that apartheid's goal was to deprive blacks of their *personhood*

[381] Yon, "Race-Making/Race-Mixing: St. Helena and the South Atlantic World."
[382] Gwen Benjamin, interviewed in Bonteheuwel, June 27, 2015.
[383] Being visibly 'mixed-race', of a poorer class and having already internalised notions of race on the Island, Mrs Benjamin may have been prepared and more susceptible in accommodating the hardened legal classification, 'coloured' in apartheid South Africa.

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in which the first step was classification. Although, later in the interview she relayed to me an act of defiance similar to that of the famous Rosa Parks incident where she resisted the disciplinary and regulatory enforcers of apartheid separatist policy:

> I was sitting in a bus one day, many years ago, in one of those railway buses because I was living in Hout Bay at that time. And I got in the bus to go to Hout Bay [when] this conductor… I was sitting in front of the board and my first husband's aunty (sic) was also sitting in front of the board… so he said to me I must sit behind the board because I am coloured. So I asked him, why is she sitting in front of the board when she is married to my husband's brother? So I sat there and wouldn't get up, so he moved the board and put it in the front of me, because I'm coloured.[384]

The effect of official racial classification began to rear its malefic head despite Mrs Benjamin initially dismissing her official classification as 'coloured', putting it down to something arbitrary and inconsequential. She was correct in understanding the criteria for classification as arbitrary, but mistaken in her assumption that it was innocuous. Although her act of defiance highlights the absurdity of racist apartheid policies, it was the being of a lifetime of oppression and resistance for her and the slow creep of racial subjectification and interpellation. On the issue of racial self-identification, at the time of the interview, the ninety-six year old from Bonteheuwel considered herself 'coloured' and expressed as much:

> Well, I am a coloured, look how I look, I am not white […] I live here amongst all the coloureds, so I must be coloured, but I am British born, you can't take that away from me […] I am glad I didn't come [out] black, I'm brown, I'm brown […] I don't speak Afrikaans, I only can speak English (sic), they [neighbours in Bonteheuwel] ask me where I came from, I say St. Helena Island. Even in the church, I don't go sit by the Afrikaans bible study I sit with the English because I don't speak Afrikaans.[385]

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[384] Gwen Benjamin, interviewed in Bonteheuwel, June 27, 2015.
[385] Ibid.

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Mrs Benjamin's conception of race appears, at face value, to fall within the banal definitions of race on the basis of phenotype and complexion – a biological 'truth', nothing more because she was still culturally English and that was that. However, she understood the social ramification of racial classification: in the act of declaring her relief that she was not black, she conceded to the relative privileges inhered in being classified 'coloured'. Yet, Mrs Benjamin was resistant in acknowledging the full impact of racial subjection through classification, holding on dearly to her notions of a common humanity, pride in her origin and her sense of English propriety.

On the other hand, one may ask, what has Mrs Benjamin possibly gained? Exactly that which distinguished her from the majority of her 'coloured' neighbours in her community: the fact that her native tongue is English and precisely because she refused to speak Afrikaans even through she was capable thereof and proficient in the local Afrikaans vernacular.[386] This negation was necessary to assert her Englishness in a circumstantial and contextual environment. In her community she was considered the "English woman", which conferred onto her a form of self-evident respectability and distinguishability in a largely Afrikaans speaking community. Her St. Helena identity was anything but dormant, in her context it was evoked and resuscitated as cachet. The English language - and all that it represents – acts as the central synecdoche for English culture conferring the prestige Mrs Benjamin relished, an Englishness authenticated by her St. Helena origin and her English native tongue.

Another manoeuvre in performing respectability was Mrs Benjamin's vehement abjuration of her slave antecedents: "no, no, no, there was no slavery there [on the Island in her lifetime] … that was a different time,"[387] to rearticulate herself in the present in a new nostalgic relations to empire. Her denial illustrates that the relationship between empire and its subjugated has never been a clear dichotomy in the sense that the terms of an erstwhile subjugation can be

[386] During our interview, Mrs Benjamin responded to a beggar knocking at her door in clear colloquial Afrikaans.
[387] Gwen Benjamin, interviewed in Bonteheuwel, June 27, 2015.

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reconstructed and invoked as prestige in a different milieu, like current day South Africa.

Another example, amongst several, demonstrating displays of English respectability emerged from my interview with Castella Fourie. She recalled her father, Edward Caswell, a direct St. Helena immigrant, having never faltered tipping his hat in a gesture to greet each passer-by as he walked confidently down Ebor Road, Wynberg. She continued,

> For work he worn a cap, but on a Saturday and Sunday he worn a hat, 'vol houdings, daai swart man'.[388] They used to call him the black-white man because he was ….. full of nonsense […] He was a character hey, he was a character, you didn't lay a table for my daddy without putting on a cloth, and his cutlery, and his water jug and his crutzen set with all his salt and pepper and vinegar and all that stuff… even if he was [only] going to have a sandwich, the table had to be laid. The only friends he had then were […] the Jews and the St. Helena people. He had a radio then, which few people had, and then they (his friends) used to sit and listen to the news and then discuss the news. […] They used to have a drink […] but those people didn't drain their glasses like [the people] today, they always left a little in their glasses. [389]

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It should be highlighted, however, that these abovementioned consolatory performances of respectability, through displays of etiquette and association, are usually staged in communities engineered exclusively for the subaltern and contrast the servile and sycophantic performance in the presence of whites, especially in the company of white employers. These displays of respectability are often attempts to countervail a deep sense of lament for being classified as 'less than' and for miscalculating the extent of foreclosures to opportunity and dignity on the basis of these disparaging racial classifications.

[388] A direct translation to English will read, "he had lots of attitude that black man", but this does not entirely capture the idiomatic meaning that would imply he was discerning and of impeccable character, performances one normally associate with 'whiteness'.
[389] Castella Fourie, interviewed by Damian Samuels, Bridgetown, Cape Town, July 18, 2015.

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Castella Fourie lamented the loss of characteristics that constituted her St. Helenianess, her intimate distinction, with the sudden death of her father, as well as what she believed to be the loss of St. Helenian propriety as it increasingly became subsumed under general 'coloured' culture over time:

> […] I believe a lot of men came first hey, because they were young men, they came from the Island […] to seek their fortune here or whatever […] and they married the coloured women here and they had children and they had children and they had children and so we all became *just coloureds*, you know what I mean, we all became *just coloureds*, we didn't think anything… that we were from a different place. And as far as culture is concerned and character is concerned […] I don't know how much influence the St. Helenians had on some of their families, I only know how … we turned out … a lot of my family turned out well. […] You know the St. Helenians have their own … accent hey… have you heard it? You see, my dad spoke like that [therefore] we spoke like that […] I spoke like my dad. I liked the way he spoke. As we grew older […] we just lost that. Sorry I did, I would have liked to hold on to it … to have held on to that accent. [390]

Varying from Mrs Benjamin's conceptions of race as wholly and exclusively a 'true' biological fact, Castella Fourie's understanding of colouredness echoes the problematic sociological conception of this racial category as underdeveloped, reductive and ill-defined. She regarded St. Helena respectability to elevate the status of the coloured community in South Africa in much the same way Mr Solomon conceived the contributions of St. Helenian immigrants and their descendants as emphatic to 'coloured' cultural respectability.

