De/acculturation of identity: diaspora in selected photo installations by Searle and Farber

M. Goosen
North-West University, Potchefstroom
E-mail:moya.goosen@nwu.ac.za

M.C. [Rita] Swanepoel
North-West University, Potchefstroom
E-mail: rita.swanepoel@nwu.ac.za

This article investigates the de/acculturation of identity (as brought forth specifically by diaspora) as visually represented by contemporary South African artists Berni Searle and Leora Farber. Specific focus is placed on the photographic installations *Looking Back* (1999) by Searle and *Aleorosa: Induction* (2004-2007) by Farber. The postcolonial spatial construct diaspora involves an experience of displacement, relocation and a scattering of identity. Diaspora is mainly brought forth by the willing and unwilling [forced] migration of people across physical and psychological borders. Accordingly the repositioning of identity during diaspora is associated with de/acculturation. We argue accordingly that both Searle as a brown woman and Farber as a white woman from Jewish descent distinctively reclaim their collective and autobiographical identity narratives in the selected artworks as solo-protagonists. The methodological approach for this article consists of a theoretical investigation of the postcolonial spatial identity complexities diaspora, hybridity and liminality. This is followed by a reading and interpretation of Searle's installation *Looking Back* and Farber's *Aleorosa: Induction* as a visual manifestation of the de/acculturation process that is associated with the diaspora.

Key words: *Aleorosa: Induction* (2004-2007), Berni Searle, diaspora, identity, Leora Farber, liminality, *Looking Back* (1999), hybridity

De/akkulturasie van identiteit: diaspora in gekose foto-installasies deur Searle en Farber
Hierdie artikel ondersoek die de/akkulturasie van identiteit (wat spesifiek deur diaspora voortgebring word) soos ver-beeld in die kontemporêre Suid-Afrikaanse kunstenaars Berni Searle en Leora Farber. Spesifieke fokus word geplaas op die foto-installasies *Looking Back* (1999) deur Searle en *Aleorosa: Induction* (2004-2007) deur Farber. Die postkoloniale ruimtelike konstruk diaspora gaan gepaard met die verspreiding, verplasing en herposisionering van identiteit. Diaspora word hoofsaaklik voortgebring deur die vrywillige en gedwonge migrasie van mense oor fisiese en psigologiese grense. Gevolglik word die herposisionering van identiteit gedurende diaspora geassosieer met de/akkulturasie. Ons voor aan dat beide Searle as 'n bruin vrou en Farber as 'n wit vrou van Joodse herkoms, onderskeidelik as solo-protagoniste, hulle kollektiewe en outobiografiese identiteitsnarratiewe in die gekose kunswerke terugeis. Die metodologiese benadering vir die artikel behels 'n teoretiese ondersoek van die postkoloniale ruimtelike identiteitskompleksiteite diaspora, hibriditeit en liminaliteit. Daarna word 'n lees en interpretasie van Searle se installasie *Looking Back* (1999) en Farber se *Aleorosa: Induction* (2004-2007) as visuele manifestasie van die de/akkulturasie proses wat met diaspora geassosieer word gedoen.

Sleutelwoorde: *Aleorosa: Induction* (2004-2007), Berni Searl, diaspora, identiteit, Leora Farber, liminaliteit, *Looking Back* (1999), hibriditeit

This article focuses on postcolonial historical terrains of identity narratives that were suppressed pre-1994 by way of the interpretation of selected artworks from contemporary South-African artists Berni Searle (born 1964) and Leora Farber (born 1964). The selected artworks chosen for this article namely Searle's installation *Looking Back* (1999) and Farber's *Aleorosa: Induction* (2004-2007) deal with two separate identity narratives of womanhood and specifically an experience of de/acculturation. De/acculturation in turn can be associated with the postcolonial interpretation of diaspora, hybridity and liminality. Searle is a brown[1] English speaking South African woman while Farber is a white English speaking South African woman

of Jewish decent. Both artists were raised during the apartheid era and simultaneously witnessed the end of apartheid and the transition of power after 1990. Searle as a brown woman experienced three-way othering: as a woman, a brown individual and a brown woman. She expressed her experience as a so-called Coloured of hybrid heritage during apartheid (1948-1994) where she, as all brown individuals, was subjected to racial discrimination as follows:

> It is a term which I rejected then, as I do now. By colouring myself in different ways, in sometimes imaginary ways, I tried to subvert the idea of being racially positioned and described under apartheid (Searle *in* Williamson 2009: 108).

