

White Christian talk and the reformation, transformation, and disruption of whiteness in South Africa

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Introduction

Let me start by thanking Fernando and the team for creating this space, and for the willingness to learn from a different context – specifically the South African context. As fate would have it – and not only fate, but also modern medical systems impacting on this – I now have the strange privilege of opening this public lecture series on South Africa. Strange because, while I, and supposedly those organizing these events, do think that what I am going to speak about is important, I doubt anyone would consider this a good place to start when thinking through South Africa. Nevertheless, it is what it is, and I will open up this discussion by turning the gaze on white South Africans post-apartheid.

Perhaps a brief clarification on the title of the lecture is in order. Those with a careful eye might have noticed that what was presented on the flyer, and what you find on the screen is not the same. The title on the screen is indeed the right one, although the accidental change of “reformation” to “reconciliation” might say something about much of global expectations of what to hear from South Africa. I won’t be speaking on the reconciliation of whiteness – I’ll also refrain from a long theoretical reflection on the impossibility of such a task. That said, much of what goes by reconciliation is indeed not that different from a re-forming of whiteness...

The way I hope to pitch this lecture, and whether that was successful is something which you will have to evaluate, is as both public and preparatory. Public in the sense while I’m speaking within the university, I’m not assuming that everyone here would necessarily be that well versed with the South African context, or with critical studies on race and whiteness. The invitation was public, and I hope to acknowledge that by being inclusive of those outside the small guild of scholars interested in the narrow field I’m drawing on. But more specifically, I want to prioritize the fact that there is a group of Masters students that are on their way to a visit in South Africa, and for whom this lecture series should be of use in preparation. My hope is therefore mostly to try and provide one potential lens for seeing, and given what I’m going to say more probably hearing, what is going on in South Africa: most specifically, I hope to provide a lens for hearing more than just words and sentences in the discourses of white South Africans in general, and white South African Christians in particular – hopefully tuning in to the political and social work being done by these words.

So let me briefly outline what I wish to do.

In the first part of the lecture I'm going to give a very brief overview, while actually riffing off, of the early work of South African sociologist Melissa Steyn. In her early research she analysed white discourses in the early years after apartheid, and presented a kind of typology of white talk working to reaffirm, reform, resist, or any combination of a number of such descriptive words, whiteness. While this was not the end of her research, and while much has changed since, I suspect that the markers she indicates continue to exist, even if the strategies evolved and expanded, and the demographics of where we would find who and in what numbers definitely changed. So I use her typology as a kind of scaffold, presenting her work, while trying to extend it into the present with – mostly anecdotal – references to more recent debates.

With Steyn's work as background for what we mean with white talk after apartheid, I will then present two types of white Christian faith talk, showing how white people of Christian conviction are reworking their faith talk in ways which reaffirm, reform, resist, or any combination of a number of such descriptive words, whiteness. What I present in this part is mostly based on my own research some years ago, and quite preliminary. I am quite convinced that other lines could be drawn, and it would seem like others might indeed try and do so in the years to come.

Lastly, I need to make a comment on my focus on words, on discourses, or on "white talk". It should immediately be apparent that this is very limited. We are not our words only, or even primarily, and racism is quite specifically not a matter of speaking wrongly. Indeed, there are important other pictures that we would see if the focus were on geographic organization in post-apartheid South Africa, on political or economic activity, on religious and social ritual, or a number of other lenses. However, faith identity, theology if you will, does come to expression in a particular way through words, so listening to how people speak can give us a picture of at least the ideals they have for how to think through their own identity and political or social location.

So with this as background my question: how do white people speak their whiteness into a changing identity in post-apartheid South Africa?

Steyn's typology

Melissa Steyn's early research tried to identify ways in which white South Africans are reworking their whiteness in a changing South Africa. The data was collected in the first years after the 1994 elections, and she rightly describes South Africa as one of the biggest experiments at reworking identity. This is not limited to white South Africans! Thinking through who we become after apartheid, in particular given the deep settler context of South Africa – where European colonists do not leave, partly because they no longer have any actual connection to European nation-states – is a challenge for all South Africans. But Steyn focuses the gaze of the researcher on white people: what are we doing after apartheid?