I conclude this section of my chapter with another experience during my interview with Mrs Benjamin. Intrigued by the photos of a happy white family on display in her home, I requested she show me personal family photographs, like I

[390] Castella Fourie, interviewed in Bridgetown, July 18, 2015. Castella Fourie is my great-aunt, my grandmother's sister. I share some of her lament in terms of reconciling the disruptive paring off of my family narrative that occurred with the abrupt death of my great-grandfather when my grandmother was merely three years old. This project is and inadvertent attempt to recover some of this truncated filial history, which diminishes my own St. Helena heritage.

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did with Mrs Feils.[391] Although these photographs existed, they were stowed in dark forgotten crevices of her home. My first instinct was to deduce that, as a working class family, the Benjamins may have had limited access to cameras, which is often my experience. But, eventually and to my delight, she could present a box filled with family photographs that she had to first "look for" and dust off. These photographs were interesting, but the saliency of this experience lay elsewhere.

To recapitulate, Mrs Benjamin's first job as an immigrant in Africa was that of a child-care worker.[392] After she married her first husband, she managed to escape domestic servitude and become a home-holder. However, as the need arose, Mrs Benjamin continued to work intermittently in various domestic-type occupations throughout her early life.[393] Significantly though, these class-based forms of ensuring a livelihood were reproduced and passed on to the next generation; both her daughters worked and one continues to work as a house-helper.

Part of the Benjamin family's mode of visually expressing respectability in her community of Bonteheuwel hinged on associative display of photographs in her home. Not the photographs of her own family, however, but a family portrait of her daughter's employer – respectable manufacturers and owners of a popular local shoe brand - placed conspicuously on the small living room mantle for all to see. I present no judgement about the intimacy of their affective relationship,[394] but simply to illustrate how subjective value and processes of self-avowal remain partially linked to associative displays of prototypical filial whiteness intended to offer the templates for respectability.

What seems to matter is that Mrs Benjamin's daughter loved her employer's family and believed that this affection was reciprocated; I have no doubt in the

[391] The only other picture on display, mounted on the wall of Mrs Benjamin's lounge, was an image, resembling a tinted photograph, of herself and her second husband.
[392] In Chapter Two I referred to the general sentiment that St. Helenian women were perceived to be the ideal 'nannies' for privileged white English-speaking families in the Eastern and Western Cape Provinces of South Africa in the late 19th century. This I substantiated with media reports.
[393] Later in her life she worked at a local SPCA – Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.
[394] I recognised that these relationships - between employer and domestic worker - are far more complex, ambiguous and intimate than the manner in which I am currently treating it.

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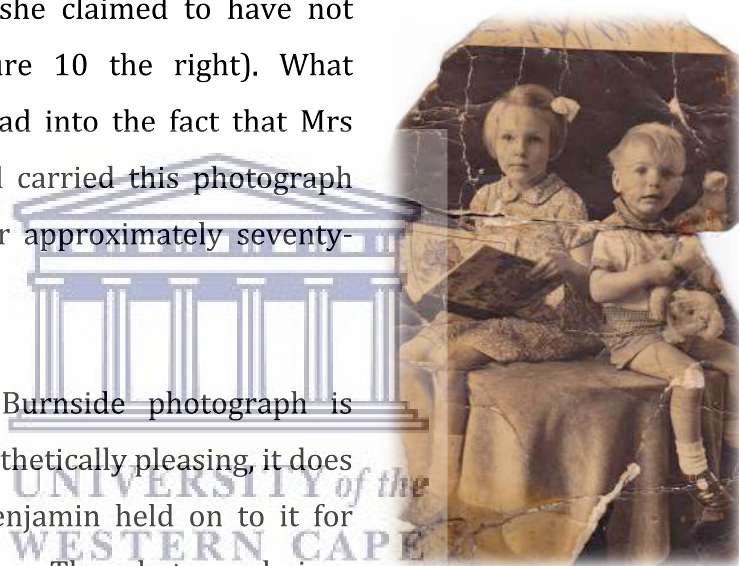
sincerity of this relationship. But this mutual affection is shared within an unequal relationship of structural dependency for domestic workers.[395] This display may be dismissed as coincidental and insignificant, rendering my reading of it moot, but the stark absence of personal family photographs, *when they do exist*, means the process of display was an active, albeit an unconscious, action. It appears therefore, that the dependency is not only structural and economic but also psychological and interpersonal, as well as performative and aesthetic.

To augment my argument, Mrs Benjamin carried on her person a photograph of Anne and David Burnside, the two children she cared for in Mazibuku for under a year in 1941; children she claimed to have not been fond of (see figure 10 the right). What meaning can then be read into the fact that Mrs Benjamin preserved and carried this photograph in multiple handbags for approximately seventy-five years?[396]



While it is clear the Burnside photograph is technically adept and aesthetically pleasing, it does not explain why Mrs Benjamin held on to it for such a considerable time. The photograph is a fragment instantiating a temporality she was nostalgic for, but more importantly, its durable tactility renders it a mnemonic device that indexes a performative model of respectability, one worth aspiring towards. Anne and David's deportment in the image represents young English propriety and dignity, a

[395] Through the works of Jacklyn Cock, for instance, we are reminded of the grossly unequal relations of power between employer and domestic employee in the South African context producing an unprecedented type of dependence on the employer suffered by domestic workers: Jacklyn Cock, *Maids and Madams: A Study in the Politics of Exploitation* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1980). Chapters two to four are especially relevant: in these Cook addresses the paradoxical consequence of employer benevolence and relational intimacy that often intensifies the domestic worker's structural and psychological dependency on the employer by obscuring the inequality and giving domestic workers a false sense of being 'part of family'. By extension, this employer benevolence and relational intimacy creates a spurious sense of respectability by association and proximity to a worthy employer family.
[396] She did not carry any photographs of her own children in her handbag.

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potentiality and possibility that these children would bring light and order to the world wherever they may go as embryonic cultural scions of British distinction.

The image and its referents signal an incipient imperial dignity that can travel and interpolate into any geographic context, enhancing the status of its place of import. If England was Mrs Benjamin's cultural home she had never reached, to her, the white respectable English family is its most authentic occupant. Her children, on the other hand, would not embody these potentialities of English authenticity and respectability, but she could proximate a measure of respectability by association through *possessing* this grand image and exhibiting it as proof of association in situations where such performances become opportune.