Farber, in contrast to Searle, enjoyed the privileges of whiteness. Although white, Farber as a woman from Jewish descent can be viewed from the Eurocentric gaze as the Other.[2] Farber states in an interview with Sandra Klopper (in Law-Viljoen 2008: 16-17):

> In contrast, my sense of alienation and ambivalence is characterised by feelings of psychological *dislocation*...On the one hand, I completely understand and support the preoccupation in contemporary South Africa society with issues of reconstruction and redress; on the other, my role in this process as a white, English-speaking South African is necessarily liminal and marginal (Farber in Law-Viljoen, 2008: 16-17).

In accord with Farber's description above the artist's body becomes a medium of performance. Performance, as Butler (1993: 95) argues, cannot be understood outside of the context of repetition.

Both artists use their bodies as a voice of agency through which they visualise the search, repositioning and displacement of their autobiographical identity heritage in post-apartheid South Africa. Furthermore Searle and Farber distinctively comment on the acculturation and simultaneous so-called de-acculturation of identity that took place during their collective historical identity narratives as inherited from the colonial era. The expansion of European colonialism since the 1600's brought forth the willing and unwilling [forced] scattering of peoples, populations and cultures. The migration of people, although not solely associated with the advent of colonial practices, was amplified by improved global transport and immigrations. New settlements in new contexts had to be negotiated across borders that brought forth spatial identity complexities associated with diaspora. Diaspora brings forth novel displacement, relocation and a willing or unwilling repositioning of the self. From a postcolonial perspective the de/acculturation of identity that occurred during the scattering of people during imperial and colonial diaspora still has a continuous to influence on identity formations long after the demise of these empires (Cohen 1997: 26; Ashcroft *et. al.*, 1998: 68; Loomba 2005: 147).

Twenty years after South Africa's first democratic election the country is still inlayed with inherited as well as newly voiced identity complexities regarding authority, belonging and displacement. The "strategic-political and ultimately moral-historical question" as anti-apartheid activist Neville Alexander (1936-2012) formulates in *An Ordinary Country* (2002) is how to move forward whilst remembering, when the demise of apartheid was unmistakable but the transition into a new democracy has only begun. Post-apartheid artists visually document, investigate and simultaneously contribute towards the discourse of identity by critically re-evaluating the past whilst looking forward. The need to conscientiously conceptualise and ultimately authentically claim identity plays an important part in the recognition of individual autobiographical narratives.

We argue that during the colonial and apartheid era, individual identity narratives and histories that differed from the patriarchal white dominated so-called norm was alienated due to

hierarchal power relationships. Searle and Farber as postcolonial protagonists therefore reclaim their own distinct and individual historical and spatial identity narratives by re-performing identity. Both artists' distinct collective and historical identities are inherently moulded by hegemonic power structures of the past. The methodological approach for this article consists of a theoretical underpinning of the postcolonial spatial identity complexities diaspora and inherently hybridity and liminality is investigated with particular focus on the brown and Jewish experience. This is followed by an interpretation of Searle's installation *Looking Back* and Farber's *Aleorosa: Induction*. The article concludes with a summary of the main arguments.

A postcolonial understanding of brown and Jewish diaspora

The term *diaspora* is generally associated from a postcolonial perspective with the identity complexities that arise as product of the scattering of people during imperial and colonial practices or as a consequence thereof (Ashcroft *et al.* 1998: 68). The term, however, does not only imply the consequences of geographical scatterings but is also associated with a psychological sense of home. McLoed (2010: 242) emphasises the shifting perception of *home* for diaspora communities:

> The concept of "home" is *imagined* in diaspora communities. The concept of "home" ... can act as a valuable means of orientation by giving us a sense of our place in the world. It tells us where we originated from and where we belong. As an *idea* it stands for sheltering, stability, security and comfort... . To be "at home" is to occupy a location where we are welcome, were we can be with people very much like ourselves... (McLeod 2010: 242).