Narrative one

It should come as no surprise today that the colonial narratives of whiteness didn't die during the second half of the twentieth century as various processes of decolonization in Africa and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa took its course. So one possible way in which white South Africans are

trying to form their identities in relation to whiteness is by quite simply assuming that nothing has changed.

Put broadly, the colonial construction of whiteness always had at least these two lines running through it: on the one hand a firm belief in white superiority. White people was quite frankly closer to God or more evolved human beings – different arguments depending on what the reigning epistemological climate was at a given time. Who is included as white remains quite fluid throughout history, although for most of modern history after the so-called ‘Enlightenment’ its center is found somewhere between London and Berlin, Hamburg and Paris.

On the other hand, and often deeply intertwined with this firm belief in white superiority, the belief that white Europe should guide the world towards toward Christianity, enlightenment, development. It runs through much of the modern missionary movement, at times gets described as a “white man’s burden”, or thinking of white people as adults and all others as children that needs guiding to maturity. It continues into much of the benevolent talk of development aid and assistance –accompanied by the assumption that those considered white should guide the world into whatever future ideal is presented.

These narratives, taking on a particular version in South Africa, continue after apartheid. You probably won’t find this kind of talk splashed in mainstream media. Although there are exceptions from time to time, it is always met with fierce criticism. If ever you do become a fly on the wall in the private talk within some white South African spaces, you will however no doubt find that these discourses are still very much alive.

But this narrative has been so thoroughly discredited, that it is doubtful that it provides the means to provide a coherent way of existing as white in South Africa today in the long run. Different discursive tools are therefore needed.

Narrative two

A key apartheid trope was that of the “swart gevaar” – “black danger”. The belief was that once the ANC governs the country, there will be large-scale violence against white South Africans. The ANC is the party of Nelson Mandela, which has received the majority of the votes in all elections since 1994. Historically it was often discursively used in white talk as synonymous with “black”, in particular after apartheid when explicit racist talk was being rejected.

Such large-scale violence is not the only way in which attention would be drawn to what is allegedly being “done to white people”. Exclusion from jobs and education, expropriation of financial resources, attacking cultural, social, or educational spaces which is predominantly white, all of this becomes part of a narrative created on white suffering.

It’s extreme form today, seeing a recent revival and often receiving support from the Dutch- and Flemish-speaking part of the Europe, focus on a supposed “white genocide” happening on South African farms. While genocide talk is probably limited to a number of fringe organizations, more general talk of how safe and secure, on many levels, things were in the “good old days”, compared to the present, it far more widespread.

At present this discursive repertoire is drawn upon extensively as the long-standing question of rectifying the dispossession of land in South Africa is getting renewed priority. This is also tied to various discursive and material projects of building white enclaves. Richard Ballard years ago observed that apart from the emigration movement of white South Africans before and after the end of apartheid – involving English-speaking white South Africans in particular, but not exclusively – there was also a movement of inwards migration, or semigration. This could be seen in the growing phenomenon of security estates – large walled residential areas, increasingly including education and retail spaces within them, which is indeed a class phenomenon, but also quite explicitly racialized. Here white people in particular, and upper-middle class people more generally, can recreate a world within a world, a country within a country. More explicitly, it is found in talk of a “Plan B” by the Afrikaner social movements, the so-called “Solidarity-movement”, where the argument continues to reign that since the ANC is only looking after black people, at the expense of white South Africans, white South Africans should do their own thing in response., building parallel community infrastructure such as security and education services.

That there is quite easy overlap with the first narrative should be obvious. But the easy presumption of white power and unquestioned white right to rule the world for and on behalf of others – whether through force or benevolence – is clearly ruptured. On the other hand, this talk struggles to hide assumptions that white people really should be treated differently, and that re-segregation is the only way to live as white in South Africa.

Narrative Three

While big social changes do indeed take time, it is probably safe to say that the number of white South Africans who can imagine any kind of coherent identity through either old colonial imaginations of explicit white superiority or late apartheid warnings of pending black danger should the guard be left down for a moment are becoming less and less. However, more “pragmatic” approaches to a kind of South African multiculturalism does produce ways of existing as white in South Africa, and I suspect those listening attentively will hear such talk quite often.

Whether it was Nelson Mandela wearing the number 9 rugby jersey in 1995, the starry-eyed global narrative of the South African miracle, or just the relief that the dominant white right propaganda about what will come after democracy was wrong, at some point many white South Africans figured out that things would be “all right”.