The problematic of this encounter suggests that respectability on Mrs Benjamin's own terms remains unattainable for as long as self-worth remains attached to imperial English cultural prescripts according to which the dramaturgical casts and scripts are often racially assigned. Respectability is performed, it is not innate or self-evident. The force of race is that it sets the stage for acceptable racially scripted performances in which black subjects, despite their cultural and linguistic base being English, are reduced to Pygmalion (underling) status. Social 'transformation' from unrealised lowly cast(e) to respectable is, therefore, held and meted out according to the quality of the underling's mimetic performance or associative displays of 'proper' English whiteness.

It can be argued, without much strain on logic, that performances of respectability are constructed and, therefore, expressed pluralistically and heterogeneously. Yet, I found that St. Helenian respectability, having its roots and expression derived from processes of creolisation, still appears to measure its gravitas against some false and limiting notions of 'authentic', 'absolute' and ideal forms of racially defined English respectability. It is in this sense that I construed these specific contextual and situational performances of respectability encountered with some of my participants as consolatory, which I believe is limiting and somewhat self-disparaging. Are there not multiplicitous

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inflections of English culture producing variegated, yet commensurate, forms of respectability?

4. Conclusion

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the two chapters on nostalgia and identity, while bearing in mind my methodology in this part of my thesis is more exploratory than explanatory. In the first instance, I have argued that nostalgia is an active, conscious and deliberate type of affective re-memory. It is a way of feeling the past on my participants' own terms, terms that serve an aesthetic function in which pleasure is derived from re-memory through the process of cathecting and introjecting the object of one's nostalgia.

Moreover, I've hoped to demonstrate that personal pasts can be felt inter-subjectively and collapse into *a past* when the object of memory is one that is shared to form an imagined community orbiting around a collective nostalgic object. In the case of my study, this nostalgic object is a place - the Island of St. Helena - around which a community has emerged and developed in South Africa, constituted by the descendants of St. Helena immigrants bound by their mutual affection for St. Helena Island.

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I have argued that nostalgia operates as a vehicle privileging and foregrounding narratives of origin. The inclination among many of my participants was to reshuffle their memories and fantasies through processes of adaptation, embellishment and sometimes erasure, which led them to effectively curate desired versions of themselves within past and present time. This is particularly evident from the personal narratives of direct St. Helena immigrants like Mrs Benjamin and Feils who have deep sensorial experience of the object of their nostalgia, which they have archived as readily retrievable memory. I have referred to this type of nostalgia as synchronic – where the nostalgic has personal experience of the object of their nostalgia.

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Diachronic or inherited nostalgias that are passed down to descendants of Saints as filial orature through time and over lifetimes are particularly susceptible to forms of outright invention due its fantastical tendencies. Here I refer specifically to the case of Solomon whose family narrative pertaining to the Island translates into mythopoeic renderings of identity – a type of 'mythopoiesis' forging identities founded and grounded on a nostalgia for a lost, idealised and often romanticised spatio-temporality. However, this phenomenon is not restricted to Solomon. Milder varieties of these forms of inherited nostalgias and imaginaries of the Island are evident in, and acknowledged by, other participants. For instance, the testimonies of Watson and Alexander underlie my argument for the shift in the source and mode of introjecting a nostalgic object from being rooted in personal senses to the efficacy of feeling nostalgic about an object through an interface with collective historical 'senses'.

My case study analysis has revealed that St. Helena Island possesses a special valence for the descendants of immigrant Saints. In an effort to understand why this may be the case, especially since most of them have not visited the Island, I have deduced and offer the following composite reason: the Island's minute size, distance, isolation, near inaccessibility and associations to grand imperial Englishness all converge, shrouding the Island in mystery that means it aptly lends itself to mystification, intrigue and fascination. In addition, St. Helenian descendants who have visited the Island often describe the place as charming and enchanting, and found that their experience far exceeded their expectation.

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However, we have to bear in mind that these fascinations and romanticised expectations of the Island were idealised to begin with and do set the psychic parameters for descendants' sojourning experience, which is often contrary to exigent circumstances experienced by immigrant Saints forced to emigrate from their beloved island, as the case may be with Benjamin and Feils. According to Alexander, he believed that his link to the Island was through genetic inherences, rationalising enchantment with the Island that is phylogenetically relayed through generations.

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In other instances, particularly exemplified by my interview with Castell, St. Helena is construed beyond the imaginaries of immigrant Saints and their descendants, as an edenic English paradise, an idyllic place apparently free of the abrasive and corruptive impulses associated with modernity. For resident Britons like Castell who sought respite from Britain's changing demographics, the Island was a cultural and temporal refuge. However, most British metropolitans did not and still do not know the island exists, adding to its epistemic exclusivity, which intensifies the notion of the Island as a nirvana.

Knowledge of the Island is mainly restricted to those with an ancestral relationship to St. Helena. However, once information on the existence of St. Helena is acquired and interest in its edenic properties sown, it is another matter getting to the Island and yet another making a living there. Manifested by the economic history of Island, St. Helena is place of impermanence precluding any pragmatic or sustainable (re)settlement for those who have nostalgically introjected the Island, irrespective of whether this nostalgia is derived from immigrants' first-hand experienced and memory or inherited as the case may be with many of their descendants. However, this impossibility of a permanent spatial return has a counter-effect in that it contributes to sustaining the Island as an object of intense fascination. A temporal return is absolutely impossible.

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To many of my participants the Island is a sacred place suspended in time, a land that had enjoyed a long duration of imperviousness to modernity's corroding and econocentric impulses. In such renderings of a pristine image of an Island, St. Helena is an interesting example of how nostalgia for place can instantiate a tendency to sanctify the past more generally.[397] Evident from interviews with my participants, their nostalgia and attachments to an ancestral place is a psychic

[397] As a practical illustration, many of my participants expressed their concern about the opening of the airport in St. Helena in October 2017. Even though most would agree that the airport would probably grow the economy of the Island, for them the cost outweighs the benefits. In most cases the airport is considered a harbinger signaling the 'end of a edenic era' for the Island. Although the airport represents the beginning of a process that will see the Island integrate with the rest of the 'modern world' many of my participants lamented that the Island has finally succumb to modernity and will eventually lose it character, charm, mystery and spirituality.

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strategy to countervail the alienating and unsettling effects of modernity as well as to ensure an inviolable continuity of the self across time.

Instigated by the exigencies to emigrate for new territories, nostalgia is often a multifarious reflex to my participants' confrontations with difference and social change, which demanded new psychic accommodations and adaptation to identity. By way of example I drew a comparison here between two contrary responses to social change. On the one hand, forced to immigrate to South Africa under economic duress and in the process reluctantly encountering a large complex industrialising and cosmopolitan state here in the 1940s, Benjamin and Feils lamented the loss of their Paradise Island. Under these disenchanting conditions they had developed a poignant nostalgia for their native home. On the other hand, as recourse to his disenchantment with Britain and the social changes underway in the metropolis around the same period, which he voluntarily chose to evade, Castell temporarily found in St. Helena an English paradise gained in time and space as a mode to satisfy his nostalgia for an idyllic, uncontaminated and idealised English lifestyle.