McLoed (2010: 242), in accordance with Rushdie (1991: 10), argues further that the concept home for diaspora communities becomes an "unstable and unpredictable mental concept", which is built up from spatial paradoxes between the past and the present. Cohen (1997: 26) identifies two different criteria by which diaspora takes place. The first criterion is the alienation and relocation of a group that is forcefully or willingly driven from their *home*. This relocated group can be identified as a collective that shares a so-called sameness such as culture or religion. A classic example would be the 2000-year-old dispersal of Jewish individuals as a result of anti-Semitism:

> Diaspora Jews ... are always in a vulnerable situation. For almost two thousand years, from 70 [B] CE until the re-establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Jews have lived as a relatively powerless minority in a variety of host countries. Their well-being, or lack of it, has been in direct proportion to the positive or negative attitudes of their host governments (Hellig 1995:155).

This so-called type of diaspora is usually associated with a profound experience of trauma as it is a constant over generations. The second criterion Cohen (1997: 26) differentiates is an experience of diaspora as a product of expansion of a country across borders for example colonialism. Colonists experienced diaspora after leaving their country of origin. The immigration of Dutch colonists during the VOC's trading post campaigns in southern Africa and later the imperial British takeover, for example, had to acculturate geographically and socially to their new environment. This possibly led to the migrant's self-perception as a victim. Fludernik (2003: xii) alternatively divides Cohen's (1997: 26) second criteria of diaspora into three subcategories namely: colonial diaspora; diaspora caused by slavery and permanent displacement by emigration; and lastly diaspora characterised by a greater mobility regarding temporary or semi-permanent, self-exile. For this article Fludernik's (2003: xii) subcategory of diaspora which concerns slavery and permanent displacement is of importance. The importation of slaves to the Cape colony by Dutch and British colonialists for example enforced unwilling and permanent

diaspora upon slaves. From 1658-1808 a rough estimate of 63 000 slaves were imported from mainly Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka (earlier known as Ceylon) as well as Angola, Malaysia, Guinea, Mauritius and Madagascar (Thompson 2006: 35; Giliomee & Mbenga 2007: 80). These slaves as mentioned earlier were forcefully imported and had to acculturate geographically to southern Africa and simultaneously adapt socially and psychologically with Western values and religion as determined by colonial rule.

Accordingly a shared feeling of diaspora within an alienated migrant group creates a communal collective memory (Hutchinson 2007: 42-52; Leoussi & Grosby 2007: 8). McLeod (2000: 207) emphasises the complex relationship between identity formations and memory that are heightened with diaspora communities. First or second generation children of willing or unwilling migrants, for example, develop their identity in "both spaces of origin". For that reason, the identity of descendants of diaspora migrants is simultaneously shaped by the memory and experiences of their inherited country of origin as well as their country of birth. Descendants of Jewish immigrants that came to South Africa during the 1930s for example completely acculturated South African identity as they grew up here whilst keeping their inherited eastern Jewish tradition from their partially acculturated parents or grandparents.

One can argue that diaspora communities form their own unique, acculturated, hybrid cultures or as Hall (1993: 401-402) states "the diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew". Hybridity broadly refers to the formation of new intercultural identities that was brought about with the spreading of colonialism (Van der Merwe & Viljoen 2007: 3). The term was initially used during Victorian botany to describe a third, new plant species that originates when two existing plant species are traversed (Ashcroft *et al.* 1998: 118). During imperialism and colonialism, the term was negatively used as part of racial ideology to describe people of mixed race that were "not pure" according to the colonial gaze. Slaves who arrived in southern Africa during 1658-1808 for example assimilated over generations with the local KhoiKhoi, white European settlers as well as other migrants from African or Asiatic ancestry and would later collectively become what we know today as the brown identity (Adhikari 2006: 468). Racial hybridity as set by colonial and apartheid racism had a great impact on the so-called brown heritage and inherent identity complexities that followed:

> For me, growing up coloured meant knowing that I was not only not white, but less white; not only not black, but better than black (as we referred to African people). The humiliation of being "less than white" made being "better than black" a very fragile position to occupy. The pressure to be respectable and to avoid shame created much anxiety (Erasmus 2001: 13).

Bhabha (1994: 2), however, highlights from a postcolonial context that hybridity can be used as a tool to undermine structural imperial and racial domination. From this perspective, hybridity is not only associated with so-called structural and biological differences such as colour or race but rather cultural acculturation. Descendants from Jewish immigrants of the 1930s, for example, have culturally hybridised with South Africa. According to Bhabha (1994: 235) hybrid identities undermine structural difference by creating a space of agency or what he (1994: 37) calls "a third space of enunciation".