Things being “all right” imply the idea that being white can be OK in a changing South Africa. We can be white, and be part of the country. Quite specifically, it assumes an inevitable continuation of some vague connection to Europe – again, apart from certain connection to Britain usually not to any particular part of continental Europe, but just to “Europe” as that which stands in for “white”.

While the “Plan B” mentioned above builds on a threat which needs to be forcefully countered, this narrative is more pragmatic in its reconstruction of whiteness. Steyn associates this with much of the white cultural movements mushrooming up since the end of apartheid. Afrikaans language and cultural festivals have become a very common phenomenon in the past decades. These are usually not even

vaguely representative of those who are Afrikaans first language speakers, a racially diverse group, not to speak of those who are competent in Afrikaans as a language, but has a largely, if not almost exclusively, white constitution.

These are a far cry from the global campaigns arguing that there is some white genocide in South Africa, and could easily incorporate an acknowledgement of current economic privileges associated with being white. However, it considers a European cultural, linguistic, or intellectual core to be separable from apartheid and racist identities, so that whiteness can coexist as just another identity. The “just another” might soon show its limitations, as there is little evidence apart from verbal commitments to making available the level of material resources required to maintain these white cultural movements, and silently race is in questionable ways linked to culture and language.

But outside of such explicit white organizing, a broader pragmatism is also drawn upon to make sense of a general coexistence. People “make it work” where they find themselves. When circumstances dictates – often a change in the labour force more reflective of society at large within the sector where someone finds themselves – then people find ways of living together.

For example, I remember a conversation with some congregants about a decade ago: they were working in one of the large banks in South Africa, in departments which were quickly seeing a changing labour demographic on all levels. Their response was not with alarm, nor with arguments for drawing together white enclaves. These changes were a reality which they accepted with little protest – at least as far as I can see. They even saw their own work as participating in a changing society. However, at one point they also explained to me that work is work, and home is home. Over weekends they move among “their own people” – even while in this particular example they were living in increasingly diverse residential neighborhoods as well.

More recent research seems to indicate that this is a pattern that remains important: In spite of growing desegregation of government departments, and in slightly slower fashion the corporate and education sectors, spaces of voluntary association remain largely segregated – such as holiday resorts and some forms of entertainment, but, important for my own interest, also religious groups. Quite specifically, while a large section of white society find ways of managing their public lives in a world where whiteness is less and less dominant, and might even consider such participation as a positive thing, and in contrast to the explicit racist mentality of their parents or the alarmist withdrawal of their peers mentioned earlier, the assumption remain that of working together, while retaining some white identity in private (which does not imply in secret) and through voluntary activity.

Perhaps growing white anxiety in current South Africa is partly due to the pressure on such pragmatism. While those identifying with the earlier narratives have been anxious all along, the insistence that a more critical interrogation of whiteness is required for the future of South Africa calls forth questions which such pragmatism either could not answer, or, which challenge the way in which a privileged white identity has been maintained through cultural, linguistic and other means. Here we might see a discourse which worked for a time, but which cannot respond to contemporary changes in a coherent fashion.

Narrative four

The story of the reconstruction of whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa world would not be complete without noting the popularity of approaches which claim to “not see race”, or even of white people who claim to “not be white”. Such discourse can tap into post-World War II renouncements of scientific racism and the insistence that race as a biological category is utter nonsense, while through this denying the way in which race do function as a social tool in the organizing of society, and of their own lives as well.

In a world where whiteness is publicly problematized, such talk provide an easy way out of the problem. Denying that I’m white imply a denial of how the history of race and whiteness impacted on myself. Pointing this out does not imply an assumption on my behalf that whiteness is somehow static, that it is functions in exactly the same way in all places and times. It clearly does not. Eastern Europe or Latin America has a very different relation to how whiteness is constructed than Europe or North America. Yet in a world as thoroughly shaped by race and colonialism as South Africa, or, for that matter, Western Europe, the knee-jerk insistence that “I don’t see race” does beg questions of how it related to the construction of whiteness.

This narrative clearly has international parallels in various discourses of being “colour-blind”. It finds a moral appeal in being able to claim insistence on the language of universal human rights, and nice-sounding platitudes of how we “are all just humans”. It easily makes use of South African language of non-racialism, and in fact, often claims to be the true non-racial alternative to official government policy which through processes of affirmative action or economic empowerment are inevitably reinscribing race into a society.

