

Haunted by the Somatic Norm: South African Parliamentary Debates on Abortion in 1975 and 1996.

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'No-one who visited the fortress like and gloomy portals of Parliament before May 1994, can fail to be astounded by the atmosphere today. There's a cheerfulness, a greeting from the staff, a vibrancy in the corridors, laughter in the committee rooms, extraordinary art on the walls, groups of visitors at every turn (both locals and tourists) – in short, the buildings breathe with life' (Corder 1996, 8).

'Every respectable historical building has its own live-in ghost. The South African Parliament in Cape Town has several. In this labyrinth of hollow corridors, forgotten cellars, underground streams and echoing chambers, it's not very clever to burn the midnight oil. When the bells chime at St George's Cathedral...they say Parliament swarms with ghosts. "The old parliamentarians", the workers there maintain' (Krog 1998, 122).

In these epigraphs Hugh Corder and Antjie Krog differ significantly over whether the corridors of the South African Parliament were filled with 'new life' or 'old ghosts' after the 1994 democratic elections. The related underlying question that social scientists have grappled with for years is: does an influx of new people transform an institution and under what circumstances? An institution such as a national parliament might be understood in a number of overlapping ways: in terms of its function or purpose, personnel, formal rules of operation, internal culture or informal norms, and even its physical buildings. All of these aspects of an institution are subject to change. In 1994 the South African Parliament was 'transformed' in terms of its purpose and function; it went from being an institution representing a minority of the population defined as 'white' by a system of racial classifications, to representing and legislating on behalf of all South Africans. The personnel of Parliament changed just as dramatically, in its racial make-up but also through a large increase in the number of women MPs. At the same time, the rules of Parliament remained almost entirely the same and MPs continued to meet in the same collection of buildings used prior to 1994, some of which had been in use since the first Parliament of the Union of South African met in 1910. This last fact provided observers like Corder and Krog with a powerful metaphor through which to explore change and continuity in the new South Africa.

Their observations also bring us to a consideration of the internal culture or informal norms of the institution. How did these change and is there a simple relationship between, for example, changing the

people in parliament and transforming the way it operates? To put the question of institutional change another way: does the overwhelming presence of men make and maintain an institution as masculine? South Africa was praised internationally for the increase in the number of women MPs that accompanied its transition to democracy, in ways that suggested these women could break down the historical domination of state institutions by men and foster a more inclusive democracy. It is this putative transformation I wish to re-examine here. By drawing on the metaphor of haunting I suggest that the old norms of an institution never simply disappear during processes of transformation. As Avery Gordon has suggested, 'to study social life one must confront the ghostly aspects of it' (Gordon 2008, 7). Ghosts have caught the attention of Gordon, Derrida and others as a way of thinking about the relationship between the past and the present (Derrida 1994). Wendy Brown suggests that, 'ghosts figure the necessity of grasping certain implications of the past for the present only as traces or effects (rather than structures, axioms, laws, or lines of determination) and of grasping even these as protean' (Brown 2001, 146). In Gordon and Derrida's work ghosts are conceived of as evidence of an injustice or a forgotten past.¹ In contrast, the ghost I am concerned with here is the remainder of an unjust and ever-present past. This article considers the haunting of one particular ghost, that of an institutional somatic norm, for how it might shape the parliamentary representation of women and 'women's interests' in post-apartheid South Africa.

The article begins by exploring the idea of a somatic norm within the South African Parliament and what happened to the norms of the previous Parliament after 1994. It suggests haunting as a useful way of conceptualizing the continued effects of a now discredited political culture on a new one. This idea is then explored further through one widely cited example of the success of South Africa's women's movement and new gender sensitive institutions - the passing of the 1996 Choice on the Termination of Pregnancy Act. The parliamentary debate on the 1996 Act is compared with the debate on its considerably less progressive predecessor, the 1975 Abortion and Sterilization Act. The analysis of the two debates draws links between the ritualised forms of parliamentary debate and the constitution of an institutional somatic norm. Through this comparison I wish firstly, to draw attention to the way MPs in the two debates lay claim to somatic authority and secondly, examine more closely how women were incorporated in the South African Parliament and performed as MPs. The analysis presented here aims to add to our understanding of the ways in which an informal institutional culture might be created, maintained and changed through a particular focus on the somatic norm.

The Ghost of the Somatic Norm

In the study of informal norms the boundaries between an institution and its cultural context appear porous. An institution such as a national parliament is a privileged site within the nation in which gender norms and other elements of 'national culture' are constructed and tested. Gender, alongside race, class and the nation, are constituted through the practice of politics in parliaments. In her work on institutions and diversity policies, Nirmal Puwar has advanced a concept of the somatic or bodily norm

as operating within such institutions (Puwar 2004, 8-10). The concept of the somatic norm is particularly useful because it allows the intersectionality of constructions of gender, race, and class to be discussed. Puwar argues that in twenty-first century Britain, the somatic norm for political leaders is that of white, middle-aged, educated, men. As such, white, middle-aged, educated men are the only bodies whose ability to be a politician is not doubted. The British Parliamentary somatic norm thus relies on, and in turn creates, a powerful construction of white masculinity. As such this institutional somatic norm is separable from, but intertwined, with wider constructions of hegemonic masculinity, race and class.