Turner (1969:95) and Bhabha (1994: 117) state that liminality includes a transformation in which the previous self-seizes to exist and is rather replaced by a new self. *Liminal* originated from the Latin *liminis* which literally translates as lintel (*Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins*, 2010). The lintel symbolises a transitional space of identity between leaving and arriving, the border between here and there or now and then. Bhabha (1994: 117) argues that liminality is by necessity a result of the colonial condition. That is why he regards the creation of identity

as an on-going and constantly changing process. He (1994: 37-38) identifies three spaces with reference to hybridity and people in diaspora. The first space refers to displaced people's memories of their countries of birth, and their original culture and identity. The second space refers to displaced people's current position with regard to the country in which they are resettled, and their forming of new cultural traditions and identities. In this second space, different phases of acculturation with the new country and traditions take place. The third space is the liminal or "in-between" space [between the first and the second space] and is characterised by a perplexed state of mind, trauma, new identity formations, and experiences of uneasiness, discomfort and ambiguity (Bhabha 1994: 117). The third space has reference to the shattering of a previously coherent and structured life, characterised by displaced people's view of reality (Bhabha 1994: 117). Brah (1997: 225) in accordance with Bhabha (1994: 117) emphasises the importance of diaspora and liminal spaces in which identity should be questioned and rethought. A spatial border which ought to be celebrated where acculturation can take place and the restructuring of identity, culture and exclusivity takes place:

> It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. ... It may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity (Bhabha 1994: 38).

Within the so-called South African postcolonial moment and post-apartheid context [since 1994], it seems as though personal, collective, and historical identity issues are still critically present as racial complexities are complicated by the radical political power shift from white to black in a democratic South Africa. Black people are not only in the majority, but they also have the political power in the country (Le Cordeur 2011: ii). This decolonial power shift in accordance with Ricoeur (1991: 435) caused a necessary rupture in the so-called linear structure of identity and brought forth a heightened consciousness of identity and inherently a liminal space. Adhikari (2005: xv) emphasises that brown South Africans particularly, despite Bhabha's (1994) assurance of hybridity as a tool to undermine structural imperial domination, are in a liminal space. This experience of liminality was not only felt during colonialism and apartheid but also now in a post-apartheid South Africa: "First we were not white enough and now we are not black enough" (Adhikari 2005: xv). Erasmus (2001: 24) also highlights the brown identity position in post-apartheid as in liminal diaspora. According to her (2001: 24) the brown identity was suppressed by white domination but simultaneously othered black people pre-1994. White Jewish South Africans on the other hand possibly experienced a feeling of psychological diaspora with the turnover of power in 1994. The concept of whiteness still preserves an inherited, privileged hegemonic status, which is still evident in the economical and education sectors (Lopez 2005: 6). The identity of being white, especially white Afrikaners, is currently under scrutiny because of their past hegemonic and political power identity. This causes an experience of self-alienation (Alcoff 1998: 11; Visser 2007: 2; Engelbrecht 2007: 39-40).

The most common contributing factor for present-day diaspora is emigration. White South Africans in general have shown a certain form of escapism from current day South Africa in search for better possibilities internationally. Jewish South Africans would also join the so-called white chicken run, with approximately 50 000 white Jews leaving South Africa for mainly Canada and Australia, between 1980 and 1996 (Beinhart 1996: 71). This emphasises the Jewish culture's consciousness of a global community and their historical experience with diaspora. In accordance, Visser (2007: 2) postulates that the remaining white South Africans are also left with a feeling of diaspora as "emotional detachment from the realities of South Africa". This emotional detachment can especially be seen in middle-class suburbia where the constant fear

for security is met with gated, highly secured complexes and 10 feet walls. This is also true for the upcoming black and brown South African middle class.