It might be drawn upon quite consciously cynically – implying a conscious misuse of ideas of universal humanity to obscure ongoing racial inequality – or with genuine moral intent – meaning that it provides a tool for white South Africans to find some coherent identity where the formative discourses from their past can no longer serve them in the present, while they do not have tools to face whiteness in the present.

This particular discursive trope has in recent years received critique perhaps equal to more hard-liner white racist tropes. White claims at not seeing race is considered disingenuous at best, but more often as a way of evading difficult debates on how history impact on the present – perhaps the question at the heart of South African society a quarter of a century after apartheid.

Narrative five

However, South Africa has not been without examples of attempts at working through whiteness which recognize the injustice of the past – and often also of the present – while recognizing that race will remain a social reality for the foreseeable future, and yet committing to the South African and broader African context. I briefly mention different ways in which this might happen, again drawing on Steyn’s analysis broadly, but working it out into the present.

One option is the simple recognition of the problem, and noting that white people simply do not know what to do in response. A strong version of this was perhaps found some years ago in the wide debate around an article by Rhodes University Philosopher Samatha Vice. Vice attempted to make a strong argument for the moral problems with being white in a world shaped by white racism. While not her only proposal, the article became the point of public and popular debate mainly because of her argument that the appropriate stance for white South Africans should involve political silence. Given the history of white racist rule, the best option for white people, she argued, was to remain silent and allow black South Africans to determine the future course of the country. She did not argue that white people should do nothing while being silent, rather we should work on ourselves, find a more moral way of being, and should definitely work to contribute positively in many others spheres, but the sphere of the political should be responded to with silence.

I'm not going to try and give an overview to the responses and critiques here.¹ But in brief, while there is much to say for an honest recognition that white people simply do not know and cannot determine the future of South Africa, being a response to a number of different narratives mentioned thus far, the long-term viability of such silence, and whether it is indeed an appropriate stance has been questioned.

Secondly, and perhaps one of the most difficult discourses to draw out from Steyn's original work is that of white people who no longer identify as white, and who identify in some way with a different part of South African society. This is quite different from the broad notion of not seeing race, or believing that whiteness simply doesn't affect me, but rather involves narratives of forming the self where a different identification becomes more prominent.

This could be due to romantic partnerships or long-term location in spaces racialized as black. It inevitably implies a political commitment and a clear position outside the spaces of white dominance. Steyn identified this with micropolitical processes, and it has parallels with "race traitor" discourses elsewhere. Historically it involved clear political choices to act against received whiteness and to embody an alternative identity. Globally this might today be met with charges against appropriation which was less common 20 years ago.

While questions should be raised about any too hasty dis-identification with white identity, the micronarratives of people who would be identified as white yet who cannot make sense of their own identity as white should also be heard. For example, the reality of a minority which by all account would have been identified as white yet who are primarily part of African-language (here I am not speaking of Afrikaans, but of languages such as Sotho, Tshwane etc.) linguistic and even cultural communities is part of the mix today – even if not yet of any political significance.

That said, the overt rejection of white identity and public identification of blackness born of white experiences of guilt continue as part of the mix of narratives of whiteness, and will probably remain a point of ongoing debate.

¹ I've discussed this in detail in an earlier publication.

Lastly, various ways of thinking through growing hybridization, or even miscegenation, are being experimented with. This implies a recognition of the history of white racialization and of the fundamentally distortive power that it yields, while questioning any easy stepping out of whiteness – whether that of not seeing the self as white, or of traitorous acts that moves the self out of whiteness. It requires recognizing the past that brought us to this point, but committing to a future which is not its reproduction.

I suspect that important to this is a particular political commitment: where whiteness in South Africa has often functioned as conduit for North-Atlantic economic and political power, part of this changing identity involves a realization of and commitment to being differently situated in the global political landscape.

Such talk of expanding and changing white identities should be questioned if not accompanied by a broader formation of identity which supports this. Cheap white talk of being “African” while committing to re-segregating movements within the South African context – hardly as contradictory as it might sound – should be noted as exactly that: cheap talk. On the other hand, in the longer term, and on a level which involves not the moral individual but the transformation of broader communities, such a hybridizing reality might be the only coherent option. Still, it requires ongoing reflection, since it too can take on forms which merely lead to the reconstruction of whiteness.