Puwar argues that if and when the bodies of those who have been historically and symbolically excluded from an institutional space enter, then they will do so as 'space invaders' (Puwar 2004, 10). The processes of 'space invasion' that occurred in the South African Parliament in 1994 are of course somewhat different from the entry of women and black and ethnic minorities into the British Parliament that Puwar has studied. Nonetheless her concept of 'space invasion' and the somatic norm helps us to understand changes in the informal norms of the South African Parliament. White men were also the somatic norm of state political power in apartheid South Africa. Whilst the position of these white men was heavily contested outside state structures, for example locally on the streets or in global forums like the United Nations, within state institutions in 1975, the year of the first debate considered here, white male authority was supreme. In post-apartheid South Africa, the white male body lost its institutionally constituted moral authority. The somatic norm of the liberation struggle leader (the black African man?) thus entered the corridors of power in a very particular kind of 'space invasion' in 1994.ⁱⁱ

Women's position within liberation struggle politics and the new parliament was far from straightforward.ⁱⁱⁱ The timing of South Africa's transition to democracy and the actions of an (albeit briefly) united and powerfully positioned women's movement resulted in a gender sensitive and progressive Constitution and significant efforts to institutionalize the substantive representation of women through state bodies such as the Commission on Gender Equality and the adoption by the ANC of quotas for the representation of women in Parliament (Hassim 2006). Discussion of South Africa's transition was widely accompanied by a narrative of 'gender victory', the main achievements of which, outlined above, are hard to dispute (H. Britton and Fish 2009, 3). However, women's inclusion was by no means uncontested there were for example allegations that sexual harassment in parliament was rife and unchallenged (Geisler 2000, 618). In this context, a background in liberation politics seems to have offered some new women MPs scripts for claiming a somatic authority that challenged the previous parliamentary somatic norm of the white male. However, I argue that these disruptive performances continued to rely on the previous parliamentary somatic norm by raising it as a ghost. As such these debates demonstrate the way in which performances of political authority can be haunted by a somatic norm, even when it is no longer a physical reality.

Using the metaphor of haunting captures something about the way the somatic norm operates. The somatic norm inhabits the air of an institution; *lives in the building*. It is the visible/invisible embodiment of an institutional past, and haunts those who disturb it. In particular, I suggest that the ghost of the somatic norm is conjured and contested through the rituals of representation which comprise

parliamentary debate. Parliamentary debates and the repertoires of speech and gesture used by MPs are highly formalised, governed by written rules but also by conventional forms of behaviour. The repeated forms of speech and behaviour of MPs during debate are considered here as 'rituals of representation'.^{iv} This is not to suggest that MPs are performing a play of representation that disguises the true exercise of power. The focus on the rituals of representation draws our attention to the performativity of political representation or in other words the making of a somatic norm. This is directly influenced by the work of Judith Butler on the performativity of the gendered body. To argue for the performativity of the body is to 'suggest that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality' (Butler 1999, 173). The embodied performances examined in this article are not expressive of an essence of, for example maleness or whiteness; they are what constitute maleness or whiteness.

MPs are embodied actors, at a particular location in wider social hierarchies, something that they and their political allies and opponents can, and often do choose to emphasise in parliamentary debates. The South African Parliamentary debates on abortion make clear that most MPs in both 1975 and 1996 derived a large part of their rhetorical authority from particular constructions of masculinity and femininity, and/or race and class. This act of claiming legitimacy through constituting a somatic subjectivity, I refer to as laying claiming to somatic authority. The analysis presented here suggests MPs constitute and reconstitute the institutional somatic norm through their performances of debate. MPs participate in debate not only through making speeches but also through interjections, interruptions, jeering, clapping, laughing and using humour, all of which are considered here. In these ways political authority is embodied through parliamentary debate, and MPs performances are overlaid on those of their predecessors.

The somatic norm is thus produced and re-produced within the moment but as Raewyn Connell has suggested this production is not simply instantaneous, it is also 'a deeply sedimented historical process' (Connell 2008, 245). It is in repetition or reiteration that the key to understanding the haunting effects of an institutional somatic norm lie. According to Judith Butler: 'as in other ritual social dramas the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated*' [Emphasis in original] (Butler 1999, 178). Shannon Sullivan thinks of white privilege as 'unconscious psychical and somatic habits' repeated in daily life (Sullivan 2006, 4). I suggest here that repetition, unconscious and self-conscious is also central to the making and unmaking of an institutional somatic norm and the potential potency of an old somatic norm for a new institution. Freud has suggested a relationship between repetition and the uncanny, arguing that, 'the factor of the repetition of the same thing will perhaps not appeal to everyone as a source of uncanny feeling. From what I have observed, this phenomenon does undoubtedly, subject to certain circumstances and combined with certain circumstances, arouse an uncanny feeling' (Freud 1953, 17:236-7). If somatic difference is made through ritual reiteration, it is perhaps little wonder that ritually repetitive parliamentary performances that disrupt an institution somatic norm can be haunted by the image of that which they have replaced. Before exploring these

ideas further through the analysis of two specific debates on abortion in the South African Parliament, a brief sketch of the background to and content of the two Bills under debate is outlined.

‘Abortion’ or ‘Choice on the Termination of Pregnancy’?

Whilst separated by twenty years and very significant contextual changes, the second debate considered here was in several ways a continuation of the first. The 1975 debate had both haunting and material effects on the 1996 debate. In terms of content, the 1996 debate was informed and framed by the 1975 debate to a very significant extent. The 1996 Choice on the Termination of Pregnancy Act aimed to address the limitations of the 1975 Abortion and Sterilization Act. In both 1975 and 1996 the South African Parliament was dominated by one party with an overwhelming majority. In 1975 this was the National Party, which had by this point been in government in South Africa for 23 years, elected by a racially classified franchise of white men and women. In 1996 at the time of the debate on the Choice on the Termination of Pregnancy Bill, the composition of the South African National Assembly had been transformed by the first democratic elections based on a universal franchise in 1994. The African National Congress, previously South Africa’s most prominent anti-apartheid political organisation, held a large majority in the National Assembly, with the National Party and the Inkatha Freedom Party comprising the two second biggest parties. There were 111 women MPs, making up 27% of the legislature.