Searle's *Looking Back*: an exploration of hybridity and diaspora

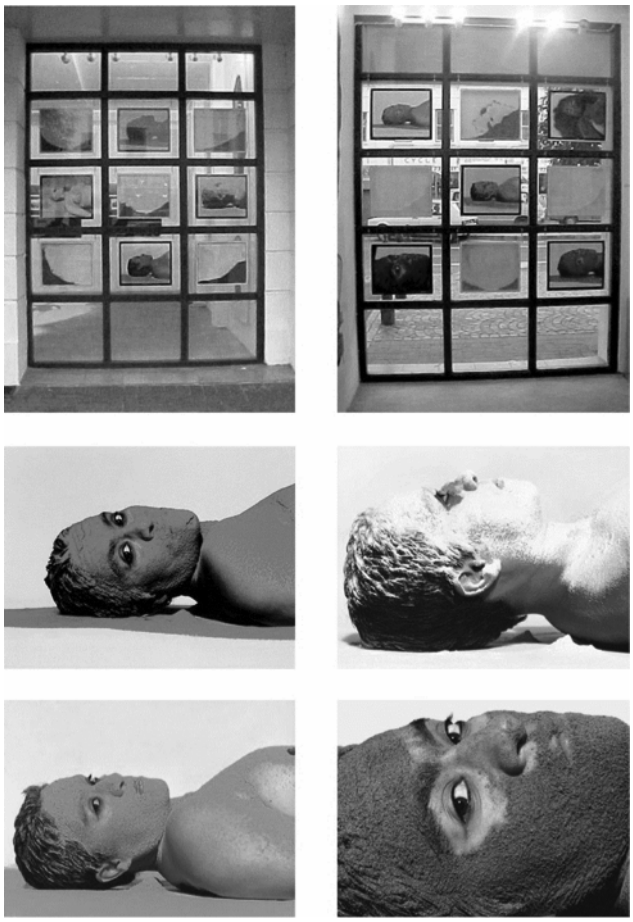

Figure 1
Bernie Searle, 1999. *Looking back, Colour Me* series, nine colour photographic images, glass silicon, spices, 420 x 500 mm each (source: Bester 2003: 16).

Looking Back consists of nine colour photographic images of the artist, and forms part of her *Colour Me* (1998-2000) series. Each photograph depicts a close-up of the artist and is 42x50cm in size. The photographs as part of the original installation were displayed in the window of an art gallery. Four of the nine photographs are displayed on the outside and are, therefore, visible to pedestrians passing by while five are facing the interior of the gallery. At the back of each of the photographs are different coloured spices from different geographical destinations, each individually placed in glass containers which are framed in white. As seen in Figure 1, Searle is lying on her back in each of the four depictions, her face covered with different types of spices, each spice a different colour. Each photograph is taken against a white background and framed in a black. The glass frame that contains the spices is each filled with the specific spice that is depicted in the specific photograph that Searle used to cover her body.

The main spices used in *Colour Me* are baking flour (white), paprika (red), cloves (brown), pea flour [*ertjiemeel*] (beige) and turmeric (yellow). The four selected photographs

depicted in Figure 1 specifically contain paprika (top left), baking flour (figure 2), and turmeric (bottom left) and cloves bottom right. Furthermore, Searle's gaze and posture in the selected photographs shifts from directly confronting the viewer (top left and bottom right), looking past the viewer (bottom left) to completely looking upward, away from the viewer (top right).

Figure 2
Berni Searle, 1999. *Looking back* (detail), *Colour Me* series, colour photograph, 420 x 500 mm (source: Bester 2003: 19).

Searle's body posture and subsequent gaze in *Looking Back* emphasises her autobiographical as well as her collective search for identity (Du Toit 2013: 153). Her body becomes a metaphor for her shared identity as a woman and more specifically a brown woman. As discussed earlier the brown identity narrative is inlayed with complex heritages. Searle's use of different kinds and colours of spices forms a link to her hybrid ancestry: that being a descendant of slavery, the original native KhoiKhoi and the succeeding brown identity formations that followed (Bester 2003: 15). Especially slaves and spices were viewed during colonialism as trading commodities and negotiable objects (Baderoon 2011: 81; Lewis 2001: 109). Postcolonial critique suggests that the colonised is not only exploited by colonialism, but also dehumanised and objectified (Loomba 2005: 24-25). Searle's use of different kinds and subsequent colours of spices also become a reference of so-called colour classification as enforced by the apartheid regime. During apartheid, as inherited from the colonial era, people were classified and accordingly framed and discriminated against according to their skin colour. Searle, on the other hand, exposes this hegemonic racially biassed practice by *framing* herself in many colours. Therefore visually remapping and deconstructing previous misconceptions of colour and identity. Simultaneously Searle's use of spices, as food enhancer and preserver, becomes a metaphor for the safeguarding of her identity heritage which ought to be celebrated and conserved (Williamson 2009: 110).