White Christian faith talk

While these discourses were traced quite cursorily, they hopefully set the scene on different ways in which whiteness reworks itself and white people rethink their identity in post-apartheid South Africa. But what about faith? It should be quite obvious to those thinking about questions theological and religious that people of faith would make use of their faith language to think through their identity in such a context as South Africa.

My one hypothesis, but which will require many years of further work and probably different eyes than only my own, is that in a way we should read every significant white faith movement in post-apartheid South Africa as in some way responding to apartheid. Apartheid was such an all-encompassing reality in South Africa, that it is almost impossible to think constructively about theology without in some way responding to this. Most often it is not explicit however. So the question that I suspect we should ask of any white attempt at reworking a Christian is how it seeks to renegotiate whiteness.

As examples to this, I briefly outline two dominant discourses. Both are based on data predominantly from the white Afrikaans Dutch Reformed Church, which in a very particular way has to face the past of apartheid, but I suspect that they might be found outside this church as well – Christian in South Africa, as in many other places, are hardly denominationally fixed.

Mission

The language of “mission” has been at the heart of Christian participation in the colonial project. Quite specifically, Christian mission played a key role in constructing the idea of apartheid. The first mention of

the word “apartheid” as a vision for society emerged from church missionary reflection, and mission was key to arguing in favour for an earlier racial segregation of the Reformed churches. The Dutch Reformed Church has in the 20th century had a phenomenal commitment to mission, committing vast amounts of resources to sustaining white missionaries working in black communities – not different from many other colonial churches, although some would argue on a broader scale than most respective to its size.

Such an introduction would obviously not accompany most contemporary white Christian talk of being a “missional church”, yet I find that it is quite important. Drawing from broader church mission discourses in the broader English-speaking world, in particular as found under the so-called “missional church” conversation – which has its parallels in continental Europe, a dominant attempt at rethinking faith identity is through such discourses of being a “missional church” or “missional Christians”. But in popular discourse, it is not the explicit language of “mission” that I’m interested in, even though it does still have some currency, but rather how this works through the metaphor of “crossing borders” as key imaginative tool in reimagining whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa.

In this talk, white Christians in post-apartheid South Africa see it as both a confessional and moral obligation to cross the borders in society – following the example of the incarnation as border-crossing event and the life of Jesus as a life of crossing borders to others. Interestingly, in the material I sampled, which was from around 2008-2014, race is seldom explicitly mentioned, but rather mentioned through ideas around culture, ethnicity, or poverty. The metaphor can be used either in argument for charitable actions – thus crossing borders to care for those who suffer – or to motivate more attentive listening to those who are considered different – thus crossing borders to listen and learn. Even when race is not explicitly mentioned, one cannot get away from the idea that behind much of this imagination is a segregated South Africa, and a moral call for white Christians to step outside of their white spaces – not least of these their predominantly white congregations.

There is however a brutally ironic twist to the language. South Africa is often described as a country of two countries. One white, one black, one rich, one poor. While post-apartheid changes have indeed blurred some of the boundaries, they are still sharply visible in many places. Digging through this description a bit more, we should be reminded that one aspect of apartheid is that black South Africans knew white lives quite intimately. One part of this was the dominant role they played in positions of looking after white lives – with that of the domestic worker turned surrogate mother being a more explicit example, but by no means the only one. The other was that in a context of white power, black people learn the intimate ways of whiteness in order to insure their own survival. To put this into the language of this metaphor: black South Africans have been crossing the border into white spaces for a very long time. The complex relation this then have with an imagined moral action should not be passed by lightly.

The mere assumption that it is normal and that people have the moral obligation, even the right, to cross racial borders builds on assumptions of whiteness: where the whole world is accessible to those who are white, while the white centre is carefully guarded, and access to it constantly controlled.

While never explicitly mentioned, it might be helpful to read this metaphor next to the dominant Afrikaner metaphor of drawing into the *laager*. The *laager* is most famously depicted in the narratives and art surrounding the battle of Blood River, and seen in the architecture of the Voortrekker monument. The *laager* is often used critically to describe behaviour of withdrawing into white spaces. 'Crossing borders' call white Christians *out* of the *laager*, but often leaves the *laager* intact. The assumption often remain that a *laager* is available into which we can draw back.