The largest opposition party in the 1975 Parliament was the United Party but they more often than not supported government legislation. The much smaller Progressive Party held 7 seats in 1975 and were the government’s strongest critics. On the Abortion Bill the House of Assembly was divided. The 1975 Bill was introduced after significant lobbying by the medical profession.^v It provided for legal abortions in highly restricted circumstances and required authorisation by three medical practitioners and a hospital superintendent (See sections 3-7 of Republic of South Africa 1975a). The National Party supported the passage of the Bill and imposed a whip on its members. The United Party allowed a free vote, however in the event all but two UP MPs followed the Party’s leadership and voted in favour of the Bill. The Progressive Party and the even smaller Reform Party both allowed a vote of conscience but all members of both these parties voted against the Bill and in favour of amendments put forward by the only woman Member of Parliament, the Progressive Party’s Helen Suzman.^{vi} Their grounds of opposition to the Bill were its restrictive nature and the amendments suggested made abortion more easily accessible for women.

The 1996 Choice on the Termination of Pregnancy Act aimed to make abortion on request available to all women in the first twelve weeks and thereafter up to twenty weeks following the opinion of a medical practitioner. A termination of pregnancy required only the informed consent of the pregnant woman who was defined ‘as any female person of any age’ (Republic of South Africa 1996b). There existed a strong drive within the ANC to reform abortion law but the issue was still controversial within a socially conservative, religious South Africa. The second reading debate was in this context an important occasion for the ANC to make the case for abortion on request to many of its own supporters. In 1996

organised opposition to the Bill came largely from religious groups who were opposed to abortion outright, many based in the USA. Whilst the funding and tactics of these groups undoubtedly had an impact on the debate, Albertyn et al argue that in the immediate post-apartheid context 'the public face of these views tended to be white and male', which prevented what would have been a very powerful alliance with South African conservative black spokespersons and groups (Albertyn et al. 1999, 72). The greater threat to the Bill came from the possibility that the ANC would allow a free vote – and that there were enough ANC MPs who would stay away, abstain or vote against the Bill. Supporters of the Bill within the ANC caucus argued successfully that 'a conscience vote that had the effect of preventing the Bill from being enacted would nullify women's choice' (Albertyn et al. 1999, 73). The ANC issued a three line whip, although it permitted abstentions and the pro-choice Democratic Party and the Pan African Congress did the same. The National Party and the Inkatha Freedom Party allowed a conscience vote within their parties and largely spoke and voted against the Bill. At the vote one ANC member, Jennifer Ferguson abstained in the chamber, a further 55 ANC MPs stayed away. Some ANC women interpreted this as the party 'back-sliding' on its support for the women's equality agenda (H. E. Britton 2005, 75).

Rituals of Representation and Performances of Somatic Authority

The 1975 Debate

The Parliament of the Union of South Africa established in 1910 and the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa as it became in 1961 were important sites for the making and maintenance of white settler masculinities – not just through the laws that they enacted but also in the public performances of their representatives. Parliament was a vital stage for legitimising the self-image of a white ruling elite, hence the somewhat ambivalent position of anti-apartheid opposition within the all-white chamber. A similar ambivalence existed in the position of white women within parliament. Giving white women the vote in 1930 was, as many have identified, about strengthening the numerical position of the white electorate in relation to the limited number of African voters included in the Cape franchise. The Women's Enfranchisement Bill thus paved the way for the 1936 Native Representation Act removing Africans from the Cape voter's roll, meaning the House of Assembly was thereafter elected only by white voters. In 1975 Parliament was an exclusively white space, it was also in its composition almost entirely male. Whiteness and maleness were thus largely unspoken constructions constituted through MPs performances of reasonable and articulate parliamentary debate.

In 1975 the Minister of Health, Dr SW Van Der Merwe, of the National Party asserted in his opening remarks that 'the hon. Members already agree that for obvious religious, ethical and moral reasons abortion on demand must not be allowed' establishing the terrain of debate as very narrow (Republic of South Africa 1975b, 55:Col.477). This putative consensus in the House was implicitly male, and this fact became visible at certain moments, most often when MPs completely ignored the presence of Helen Suzman and used the phrase 'members of the House' interchangeably with 'men'. For example, in his

summing up of the debate at the end of the third day, the Minister of Health praised the fullness of the discussion in which 'everyone could express *his* opinion, each according to *his* feelings on the subject' (Republic of South Africa 1975b, 55:Col.720). The Minister's omission in his summing up was particularly striking since Helen Suzman had been by far the most vocal of all MPs during the debate. Aside from her own speech she made 43 out of 94 interruptions that Hansard recorded over the three days.

In the debate male MPs laid rhetorical claim to a gendered somatic authority through statements which blended patriarchal authority, educational expertise and rationality. Particularly noticeable was the use of 'medical men' instead of 'Doctors'. At one point 'medical men' were directly contrasted with 'emotional women' as the correct decision makers in relation to abortion.^{vii} The exception to this implicit understanding of a male somatic authority was one MP from the Reform Party, who when discussing legislative authority argued that men should not be the ones making decisions over abortion. Horace Van Rensburg argued that, 'It is morally wrong and in any other way wrong that we, as males, should sit here to pass judgement on the fundamental right of women to decide for themselves in regard to their bodies' (Republic of South Africa 1975b, 55:Col.701). Elsewhere in the debate the ability of men to act as legislators and decision makers was continually reinforced, often through male MPs ritualistic praise of one another's speeches or role during the legislative process. Such praise reiterated the competent proceduralism of parliament and the legitimacy that flowed from this. The nature of this debate and the criticisms of the all-male composition of the commission which drafted the legislation appear to have led MPs to emphasise qualities such as sympathy and compassion alongside the more usual checklist of responsibility or fairness. In this way it was emphasised that male MPs were not precluded from representing women: indeed it established them as the universal representative.