Of greater significance, though, a temporary return in the form of a visit to the Island for many descendants of Saints – whether they have already gone or yet to go - is tantamount to a holy pilgrimage to their hallowed ancestral land. Underpinned by an inherited nostalgia for the place, a visit to the Island, as elucidated by Watson's experience in particular, is a sacrosanct and redemptive exercise reinforcing ancestral linkages, mending and extending their own elliptical family histories. In this sense, I have proffered that St. Helena is a place of both sacred and secular significance; it is often conjectured as an imperfect nirvana on earth, the closest one could come to a utopian paradise in this world.

By virtue of the delayed onset of modernity, St. Helena is nostalgically evoked as a compromise between an ontological paradise and an idealised metaphysical utopia usually deferred to the afterlife. In this conceptual framework, visiting the Island is a sacral rite of passage to assert and affirm, through ritual, my

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participants' uniqueness as descendants of Saints, an epithet that aptly carries with it spiritual connotations.

I have argued that my St. Helena case study suggests the decentering of national and racial identities, placing in its stead a primary subjection to a nostalgic object central to my participants' senses of self in contemporary South Africa. However, despite a sentiment of despondency with the present state, I am cautious not to discount the potency of or to suggest that nostalgic identities supplant these racial and national subjectivities, especially since the race/ethnic-nation has an enduring legacy of being appropriated as a sacred object. Rather, I have asserted that a St. Helenian identity supplements and colours the perforated contours of banal, often fortuitous, national and racial identities.

Foregrounding a St. Helena ancestry offers my participants an affective inimitability without negating the broader secular national and racial identities. In other words, it is a way to belong differently and distinctively to this nation, without alienating the self, which my participants achieve by nostalgically accentuating their origin and genealogies to centralise an inviolable sense of self on their own terms.

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In my final chapter I have begun explicating the relationship between nostalgia and race, in which I have argued that claiming St. Helena, as a mythical ancestral home for 'coloured folk', in particular, carried an additional political weight as home*land.* I've presented several underlying reasons for the current sentiments of alienation producing a range of political anxieties amongst those who identify as 'coloured', a minority group in South Africa. These 'problems' emanate from lingering discourses that predicate belonging on autochthony and notions of racial purity. In this sense, 'coloured' people are often framed as genealogical isolates - culturally and genetically impure 'historical nomads' forged in the context of Cape slavery - because their ancestors hail from multiple places.

This history of deracination, slavery and heterochthonous origins, can be framed more positively by acknowledging 'coloured' people as a rich and varied creole

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group. However, a breakdown in their complex and layered family histories produced genealogical ellipses.[398] This occurred firstly by internalising the rhetoric of racial colonial and apartheid discourses that attempted to reduce them to an essentialism as "just coloured"[399] and robbing racialised 'coloured' of their fascinating multicultural origins and complexity. Another pragmatic way they became "just coloured", in which many 'coloured' families are complicit, is simply by reproducing silences about their multifarious origins as a way to avoid the attention of apartheid enforcers and to fit uncomplicatedly into new social structures so as to simply 'get on with life'.[400]

The recovery of a St. Helenian identity is a psychic reaction by those 'coloured folk' who cherish their St. Helenian lineage. It is one of the few surviving and accessible recourses that controvert a reduction of a people to banal racial categories. Although critical of some of the conditions – for instance, the fallacious discourses constructing St. Helena as the natural native home of the 'coloured' - I have, nonetheless, as an imperfect solution to this ambiguity of origin, argued that the nostalgic appropriation of the Island for 'coloured folk' is recourse to historical continuity for a people who have suffered the yoke of deracination and, consequently, present sentiments of alienation.

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Considering its recent immigration history and enlivened by inheritable nostalgic narratives, St. Helena can be pointed to with precision as a definitive place of origin with an unambiguous English culture and imperial character. Therefore, making claims to a St. Helena origin is far less culturally ambiguous and geographically tenuous than making claims to other multiple places of derivation. This type of historical continuity is becoming increasing vital in a political climate associating worth and belonging with one's 'genealogical age'.

[398] I prefer this term as it suggests that part of a continuity is misplaced or actively omitted, rather than a gap or lacunae, which could mean there is 'nothing' between 'somethings' and, therefore, lack the agency of the subject. If one thing only, claims to St. Helenian ancestry is about the recovery of historical narratives of origin to foster a historical continuity; surely that is 'something'?
[399] For instance, this idea is illustrated by Castella Fourie's lament for her lose of St. Helenian heritage, reducing her, and by extension, many descendants of Saints to "just coloureds".
[400] This was best illustrated by the case of Mrs Benjamin who did not at first resist or protest being labelled 'coloured'.

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In some ways, these claims signal an attempt to flatten social hierarchies predicated on race since assertions to St. Helena ancestry spell membership to a global Anglophone community. These assertions are intended to demonstrate cultural belonging to something bigger and more transcendental that supersedes secularised national and racial identity strictures. Declaration of respectability is certainly a dominant objective of claiming a St. Helenian ancestry. Yet, it appears to be the case where some Saints and their descendants, in foregrounding their St. Helena heritage, have a predilection to subordinate themselves to the dated and distant colonial templates of English respectability.

However, I have argued that this is not clear-cut and suggested that temporal and spatial specificity is significant and should be taken into account when analysing the claim to St Helenian ancestry. For instance, immigrants Saints often negated their St. Helena origins and disassociated themselves from the Island due to the connotative associations of St. Helena to 'colouredness'. Instead, immigrant Saints often employed inventive ways of nostalgically associating to the 'motherland metropolis' – England. For instance, Neville Joseph's case is an extreme example of the extent to which these disassociations are performed as a mode to secure greater social prestige and prospects in South Africa.

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Yet, in the contemporary, associations with St. Helenian heritage and origins are performed as a cachet, especially in communities inhabited almost exclusively by so-called coloured people. Mrs Benjamin's nostalgic associations to England as her distant cultural home; her denial of her past filial links to slavery; her refusal to speak Afrikaans in a predominantly Afrikaans-speaking community; and her associative displays of white English propriety are consolatory performances of respectability to ameliorate deep laments for miscalculating the consequences of apartheid racial subjugation. Critical of these dramaturgical performances drawn from dated templates of English distinction, I have suggested the recognition of creative multifarious manifestations of respectability.