And at this point the limits of the metaphor must be made clear: by recasting white Christians as the acting agents, it leaves the control of which borders will be crossed and which black voices will be listened to in white hands. If white people are the acting agents crossing borders, they also determine how and to what extend space is shared with other people.

Diversity

A second dominant discursive strategy is Christian reflection valuing diversity. I became interested in this discourse because it was the one place where the white church that I am from explicitly claimed to think through the questions of race. Originally envisioned as work to think about gender, early on it was recognized that gender cannot be considered with thinking about race and class. So far some vaguely intersectional imagination might be heard.

This was of particular popularity in the first decade of this century – a time when talk of diversity also had its counterparts globally, with Amsterdam playing a particular role within this. This talk was however firmly embedded within a Christian imaginary: diversity was part of God's creation – we were created as diverse people. Diversity is presented as a gift from God. It is a revelatory principle – at one point even given Trinitarian backing, since God in Christian imagination can be described as clearly is a diverse God; for the systematic theologians present, I remind that this is a description of largely popular Christian talk, not academic dogmatics.

Now, as a response to a history of white theology where God was fully embedded within white history – salvation history and the history of whiteness became largely conflated – such an emphasis on diversity attempts an expansion of vision – God is not here only, but also there, understood and experienced differently by others, but in their experience of the same God we are related.

But the language of diversity distorts where systems of power are recast as a question of difference. At heart the changing question facing white Christians is not how we think through the difference of people – as the Dutch theologian Theo Witvliet beautifully described years ago, the idea that the Western world was unconcerned with difference, with the "other", is simply false. Rather, modernity and colonialism was a system marked by a fundamental hierarchy of being human, some were more human than others, at times some were human and others not, and this is what we are faced with when engaging race today.

It also risks a strange Godly sanction of human creation – the Barthian's among us would feel the tension. In typical Christian language – evolution notwithstanding – it is said that God have created us to appear in all kinds of aesthetic representations – although we've made an industry of adapting and adding to such aesthetic representations. However, race is at heart not about aesthetic difference, but

about the an anthropological imagination that draws on such aesthetics to do the work of producing the relation between people. God did not make whiteness however you want to look at it. We did. Godly sanction of diversity risks divine sanction of our human creations. The line between an appreciation of diversity and its drawing into oppressive systems is not always clear.

Now, these narratives are not exhaustive. They overlap, take on different forms, join with others, and at times wholly different routes are taken. What I hope to put on the table is that our faith discourse in a world scarred by colonialism and apartheid risks reproducing the very racial imagination which it claims to reject.

Conclusion

I do not intend to present some ideal white discourse. On all accounts the racial reading of the world, with its fundamental hierarchy from white to black – regardless of the fluidity of how people are positioned in terms of this – has showed an immense capacity of reinventing itself. Heterodox polygenetic arguments, or crude references to the children of Ham, are thoroughly discredited – yet the ways in which white Christians draw on their own moral tradition as resource for engaging the other often forgets that the entire colonial period was infused by such theological imaginings of how to manage Christian intimacy while maintaining a racial reading of the world. New discourses do not get away from this, and the work of dismantling the fundamental break in community effected by the history of colonialism is still of key concern.

But perhaps I should end with a small warning to visitors. Race as a system of reading the world is brutal in its execution and seemingly has no limits to its application. At heart it has always worked with the assumption that a few simple markers – often aesthetic markers such as pigmentation, facial features or others – can reveal the essence of people – even more, can determine their humanity. It was universal in application, since every person could be placed onto these racial maps – the PTR students present would remember our reading of Willie Jennings, and how the Christian racial imagination is built on and distorts the Christian capacity to think all people together.

The brutality of the history of race becomes interestingly visible in how every person entering South Africa inevitably becomes embedded within such a racial system. How and where might not be immediately clear, but its force is inescapable – stepping onto South African space imply stepping into raced space and being embedded into that. For a Dutch research project crossing borders and seeking to appreciatively learn from the diversity of people inevitably raise questions of how that very act is embedded within the history of race. Please visit South Africa. It might not be a miracle, but I find it a space where much can be learned from. But let's never be naïve about how our bodies are related to space after 500 years of colonialism, and how our words reproduce our racialised bodies and spaces.