In direct contrast male MPs attacked Helen Suzman in ways that drew heavily upon her gender and negative associations with women's decision making ability. Suzman was denigrated for her 'customary flamboyancy', for being 'naive', and was described by one United Party MP Brigadier Keyserlingk as 'irresponsible and frivolous' (The comments were made by LF Wood and Brigadier Keyserlingk both from the United Party, Republic of South Africa 1975b, 55:Col.510 and Col.605-606). The Brigadier went on to say, 'the attitude of the hon. Member is typical of some women; they like to have their cake but are not prepared to bake it' (Republic of South Africa 1975b, 55:Col.606). Only this last comment drew a reprimand from the Speaker, that the member was becoming frivolous himself. Suzman herself forcefully drew attention to the maleness of the consensus against her in the abortion debate. In the following passage, Suzman was already irritated by interjections to her speech when she was interrupted once more by a National Party MP:

Mr G B D. McIntosh: Mr Speaker, may I ask the hon. member a question?

Mrs H. Suzman: No, you cannot; sit down. I am very ill-disposed towards men at this moment and I want to advise hon. members of this House – except those in my own party – that I feel equally cross about those who are going to support me and those who are not. *As far as I am concerned, I do not want anything to do with the men in this House...* [Emphasis added] (Republic of South Africa 1975b, 55:Col.496-497).

At another time she reacted to comments with the retort 'Male Stupidity!' (Republic of South Africa 1975b, 55:Col.606). However, this was not typical of Suzman in this debate or her parliamentary career more generally. Suzman more often used procedural grounds for interruptions and criticisms, to assert her seniority in the House and to demonstrate her mastery of the conventions and rituals of political debate.^{viii} For example, when she was later referred to by McIntosh as 'the member for Houghton', she was quick to interrupt with 'The "hon" member to you!' (Republic of South Africa 1975b, 55:Col.645). Later during the committee stage debates on the Bill, Suzman again clashed with McIntosh and asserted her seniority when he accused her of interjecting too much. She replied, 'perhaps I have a right to, having been here a few years longer than that brash young member (Republic of South Africa 1975b, 55:Col.870).

Suzman's prolific rate of interrupting during the debate (43 out of 94 recorded in Hansard) again shows her adept use of the rules on debate. Parliamentary colleagues of Suzman have noted her ease and familiarity with parliamentary procedure in their autobiographies. Alex Boraine, who was a Progressive Party MP between 1974 -1986 commented that, 'actually I think she [Suzman] liked the institution of parliament; she was very much part of the formality and traditions' (Boraine 2008, 134). Colin Elgin, leader of the Progressive Party for much of Suzman's era as a lone Progressive Party MP in Parliament wrote: 'In terms of ritualistic parliamentary politics she didn't need to reach out [for support] beyond its parameters' (Eglin 2007, 220). Suzman herself wrote in her own autobiography about her attitude to her gender and her place within Parliament:

I concentrated on making well-prepared and factually accurate speeches, and gradually won the respect of the House, albeit on occasion with unsolicited effects. Once, after a speech on economics, I was accosted by an MP who said to me in the Lobby, 'Helen – you've got a man's brain!' His was not a brain I admired.' (Suzman 1993, 26).

In general Suzman adapted to the culture of the apartheid-era Parliament in ways very similar to Margaret Thatcher in the British Parliament. Thatcher's political strategy has been summed up by Nirmal Puwar with the maxim 'dress like a lady, act like a man' (Puwar 2004, 99). Like Thatcher, Suzman had a complex relationship with the somatic norm. She aimed to perform as an MP in a way which erased her gender in all but appearance. To many in her audience such performances were so successful that at times she was seen to have internalised the somatic norm – she was seen as having a man's brain. However, another anecdote from Suzman's autobiography perhaps reveals the physical vulnerability of her position in this male space. She recalled a debate in which:

I was finishing my speech when my waist slip dropped to my feet. No-one would have known about it, as my desk screened me from view, if I hadn't said 'Oh God' rather audibly and sat down and afterwards told one of my colleagues what had happened. Of course my gossipy colleague could not resist telling John Scott [of the *Cape Times*] (Suzman 1993, 202).

She describes being angry at the way the incident was reported in the press but thereafter having 'recovered my sense of humour...after receiving a sympathetic note, with safety pin attached, from one

Nationalist MP and pair of braces from the Minister of Police and Law and Order' (Suzman 1993, 202). Although Suzman skilfully retells this incident as a comic tale, we might read her initial anger as the shame of having her somatic difference exposed. This is an anger that subsided when she received tokens of membership from male colleagues that would enable her to control her unreliable, feminine, costume. In the 1975 abortion debate her gender was similarly hyper visible. In the abortion debate Suzman forcefully laid claim to a somatic authority to legislate on this issue. This was an authority repeatedly undermined through the use of 'humorous' taunts that relied upon a negative construction of women's authority, decision making ability and morality. Supporting Puwar's suggestion that 'the bodies of women MPs seem to be particularly vulnerable to abusive behaviour if they discuss issues that are explicitly related to sexual politics' (Puwar 2004, 88).