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I have proffered that natural birth, albeit powerful, is not necessarily synonymous with origin or the single route to claiming derivation. In dealing with the descendants of Saints and their quests for historical continuity, another inadvertent illumination from my case study reveals that historical knowledge of lineage presents the opportunity to assert a different mainstay for origin other than one's own place of birth. Given the efficiency of state and civil records, genealogical research has become a popular response for those with disrupted, discontinuous histories of deracination, slavery and migration under duress. Celebrating and highlighting knowledge of an ancestor's birthplace has become a remedy to the problem of nebulous origins while it also provides a perceived degree of free choice and agency in the poiesis of the self as an active process of identity formation.

In the case of my research, it is this very knowledge of their ancestors' place of origin to which my participants invest as the keystone of their identity. This is especially true when participants were disenchanted with the present and their host country – South Africa. Affective memory (nostalgia) serves as a political palliative to contemporary despondency with the secular and lingering sentiments of displacement and misplacement. Moreover, claims by many 'coloured folk' to a St. Helena identity is a response to the totalising and positivistic discourses that deprive them of deep historical continuity by embedding their existence exclusively in history.

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Notwithstanding, South Africa is a comparatively young nation, but if there is any (sub)group that constitute a *novum populum* – a 'new people' made in the crucible of recent history's empiricism and secularism, rather than mythopoeic atavism– then I will risk it and say 'coloured' people exemplify such a group. This is meant neither as a compliment nor criticism, but as an observation that history's empiricism tends to emaciate and etiolate the spirit. And, St. Helena, being more than just an object of nostalgia or an image of respectability, offers a plausible nodal entry point into the mythical, a path to sacral rites and transcendent truth for those who invest the image of the island with sacredness and, thereafter, introject this image.

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For the self to be solid and whole it cannot be explained in totality by history. Some parts of self must remain ineffable and irreducible, if not unintelligible. Therefore, for those who claim St. Helena ancestry, constructing and subsequently clutching onto the fictive, imaginative and mythical elements of the self is what offers this imagined community their *sui generis*. While cultures homogenise on account of beliefs becoming increasingly secular and knowledge more empirical, the countervailing power of nostalgia is a mode of resisting modernity's conforming impulses, by retaining and constructing the self with affective memorative narratives vested in a shared nostalgic object, and thus creating a state of tolerable sanctity, one rooted in the ontological instead of the metaphysical. Nostalgia is a compromise between the abject absurdities of religion - as an outmoded cosmic explanatory framework - and the corroding abrasiveness of modernity's secular materialism.

The broader philosophical and theoretical application of my St. Helena case study suggests that to break with that which has come before us – for instance, losing to time that which we love and those who loved us - is to leave fragmented pieces of ourselves behind, which we experience as an unsettling discontinuity. In a present marked by a dull sentiment of despondency coeval with the expectation of a bleak future yet to be felt, the recovery of a past becomes a refuge in constructing new whole selves in the present while nostalgia is a way of sensing temporality, affectively feeling time and ourselves within it more intensely.

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Appendix

Document image 1: The British East India Company's claim to St. Helena Island, etched in stone.
Source: Cape Town Provincial Archives, Roeland Street, Cape Town. Accession no. AG16168.

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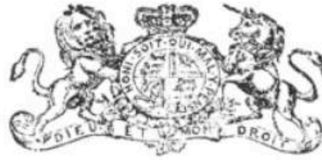

Proclamation

By His Excellency Major General George Middlemore, C. B. Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Island of St. Helena, and Vice Admiral of the same &c. &c. &c,

WHEREAS Her Most Gracious Majesty the QUEEN, by Letters Patent under the Great Seal of the High Court of Admiralty, has been pleased to appoint me, Vice Admiral of the Island of St. Helena, with power and authority to nominate such Officers under me, as I may deem necessary and requisite, for the due execution of the trust therein reposed.

BE IT KNOWN,

That I do hereby constitute and ordain the following Officers, to form a Court of Vice Admiralty for the Island of St. Helena,

C. R. G. Hodson. Esq.—*Judge.*
W. H. Seale, Esq.—*Registrar.*
Edward Gulliver, Esq.—*Marshal.*

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

Given under my Hand at the Island of St. Helena, this 24th day of March 1840.

Signed, G. MIDDLEMORE.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S COMMAND.

W. H. SEALE,
Colonial Secretary.

COLONIAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE,
ST. HELENA, 24th MARCH, 1840.

THOMAS SCOTT, PRINTER.

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Document image 2: Proclamation of 24th of March 1840, for the establishment of a Vice Admiralty Court on St. Helena Island.
Source: Robin Castell, *St. Helena Proclamations: 1818-1943.*

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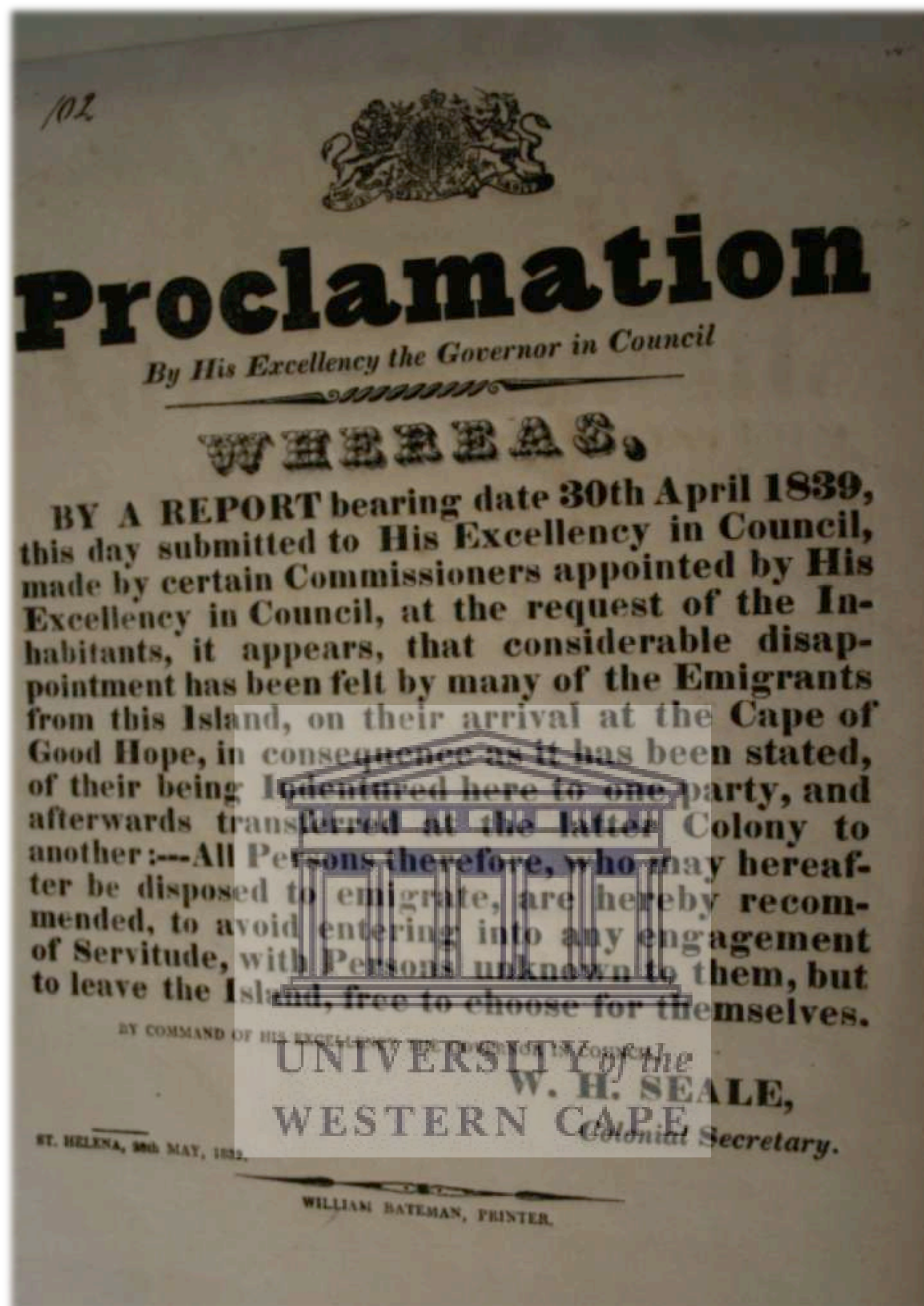

