

**Title:** To Live Coloured: An Autoethnographic [En]counter with Futurity

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In my MA thesis *'Utopia in Performance: Re-imagining a coloured identity narrative'* (2019) I explored how coloured identity has been historically produced as a monolithic racial category, focussing on how performance offers critically generative ways of addressing and contesting the politics and meanings of 'colouredness' in post-apartheid South Africa. I investigated the politics of naming and its impact on politically imposed and socially internalised perspectives within a coloured identity narrative. My aim was to disrupt normative ideological and cultural constraints, and consider the performance of coloured identity through the use of individual and collective memory construed from both historical positionality as well as an established theatrical canon.

With this paper, I will take this thinking forward by way of two particular tenets. The first would be to adopt a decolonial perspective. 'Decoloniality' is interesting, not only in its nuanced diversions to 'postcoloniality', but also in the way it works towards a rupturing of colonialism. *"It is the beginning of any epistemic de-colonial de-linking with all its historical, political and ethical consequences. Why? Because geo-historical and bio-graphic loci of enunciation have been located by and through the making and transformation of the colonial matrix of power..."* (Mignolo, 2009:2). This becomes particularly relevant in an attempt to shift from a re-active form of knowledge production (naming what was) to a proactive form of knowledge production (de-linking to create a futurity).

Secondly, and following on, I draw on the personal, through an autoethnographic lens. I propose that it is within memory – memoir – that decoloniality begins. Through the theorising of 'ethnography' by D Dwight Conquergood and 'autoethnography' by Craig Gingrich-Philbrook, I believe the coloured identity narrative flourishes. Ethnography offers autonomy over narrative from a lived experience. A *lived experience* operates with and of the body, the visceral examination of memory, one less clean and refutes 'boxing' – the definitive. It moves the definitive to the descriptive, like a poet who moulds language or a dancer expands through but beyond the body.

I propose that the coloured identity narrative, within the decolonial project, must de-link itself from the colonial influence (global) as well as from the apartheid influence (local) and therefore requires *two* diverse processes of de-linking, both necessitating the body to actively, and with authority, engage memory/remembering/recollecting/moving towards a futurity. 'Futurity' conceived by José Esteban Muñoz offers constructive ways of engaging with a coloured identity narrative, one that is dynamic in its nature.

With this framing, I compare autobiographies of coloured authors that speak about their 'lived experience' in various ways, from diverging vantage points, about an array of topics and it is in placing their voices next to each other, that a cannon emerges.

*"Autobiography is like asking a rabbit to tell us what he looks like hopping through the grasses of the field. How would he know? If we want to hear about the field, on the other hand, no one is in a better circumstance to us - so long as we keep in mind that we are missing all those things the rabbit was in no position to observe"* – translator's note from the book: *Memoirs of a Geisha*

## **Bio**

**From** – Johannesburg, living in Cape Town.

**2014** – completed BADA at the University of the Witwatersrand.

**2018** – completed my MA in Theatre and Performance at the University of Cape Town – supervisors: Amy Jephta (year 1); Dr. Mbongeni Mtshali (year 2)

### **Currently:**

- Administrator and Research Assist for Re-imagining Tragedy from Africa and the Global South (ReTAGS) – Prof. Mark Fleishman.
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