Sexist or misogynistic humour was one of the principle means by which, in 1975, male MPs asserted a male authority to speak and thus maintained the parliamentary somatic norm in the face of Suzman's challenge. Although I have no way of knowing how many MPs laughed at the following joke, the *Cape Times* parliamentary sketch writer reported that the joke-teller and many of his colleagues 'smiled broadly' upon hearing it (Scott 1975a, 13). There is also a suggestion in the same report that Suzman was not in the chamber when the joke was told, re-entering only to hear the very end of the speech. Suzman complained about such jokes, but this was some days later, during the committee stage of the Bill. Dr Vosloo, a National Party politician who had been on the Commission that amended the Bill told the following 'anecdote', as he called it, to 'add a light touch' to his words on the question of rape:

A young girl arrives at a hospital and asks for help. She says to the matron: 'Oh mother, oh mother, I have been raped. Matron, please help me'. The matron then says, 'Yes, come in my child. Walk this way. Go straight through to the kitchen. On the shelf you will find a lemon. Squeeze out the juice and drink it'. The girl then says, 'oh matron will it really help me?' And the matron says: 'Yes, it will help to remove that smile from your face' (Republic of South Africa 1975b, 55:Col.502-3).

The fact that Suzman may have been absent from the chamber during Dr Vosloo's anecdote potentially makes it an even stronger act of exclusion. Such a story, told behind Suzman's back, would have hung in the air on her re-entry to the chamber, undermining her without her knowledge. Dr Vosloo surely knew that had she been present Suzman would have interrupted him in protest. Sylvia Shaw, in her work on House of Commons debates suggests that in the case of sexist jokes, MPs are using humour to 'signal a shared membership in which adversarial norms are understood to be an accepted superficial enactment of the difference between MPs' (Shaw 2002, 211). This certainly seems to lie behind National Party and United Party MPs joint involvement in sexist humour during this debate, especially where male MPs from the United Party attacked Suzman, as in the taunts of Brigadier Keyserlingk quoted earlier.

Twenty-one years later, in a rhetorical style strikingly similar to that of Dr Vosloo's an ANC MP, Andries Nel, began a speech on abortion: 'Mr Chairperson and hon. members, I would like to start off by relaying a little story that I have heard. I do not know, but members who have been in Parliament longer than I have could perhaps vouch for its veracity or otherwise' (Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col. 4831).

He went on to describe the all-male composition of the 1975 Abortion Act drafting commission, telling the house that 'when the hon. Helen Suzman objected she was informed by members of the NP that having women would be unacceptable as it would be like having a murderer hear his own case'. He then accused those speaking against the 1996 Act being debated of being 'captives of the attitude which I have just mentioned'. The 1975 debate on abortion echoed in the South African Parliament in 1996. However, there were particular consequences for the ways in which black women MPs performed political representation during the debate.

The 1996 Debate

The opening of the 1994 South African Parliament marked a profound sort of 'space invasion'. Whilst there had been Indian and so-called 'Coloured' MPs and staff in the South African Parliament prior to 1994 they were present on a profoundly unequal basis and Africans were excluded altogether. The Tri-Cameral Parliament established in 1984 had maintained apartheid in its institutional arrangements of separate chambers for Whites, Indians and Coloureds, and whilst joint sittings were held, these were under the auspices of the White chamber. The 1994 transformation was a sudden one but bodies were hyper-visible and confusing for some time, a process Puwar has termed 'disorientation' (Puwar 2004, 41–44). This was perhaps most acute for continuing staff and for MPs who had been members of the former Parliament and was particularly prevalent surrounding the bodies of the new women MPs. In her autobiography *Pregs Govender*, a new ANC MP tells the story that, 'the day we were sworn in, the service officer guarding the entrance insisted that I walk upstairs to the 'wives' gallery', where he thought I belonged. He courteously invited Paul [her partner], who looked more the part into the National Assembly' (Govender 2007, 146). In May 1995, after nearly a year in office, Dr Frene Ginwala the first Speaker of the new democratic Parliament and also South Africa's first woman Speaker, was in one MP's speech referred to as 'Mr Speaker' or 'Sir' thirty four times despite several warnings (Geisler 2000, 618). The MP in question, a member of the previous Parliament excused himself saying, 'Madame Speaker, I ask you to bear with me. This is how it happened through the years. I am not used to it, but I shall try to get used to it' (Hahndiek 2006, 70).

Race was clearly also a major issue in the new Parliament. I have explored in greater detail elsewhere the tensions surrounding racial language in the 1994-1999 Parliament as the boundaries of what was 'sayable' in the new South African Parliament were tested.^{ix} In 1998 calling another member of the house 'racist' was expressly ruled un-parliamentary. However, racialised bodies were hyper visible in this fiercely policed non-racial space. This was also unusually the case with white bodies, in an inversion of the invisibility usually associated with whiteness. Samantha Vice has recently suggested that, 'In South Africa, whilst one's whiteness might still constitute the unacknowledged norm, as the invisibility thesis claims, *That one is white* rather than black is always present to oneself and others, barring an impressive feat of willed self-deception' (Vice 2010, 326). In the new South African Parliament whiteness was imbued with political meaning. For example, Andrew Feinstein, a white ANC MP wrote in his autobiography:

One of my first parliamentary speeches was during a debate on the budget. No sooner had I started speaking than a member began muttering, ever louder, 'Jou Kommunis' ('You communist'). Since he was clearly basing his assumption not on the orthodox economics I was discussing but rather on the fact that I am white, Jewish and a member of the ANC (and therefore obviously a communist), the rotund, pink-faced Willem Odendaal was attacked in turn by my ANC colleagues (Feinstein 2010, 58).

There is evidence too that a somatic language of political allegiance has persisted. For example in Brent Meersman's 2007 novel *Primary Coloured*, based on his experiences running the 2004 election campaign of the Independent Democrats established by MP Patricia De Lille, the following passage details the hostility directed towards Joel, Meersman's alter-ego in the book:

As Joel turned the corridor, he passed a group of black office workers in plain shirts and flannels. He smiled and greeted them with a nod. They gave him a hostile momentary look. At first, this behavior in parliament had dismayed Joel. Until...Joel gathered...that it was assumed that any white person in the corridors of the Marks Building belonged to the Conservative Alliance, and were for that reason snubbed' (Meersman 2007, 64).