Proclamation

By His Excellency the Governor in Council

WHEREAS,

BY A REPORT bearing date 30th April 1839, this day submitted to His Excellency in Council, made by certain Commissioners appointed by His Excellency in Council, at the request of the Inhabitants, it appears, that considerable disappointment has been felt by many of the Emigrants from this Island, on their arrival at the Cape of Good Hope, in consequence as it has been stated, of their being Indentured here to one party, and afterwards transferred at the latter Colony to another:---All Persons therefore, who may hereafter be disposed to emigrate, are hereby recommended, to avoid entering into any engagement of Servitude, with Persons unknown to them, but to leave the Island, free to choose for themselves.

BY COMMAND OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL.

W. H. SEALE,
Colonial Secretary.

ST. HELENA, 28th MAY, 1839.

WILLIAM BATEMAN, PRINTER.

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Document image 3: St. Helena Proclamation of 28th May 1839.[401]
Source: St. Helena Government Archives, *Proclamations 1835-1898.*

[401] This proclamation of May 1839 served as a warning to all St Helenians considering emigrating for the Cape. It was published during the period 1836 to September 1841 when the first 218 Saints emigrated for South Africa.

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August, 1852.

To His Excellency
Colonel THOMAS GORE BROWNE, C.B.,
Governor, &c. &c. &c.

The Memorial of the undersigned Tradesmen, Husbandmen, and Labourers, Inhabitants of St. Helena,—

Most Humbly and Respectfully Sheweth:—

That your Memorialists, since your Excellency's Government in this Colony, has ever experienced the humane and benevolent feeling evinced towards them, induces them with all due deference in submitting the following Memorial in the firm and solicitous expectation that your Excellency will give it your due and deliberate consideration.

Your Excellency we are confident cannot but be aware of the rapid increase of the pupulation of the Island, and from the graduating decrease of employment, which has thrown upwards of three hundred individuals out of employment, calls for the commiseration of Your Excellency in behalf of the Inhabitants located in this small isolated Island.

Your Memorialists, in consequence of their distressed and very pitiable circumstances, are so precluded the possibility of assisting themselves and families in emigrating from the Colony, that they earnestly implore Your Excellency's favorable recommendation to the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, laying before the Right Honorable Sir John Packington their lamentable condition; and that the British Government may be prevailed on, and kindly alleviate their present sufferings by soliciting the Australian Emigration Commissioners' serious consideration, and that they may be so disposed as to render their miserable fellow-creatures their kind assistance in fitting out an Emigrant Vessel to St. Helena, for the purpose of conveying those, with their families, who are desirous of emigrating from this port to South Australia, in the hopes of succeeding in obtaining employment for themselves and their offspring.

Your Memorialists earnestly beg to impress His Excellency, that they do mutually agree to accede to any proposition, agreement, or engagement, that may be imposed on them, until the expense so incurred by each family emigrating be liquidated.

Under these circumstances Your Memorialists prays Your Excellency will be pleased to forward this their Memorial to the Authorities in England, accompanied with Your Excellency's favorable and kind recommendation; and your Memorialists, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Signed by 174 of the Inhabitants.

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Document image 4: A reproduction of the August 1852 memorandum forwarded to Gov. Browne, drafted and signed by 174 inhabitants lobbying for aided emigration. Source: *St. Helena Advocate and Weekly Journal of News*, September 9, 1852.

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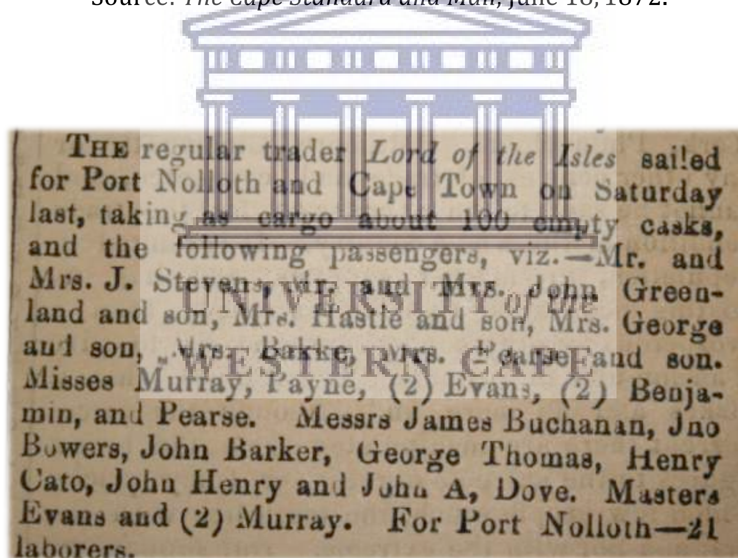
THE DISTRESS AT ST. HELENA.—A number of people from St. Helena, emigrants to this colony, arrived yesterday by the schooner *Fairlie*, Capt. Abernethy. The following is the list:—Mr. D. Roberts, Mr. W. Dickson, Mr. B. Wilson, Mr. J. Begley, Mr. C. Pain, Mr. W. Scott, Mr. R. Barron, Mr. W. Barron, Mr. Philip Joshua, Mr. R. John, Mr. G. Brown, Mr. Henry Johnson, Mr. C. Hoskins, Mr. B. Sefton, Mr. R. Carsons, Mr. F. W. Benjamin, Mr. W. Thompson, Mr. J. L. Bowers, Mr. H. Turin, Mr. W. Benjamin, Mr. R. Hoits, Mr. E. Croker, Mr. M. Lesbon, Mr. G. George, Mr. A. Johnson, Mr. R. Broadway, Mr. C. Pain, Mr. W. Barron, Mr T. Sefton, Miss Martha Henry, Miss Fanny Barron, Mr. M. Johnson, Miss Louisa Reynolds, Miss Jesssie Sifton, Miss Mary Sifton, Miss Sarah Johnson, Miss L. Broadway, Miss Emma Grigsby, Miss Mary Wilson, Miss Sarah Broadway, Miss Rosina George, Miss Mary George, Mr. E. Joshua, Miss Harriet Smith, Mr. L. Joshua, and Mr. Bateman.