This is a complex social drama since as Samantha Vice suggests the visibility of whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa coexists with a continuation of whiteness as the unacknowledged norm and within a global context structured by white racism. The South African Parliament was in 1994 a profoundly disorientating place for everyone in it.

New black women MP's discomfort in Parliament has been widely noted: 'when I came to Parliament I was afraid of it' (Geisler 2000, 617); 'When I came to this office six years ago, after the 1994 elections, I didn't stay long – I walked out. I couldn't on a psychological level, come to grips with the fact that I was in Parliament' (Smith 2002, 108); 'Parliament is like a dead place' (H. E. Britton 2005, 64). These statements convey more than disorientation; they border upon the terrified. Puwar argues that the bodies of 'space invaders' can provoke fear within an institution because they are incongruous and are perceived to threaten the status quo. This she terms a fear of the monstrous (Puwar 2004, 50). However, the above statements from MPs new to Parliament in 1994 show these 'space invaders' felt fear themselves. Rather than a fear of the monstrous, I argue here that this is a fear of ghosts. Parliament was 'like a dead place' to some, but it was also a place *of* the dead. The fear felt by the 1994 space invaders was a fear of the buildings themselves, the history contained within it, of the ghosts that lived there, and its possible transformative powers. This was a fear of becoming fully incorporated into that which they had previously despised. I argue here that this fear had profound effects, particularly upon some black women MPs and how they performed representation.

From the outset of the 1996 debate on the Choice on the Termination of Pregnancy Bill, newspaper reports described an intense atmosphere in which 'Health Minister Dr Nkosazana Zuma faced a chorus of jibes as she stood up' (Cape Times 1996a, 7). In response Zuma used an image in her opening speech which invoked a silent horde of ghosts into the legislative chamber; the poor black women who died from back street abortions and from whom she argued her authority was drawn:

...the vast majority of poor and mainly black women resort to backstreet terminations because the present law is only accessible to the affluent. Hundreds of women – more than all the members of this Assembly – die annually from these unsafe and illegal terminations of pregnancy (Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col.4759).

These spectres crowded the chamber – outnumbering the MPs present. The spectre of poor black women appeared in many ANC MPs' speeches as the ultimate source of authority for the Bill, and by referring to this figure and profusely using terms such as 'we' and 'us', black women MPs speaking in favour of the Bill constructed a somatic authority for themselves. As part of this performance these women raised the ghost of the apartheid-era Parliament's somatic norm, pointing out how male and pale he was and simultaneously laid claim to their own somatic authority.

Dr Zuma did not lay claim to a somatic authority directly during her opening speech but she did so indirectly through quoting a letter she had received from a woman priest. The letter made the case for women's authority to decide on the issue of abortion based on shared female experiences. Crucially in light of the religious opposition to the Bill the letter also made clear that Christian women could, based on their experiences as women, come to support legalised abortion:

All the major theological contributions on abortion have been written by males, mostly arguing against abortion on request. This does not imply that all women are prochoice, but many Christian women have arrived at that conclusion. Many have witnessed the horrific consequences of an incomplete abortion. Others have seen young mothers bleeding to death. This trauma is difficult for males to comprehend (Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col.4762).

Speeches like this constructed for women a somatic authority to legislate on abortion, based upon the trauma of illegal abortion and a female ability to comprehend such experiences. This somatic authority was maintained by attacks on women who opposed the legislation. What is most striking about the nature of these attacks is that women MPs who opposed the Bill were attacked as traitors to their gender. The following is from the speech of ANC MP Pregs Govender:

This debate is not about the legalisation of abortion. Abortion has been legal in South Africa for over two decades. [Applause.] When the NP passed the Abortion and Sterilization Act of 1975...We did not have *women apologists for the male NP* raising their voices in shrill protest [Emphasis added] (Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col.4792).

Another ANC MP, Mavivi Myakayaka-Manzini made similar comments in her speech. She mentioned the 1975 debate, saying that perhaps members of that House should be forgiven since they were 'all white males who did not understand or have a clue about women's rights' (Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col.4848). She went on, 'our debate today takes place in a totally different context. It is therefore shocking for me to hear, from the other side, *women speaking with the male voices of 1975*' (Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col.4848). In this way Govender and Myakayaka-Manzini suggested women opponents to the Bill were possessed by the ghost of the 1975 somatic norm.

ANC MP Thandi Modise criticized the National Party's Shelia Camerer in the following terms:

It is not possible for anybody who has never gone to Soweto or Phola Park to stand here and tell us what we believe in and what we do not believe in, especially a person who sat right here in these benches and looked at black women being reduced to animals, to little things that make tea for madam in the morning.^x

Shelia Camerer had been a National Party MP since 1987, a fact Modise drew attention to saying she 'sat right here in these benches' under apartheid. Camerer's link with the apartheid-era Parliament removed, in Modise's view, any moral authority she had or any ability to understand the position of the ANC on abortion. Modise alluded to Camerer as being on the wrong side of a racialised class divide, with black working women (now regaining their dignity and freedom) opposed to the implicitly white madam. For Modise, Camerer's race and institutional past marked her out as unable to truly represent women. To Modise, Camerer looked like a ghost. Camerer herself spoke early on in the debate; she was the third speaker and the first from the opposition. Her speech was full of technical references to the legislative amendments that the National Party were proposing. She did not lay claim to any somatic authority to speak on abortion. In two speeches roughly the same length, the Minister of Health's being a few minutes longer, Shelia Camerer mentioned 'women' seven times and 'girls' twice whereas the Minister used the word 'woman/women' thirty-two times and 'girl' twice.

In 1996 MPs made recourse to the same rituals of praise used in 1975. ANC MPs, male and female, almost all praised the Minister of Health and the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Health for their leadership at the start of their speeches. However, in addition women MPs across party lines also used the same style of praise. Opposition MP Patricia De Lille began with the following compliment: 'Mr Chairperson, I firstly want to congratulate my colleague Pregs Govender on a well-researched speech' (Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col.4810). In addition to this parliamentary praise women also used demonstrative displays of congratulation. John Scott described the reaction in the chamber to Govender's speech: 'The ANC burst into applause. Women ululated. As Govender returned to her seat, female colleagues competed with one another to kiss her. Health Minister Nkosazana Zuma kissed her and hugged her' (Scott 1996, 8). During the 1996 debate women MPs did not straightforwardly perform parliamentary rituals and thus erase their gender, as in Suzman's masterful performances of procedure. Their reiteration of this parliamentary ritual had a self-conscious and uncanny feeling to it. Their use of ritual praise as well as hugging and kissing was part of a self-conscious representation of women as a united group within Parliament, united against the ghosts of 1975.

ANC women also displayed solidarity in attacks on one particular black male MP who gave a virulent anti-abortion speech. As Sylvia Shaw has pointed out, in these situations the laughter of MPs recorded in Hansard is not so much a spontaneous response to humour as part of the 'verbal assault on an opponent' (Shaw 2002, 209). Colonel Ramaremsa, a black National Party member and a strident critic of the Bill was interrupted by women MPs from the outset of his speech. He was first interrupted by Manana Catherine Mabuza of the ANC, asking 'who wrote that speech for you?' (Republic of South

Africa 1996a, 10:Col.4822). He re-established his control over the floor with, 'Listen, Listen!' Hansard records more interjections, after which he was interrupted once more by 'An Hon Member' echoing the first interruption asking 'who wrote that speech bossboy?' It is clear from his reaction - 'I urge that member to listen with her ears not her mouth' - that this was also a woman MP (Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col.4822). 'Bossboy' is a derogatory term in South Africa, referring ostensibly to the foreman of a gang of workers and it suggests notions of racial collaboration – a black man working for white masters. The suggestion made here was that Colonel Ramaremsa was not representing his race and that he could and should be. The ghost of the somatic norm hovered over him. The speaker who came immediately after Ramaremsa, Ethesian Fazzie was another ANC MP who began by criticising Ramaremsa as someone who bore 'false witness against thy neighbour'. She was backed up by a chorus of 'Mxelele, mama!' ('Tell him, madam!'), thus completing the women's display of authority over Ramaremsa (Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col.4825).

Male MP's reactions to the assertion of women's somatic authority to legislate on abortion and the ghost of the 1975 somatic norm were mixed. Some followed on from Van Rensburg's arguments in 1975 and disqualified themselves from speaking and deciding on the issue of abortion. The first to do so was Jan Hendrik Momberg, a white ANC MP, who commented during his speech 'as a male I hesitate to take a stand here regarding a matter which mainly affects females' (Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col. 4812). The second was the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Kader Asmal, who stated, 'as a man I am basically disqualified from speaking on this issue...because I do not have the pain and the humiliation of having to go through this' (Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col.4838). Both of the men who made such disclaimers did then go on to speak on the subject. Andries Nel, whose speech was quoted earlier, whilst raising the ghost of 1975, did not lay claim to any somatic authority of his own. There was a sense in which these men could speak of maleness but their own performances of political representation remained unaffected.

In apparent contrast a number of MPs who were vocal opponents of the Bill spoke during the debate in terms of men's rights being taken away. One such speaker was Desmond Padiachey of the National Party who claimed that 'none of the women who have spoken here today in favour of this Bill are of child-bearing age' (Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col. 4834). He was interrupted several times by unnamed members before Hemanthkumar Neerahoo (IFP) rose and interjected, 'Mr Chairman, on a point of order. I do not think that the hon. member is qualified to speak on this subject – he has never been pregnant. [Laughter] [Applause].' Warming to the theme Nkenke Kekana (ANC) then rose to ask a question, 'Mr Chairman, is the hon. member of child-bearing age? [Laughter]' (Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col.4835). Despite the fact that the questions primarily ridiculed Padiachey, they also parodied the broader stand-point taken by some women MPs of a somatic authority to represent. Both discourses, that of an attack on men's rights and the claim of ANC men to be gifting the right of representation to women on the matter of abortion, reiterated a normative position as one in which political power and decision making ability rested with men.

There was a smattering of joke telling in 1996 participated in by male MPs. One ANC MP began his speech: 'Mr Chairperson, it is clear from the National Party's input that they are pregnant – pregnant with ignorance! I am now aborting their ignorance! [Laughter]' (MW Mfebe, Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col.4832). Arguably this joke diminished the seriousness of the issue in exactly the same way as the more overtly misogynistic jokes of male MPs in 1975. The Minister of Justice made a very similar joke at the start of the following debate, 'I also want to take part in termination. However, I want to terminate corruption. [Laughter]' (Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col.4856). This quip made startlingly clear a difference between a women's issue (abortion) about which men could joke and the resumption of (men's) serious parliamentary business ('I want to terminate corruption'). The haunting effects of the 1975 somatic norm were felt differently by male MPs in 1996. Whilst black opponents of the Bill were accused of betraying their duty to represent their race, in the same way that women opponents of the Bill were accused of a dereliction of their duty to represent their gender, other male MPs could quite comfortably cede a 'male' right to represent on the issue of abortion and continue to perform in Parliament unaffected.

A Potent Invisibility

'Without recourse to the white middle-class ideal, politicized identities would forfeit a good deal of their claims to injury and exclusion, their claims to the political significance of their difference' (Brown 1995, 61).