Document image 5: A list of forty-five Saint Helenian immigrants landed at Cape Town in search of work in June 1872.
Source: *The Cape Standard and Mail*, June 18, 1872.


THE regular trader *Lord of the Isles* sailed for Port Nolloth and Cape Town on Saturday last, taking as cargo about 100 empty casks, and the following passengers, viz.—Mr. and Mrs. J. Stevens, Mr. and Mrs. John Greenland and son, Mrs. Hastie and son, Mrs. George and son, Mrs. Bak[illegible], Mrs. Pearse and son. Misses Murray, Payne, (2) Evans, (2) Benjamin, and Pearse. Messrs James Buchanan, Jno Bowers, John Barker, George Thomas, Henry Cato, John Henry and John A, Dove. Masters Evans and (2) Murray. For Port Nolloth—21 laborers.

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Document image 6: A list of the fifty passengers, including twenty-one nameless labourers, respectively embarked for Cape Town and Port Nolloth, aboard the *Lord of the Isles* ship in September 1872.
Source: *St. Helena Guardian*, September 19, 1872.

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WE publish the following for general information:—

LIST OF PASSENGERS per *Lord of the Isles.*

For Port Elizabeth—

Joseph H. Rogers, Samuel Bowers, Michael Bennett, Charles A. George, James Wade, Selina Stroud, Sarah Seale, Ellen Bartly, Louisa Bennett, Athriel Leo, Sarah Jonas.

For Cape Town—

William Mitchell, Geo. D. January, wife and 5 children, John Commin and wife, Richard Williams, H. Barker, James Johnson, Louisa M. Stevens, Sarah Thomas, Elizabeth Ann Clifford, Elizabeth Tim, Catharine Tim.

Laborers for Cape Railway.—

John Cunningham, Lewis Wade, James Wells, George Davidson, James Chapman, Thomas Ward, Charles Fowler, Richard Young, Charles Scott, James Henry, Samuel London, Richard Thomas, James Fowler, John Peters, Henry Crowie, James Gray, John Riley, Thomas Williams, Eden Isaac, Albert Thomas, Charles Fuller, David Maggott, William Augustus, George Benjamin, Philip Henry, John Mussie, William McLean, Geo. B. McComm[illegible], John Seal, Thomas Kerr.

Document image 7: Another list revealing the names of 59 emigrants heading for Port Elizabeth and Cape Town aboard the *Lord of the Isles* ship in April 1873. Source: *St. Helena Guardian*, April 24, 1873.

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LIST OF PASSENGERS.

Edward Delaney, Sarah George, Mary Hubbard, Harriet Hubbard, Jane Paine, Alice Hastie, Joseph Robinson, Charlotte March, Benjamin Johnston, Charles Coleman, Elizabeth Williams, George Richards, Elizabeth Isaacke, Jane Richards, Jane Yon, Susan Pluke, Margaret Yon, Richard Young, Bertha Young, Charlotte Douglas, John Scott, Isaac Dickenson, Votair Seale, Angeline O'Connor, William Joshua, Eliza Wallace, Isaac Richards, Emma Hercules, Isabella Harris, Eliza Harris, Leah Isaac, Edith McDonald, G. H. Brookes, Sabina Constantine, John Ellis, Mary Ellis, Jane Ellis, John Ellis.

Document image 8: Yet another list of thirty-eight immigrants heading for Cape Town and Port Elizabeth via the *Lord of the Isles*. The twenty-four women were destined to work as domestic servants for respectable families in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. Source: *St. Helena Guardian*, August 21, 1873.

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LIST OF PASSENGERS per bark *Actæa* for Natal :—

Charles McDaniel, wife and 4 children, Margt Lustard, Ann Francis, Elizabeth Stevens, Charlotte Colman, George Leo and wife, Adelaide Seale, Sarah Ann Thomas, George W. Ellis, Ann Philips, John Swain, Fanny Davidson, Sarah Kemp, Mary Stevens, Jane Yon, Eliza Brown, Caroline Seale, C George, wife and 3 children, John Bowers, wife and 7 children, William Twinam, wife and child, Thomas Everton, Henrietta Young, Margaret Young, Mathew Foster, Margaret Brain and 2 daughters, Jas. Essex, wife and 6 children, Richard Hoyles, wife and 5 children, Sophia Richards, Maria Craig and 2 children, Margaret May, James Crowie, wife and 3 children, Henry Knipe, Mary Ann Knipe, Susannah May, Sarah Watson, Richard Tim wife and 6 children, Mary Watson, Sarah Stevens, Adeline O Connor, Charles Isaac, wife and 9 children, Eliza Piplow, Archibald Caesar wife and 1 child, John Leo, wife and 5 children, James Benjamin, wife and 3 daughters, Mary Ann Robinson and daughter, Agnes Coleman, Ellen Coleman, Elizabeth Smith, Susan George, Sarah March, Henry Brain, Rose Fuller, Caroline Bowers, Johanna Samuel, John Joshua, Henry McDaniel, wife and 2 children, Charles Augustus, wife and 5 children, Edgar Williams, wife and 5 children, Caroline E Henry, William Euly, Robert Holmes, William Croker, wife and 2 daughters, George Stapely, wife and 4 children, Henry Watson, Mary Ann Hampton and 5 children, Joseph Wright wife and 6 children, Eliza Wade, Charles Francis, Charles Saunders, Mary Ann George, and [illegible] children, Julia Jonas, Elizabeth Caswell, Maria Bath, Robert Crowie, Joseph McLean, wife and 3 children, Mary Young, and 5 children, Christopher Brooks, Eliza Francis, Elizabeth Agustus, Henry John, wife and 4 children, John Coleman, wife and 6 children, Jane Harris, Caroline Stevens, Colin Duncan, wife and 3 children, William Duncan, Richard Brooks, Henry W. Janisch.

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Document image 9: The names of the two hundred St. Helenians who immigrated to Durban, South Africa, in September 1873. This is the largest single St. Helena immigration event. Source: *St. Helena Guardian*, September 4, 1873.