'In South Africa...the nonracial could be heralded only insofar as it took leave from the racial, but in doing so has kept the ghostly terms of race ironically alive as implicit yardstick' (Goldberg 2009, 311).

Was the successful passage of the 1996 Choice on the Termination of Pregnancy Act in itself evidence of the substantive representation of (black) women in a historically (white) masculine institution and therefore of a change in the somatic norm of parliamentary politics in 1990s South Africa? A number of academics and activists, some of whom were heavily involved in South Africa's transition to democracy have begun to reappraise the main elements of the transition's narrative of 'gender victory'. Shelia Meintjes has argued that discourses around gender located it as a 'women's issue', as women's responsibility and suggested the solution to the problem of gender equity and equality was to promote 'women's empowerment' in South Africa's state institutions (Meintjes 2009, 75). The 1996 debate on the Choice on the Termination of Pregnancy Bill saw the issue of abortion framed in just these terms. The effect according to Meintjes was 'to open spaces for women's participation in the public sphere in the context of a particular configuration of androcentric (male-centred), heteronormative, gendered power that did not lead to a more inclusive transformation of gender power relations in society' (Sheila Meintjes 2009, 76). It is argued here that the form that representation took in the post-apartheid Parliament was one which was haunted by the somatic norm of apartheid politics, in other words that

the representation of women in Parliament was shaped by the means by which they had previously been excluded. This argument draws upon the work of Wendy Brown on identity politics as 'frequently recycling and reinstating rather than transforming the terms of domination that generated them' (Brown 1995, 7). This is, as Brown herself notes, a deeply Foucauldian point.^{xi} The statements above from Brown and Goldberg remind us of the multiple theoretical hauntings of post-apartheid South Africa. Goldberg has described apartheid as having an 'afterlife' (Goldberg 2009, 309). A term also used by Phillip Manow when describing the 'afterlife of the [concept of a] body politic in our supposedly depersonalized, disembodied times' (Manow 2010, 89). The suggestions here about the haunting of the post-1994 South African Parliament by the ghost of the apartheid-era institutional somatic norm builds upon these ideas that blur the 'epochal demarcations' of narratives of political change (Manow 2010, 89).

What processes are at play in black women's performances of political representation in the post-1994 South African Parliament? The answer from the analysis of just one debate held in 1996 is: a thoroughly complex set of claims that in the very process of challenging an apartheid-era somatic hierarchy reinstated and relied upon some of the same somatic binaries. Where white men's somatic authority in 1975 was largely invisible, black women's somatic authority in 1996 was hyper-visible. Women clung to a constructed somatic authority, because as Brown suggests, here lay the 'political significance of their difference', but also I argue out of their fear of the transformative power of Parliament (Brown 1995, 61). Exploring Nirmal Puwar's concepts of the somatic norm and 'space invasion' in a very different context from the British Parliament, we must be attentive to the ways in which a somatic norm can continue to effect representation when it has ceased to be a physical reality. Discussing 'the soul' Judith Butler argues that this construct possesses a 'potent invisibility' (Butler 1999, 172). The phrase is an evocative one for my understanding of an institutional somatic norm. Puwar argues that a fear of the monstrous shapes the inclusion of black and ethnic minority bodies into white spaces in Britain (Puwar 2004, 50). I argue that under different circumstances a fear of ghosts can effect those who take-over an institution from which they were previously excluded.

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ⁱ Gordon writes that her ghost stories, 'not only repair representational mistakes, but also strive to understand the conditions under which a memory was produced in the first place, towards a counter memory, for the future' (Gordon 2008, 22).

ⁱⁱ For work on the masculinities of the liberation struggle see: (Erlank 2003; Unterhalter 2000).

ⁱⁱⁱ For women in the liberation struggle see: (Walker 1982; Hassim 2006; Gasa 2007) For a discussion of the major controversy of this literature, the widespread mobilisation of women through discourses of motherhood and how radical/conservative this was, see: (Walker 1995).

^{iv} Political ritual is defined following Lukes as 'rule-governed activity of a symbolic character which draws the attention of its participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance' (Lukes 1972, 291). This approach also draws upon the work of Emma Crewe (Crewe 2006; Crewe 2005).

^v By the early 1970s medical practitioners were increasingly performing therapeutic abortions for wealthy white women despite the fact that criminal law in South Africa outlawed abortion, except where necessary to save the life of a woman. Worried by the legal uncertainty of their position South African doctors advocated legislative reform. In 1972 a government select committee was appointed to enquire into abortion laws, and the 1975 Bill emerged from this process. See: (Albertyn et al. 1999, 45)

^{vi} The Reform Party was formed by a splinter group of United Party MPs in the same weeks that the abortion debate was held. Later the same year the Reform Party merged with the Progressive Party to become the Progressive Reform Party.

^{vii} The speaker who did so was Dr LAPA Munnik of the National Party, (Republic of South Africa 1975b, 55:Col.667).

^{viii} Helen Suzman was a member of the South African Parliament for 36 years between 1953 and 1989. Between 1961 and 1974 she was the sole representative of the Progressive Party. The 1975 session was thus the first time she had had parliamentary colleagues for 13 years. The strategies she used during this debate had been developed during her 'solo years'.

^{ix} Rachel E. Johnson, 'Disrupting the South African Parliament: Performances of Political Marginalisation, 1990-2010', *Democratization*, Special Issue on 'Disruptive Democracy', [Forthcoming June 2013].

^x Soweto and Phola Park are both large townships in South Africa. (Republic of South Africa 1996a, 10:Col.4809-10).

^{xi} See for an example, Foucault's discussion of the 'failure' of the prison and his argument that attempts at 'reform' only reinforce it's network of power and thus the production of the delinquent (Foucault 1979, 264-271).