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THE following are the names of the emigrants who proceeded to the Cape per *Orontes*, kindly furnished us by His Excellency the Governor:—

Thos. George, Angelina George, Alice George, Florence George, Louisa Stevens, B. M. Stevens, Reuben Stevens, R. A. Stevens, Gertrude Stevens, Miriam Stevens, Klaus A. Stevens (infant), Charlotte Roberts, Emily Miller, Eliza Thomas, Rosina Jones, J. Simon, J. Cannon, Richard, Sarah, Robert, Henry, Thomas, Louisa, Chas. and Alfred Waldeck, George Lawrence, Benjamin Lawrence, Chas. Donelly, William Yon, Alfred Conolly, Thos. Francis, Agnes, Bertha, Kate and Florence George, Thomas and Phœbe Lovett, John Brown, Fred. Stevens, James, David, and Beatrice Leo, A. Brady, Forbes Conolly, Edgar and Robert Stevens, Alfred Ellick, Eliza and Walter Thompson, Alfred George, Chas. Mittens, Wm. Richards, Jas. Thomas, Florence Young, Charlotte Robinson, Hannah Ismay and infant, Barbara Hodson and infant, Mary Stockdale, Rosina Marsh and child, Mary M. Seale, John Scott, Thos. Price, Samuel Fowler, James Moyce, Geo. Piploe, Alfred Conolly, Samuel Henry, Lockwood Young, Charles and Vernon Robinson, J. Clingham, Wm. Hern.

Document image 10: A list of St. Helena emigrants, who set sail for the Cape and Natal, South Africa on the 16th of April 1891.
Source: *St. Helena Guardian,* April 30, 1891.

PEMBROKE CASTLE.—The English steamship *Pembroke Castle*, 2560 tons, Captain Warden, from London bound to Cape Good Hope, out 17 days, arrived at 12·40 p.m. on Monday 4th instant, bringing a small mail. She left again at 4·40 p.m., taking a mail, and the following passengers:—For Port Nolloth—Samuel Young, James Thomas, William Samuel, Thomas Bagley, David Johnson, senior, David Johnson, junior, Frederick McDonald, Edward Henry, John Donelly, Charles Collins, Henry LeBreton, Thomas Isacke, Luther Thomas, Edward Caswell, William Duncan, John Graham, James Graham, Ernest Franks, Iverton Henry, James Drabble, Joseph Saunders, Stephen Sylvester, senior, Stephen Sylvester, junior, William Fowler, Herbert Fowler, William Stevens, Charles Johnson, Henry Peters, William Yon, Henry Stevens, James O'Neil, John Drabble, William S. Yon, Matthew Henry, Thomas Whiteman, John Twynam, John Maggott, Samuel Benjamin, Thomas Maggott, Benjamin Whiteman, Charles Isacke, William Maggott, Henry Thomas, Edward Stevens, James Yon, Richard Henry, Edward Lawrence, Joseph Corker, Charles White, Edward Brookes, Joseph Jonas, Thomas Joshua, Weston Coleman, Alexander Nelson, Thomas Green, John Williams, Mrs. Whiteman and 4 children, Mrs. Wade, Mrs. McLachlin and child, Mrs. William Yon and 3 children, Mrs. Stephen Yon and 3 children. For Capetown—Misses Catherine S. Peters and Elizabeth Davidson.

Document image 11: A list of emigrants leaving for South Africa on the 04th of September 1893 aboard the *Pembroke Castle* .
Source: *St. Helena Guardian,* September 7, 1893.

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ST HELENA GUARDIAN

THE following is a list of Labourers proceeding to Port Nolloth by the R.M.S. *Gatician* on 21st May 1907 :—

Alfred Plato, John Johnson, Charles Flagg, Archie Andrews, John Bennett, Hudson R. Cannon, George Arms, John Smith, Thomas Smith, George Burton, Arthur Thomas, John Richards, Henry A. Thomas, John Riley, George Fagan, Maurice Stevens, A. O'Connor, P. Neilson, John Brown, Arthur Isaacke, Thomas Bennett, Ernest George, Edward Yon, William George, John Peters, Edward Corker, Thomas Williams, Henry Collins, John Samuel, Matthew John, Frederick Whiteman, Edward Hercules, Frank Stevens, William Essex, William Bennett, Charles Yon, James Seale, George Augustus, Charles O'Neil, John Swain, John Williams, Harry Peters, Arthur Silversides, William John, Henry Thomas, Charles H. Stevens, Henry Williams, Arthur Houndsworth, James Smith, Percy Caswell, Louis Timm, Rubeu Yon, Isaac Leo, Thomas Timm, Henry Augustus, John Moyce, Richard Cooper, Ernest Peters, Edward C. Reynolds, Thomas George, Robert Phillips, William Francis, George Buckley, George Grace, William Du Plooy, Alexander Yon, Herbert Bowers, Charles E. Plato, Lockwood T. John, George Leo, Edward Timm, Charles W. Young, Edward Robinson, James Reynolds, John Joshua, Francis March, Joseph Peters, Arthur March, William O'Connor, Frederick Benjamin, Edward Jonas, Robert Brooks, Frederick Peters, Joseph Scott, Robert March, Frederick Paynter, Richard Yon, Charles Joshua, Richard Joshua, Edgar Samuel, Charles Stevens, Arthur Yon, Henry J. Crowie, John Arms, Edward E. Thomas, Edward Gennel, Reuben Henry, J. Vangaard, Thomas John, Charles H. Cato.—Total, 100.

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Document image 12: A full list of the 100 men who headed for Port Nolloth aboard the *Gatician* in May 1907. Source: *St. Helena Guardian,* May 16, 1907, np.

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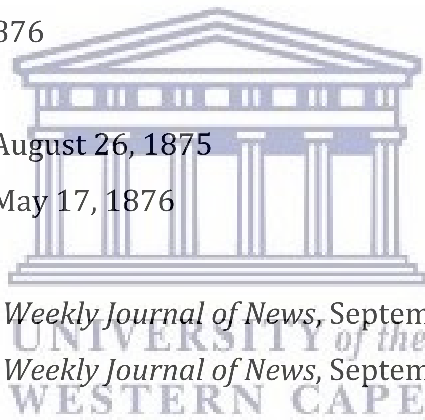
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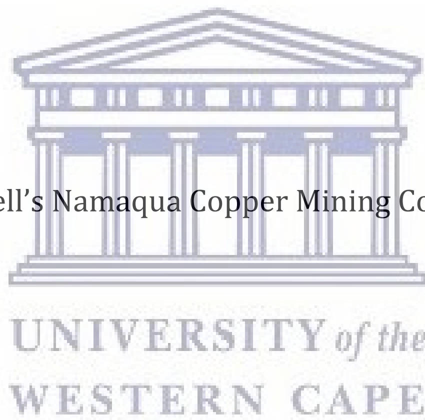
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