The reclaiming of identity is further emphasised by Searle's (as brown protagonist) gaze. The installation *Looking Back* contains images in the gallery window which face both the inside of the gallery space, as well as the outside. In the selected photographs facing the street (figure 1), which can accordingly only be seen from outside the gallery, Searle does not make eye contact with the camera and therefore neither the viewer. Searle possibly creates a conscience voyeuristic distance between the viewer and herself in order to simulate the uncomforting colonial gaze. The photo installation in the window panel facing the street as a collective whole reminds one of hegemonic Victorian scientific photo documentation. Searle's exposed, naked body becomes an inter-textual reference to a woman such as Saartjie Baartman, who became

scientific objects with no agency. This is especially emphasised by two photo frames (figure 1). One being a typical scientific profile shot from the side (figure 2) and the other which depicts, in contrast to the other photographs in the series, an entirely different angle from above, exposing her breasts. Lewis (2001: 109) suggests that the artist's nakedness and apparent helplessness [she is laying on her back] imitate the colonial and patriarchal view of brown (and black) people. The naked body's position on her back also serves as a reminder of the sexual exploitation that slave and KhoiKhoi women were subjected to during the colonial era (Williamson 2009: 110). Her mouth is covered with spices, therefore her voice cannot be heard – she cannot speak for herself. Typically of a colonial and patriarchal view of brown or black individuals (and women) as the irrational, passive and fanatical other. Furthermore, nakedness for the colonial, hegemonic gaze became a symbol of uncivilised, barbarism, which ought to be "tamed" (Lewis 2001: 109). Hendricks (2001: 27-38) states that during colonialism gender inequality went hand in hand with racial inequality.

The panel inside the gallery space, in contrast to the street view panel of the installation, contains specific photo depictions where Searle is gazing assertively at the viewer (figure 3). Smith (2000) states that Searle "gazes as much as she demands to be gazed at". By doing this, she inherently confronts the colonial gaze and claims back her identity with authority, ensuring that it is seen. Consequently, Searle becomes the protagonist of her identity by overturning the role of object to subject (Van der Watt 2004: 75). The depicted photographs in the installation *Looking Back* mostly only portray a head and shoulders shot. Additionally her skin and hair is covered with spices in all the photographs. According to Bester (2003: 16) by not showing her breasts and covering her skin – a direct depiction of her womanhood and brownness - Searle takes on an androgen *gender* and non-racial identity. Schmahmann (2004: 100) in accordance with Bester (2003: 16) mentions that Searle "underplays signs of her femaleness" to defame the objectified woman's body as perceived through a patriarchal and colonial lens. Searle, therefore, claims agency by becoming a new identity which is free of racial and sexist discrimination.

Figure 3
Berni Searle, 1999. *Looking Back* (detail), *Colour Me* series, colour photograph, 420 x 500 mm (source: Bester (2003: 17).

The *Looking back* installation as a whole possibly becomes a spatial, metaphorical interplay of liminality which highlights diaspora as an acculturation process. The windows in which the

selected art works are presented and visible both on the inside and outside of the gallery becomes a physical and symbolic marginal border. As Du Toit (2013: 166) notes, for the installation to be viewed unabridged, the viewer has to physically move between the outside and the inside of the gallery space. In accordance with Bhabha's (1994) conceptualisation of liminality and the third space of enunciation, this in-between border becomes a discursive space where identity can be renegotiated and rethought. As suggested earlier the outside panel of the installation facing the street contains imagery that can symbolise the hegemonic, colonial past and the consequences brown people had to endure because of racial discrimination. In Figure 2 for example Searle's profile does not meet the viewer's gaze and she is covered in white flour – whiteness being a symbol of decades of oppression. In other words, Searle in these specific photographs become a metaphorical other to the viewer's gaze as to emphasise the brown identity struggle before 1994. The photographs are facing the inside of the gallery space, in contrast, depict Searle's gaze confronting the viewer (figure 3). As such she becomes the Self, reclaiming her hybrid identity narrative with agency. The space between the other and the Self, as brought forth by diaspora, marks the liminal where de-acculturation of the past identity and acculturation of the new identity can take place. This in turn marks a process by which the marginalised other (brown and brown woman) is renegotiated by Searle's performance and furthermore emphasises the fluidity of identity. As Bhabha (1994: 2, 35) postulates:

> Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation... (Bhabha, 1994: 2).

Simultaneously one can argue that Searle's use of the inside gallery space versus the outside street view becomes an ironic, cynical observation of post 1994 South Africa. Searle's presentation of herself as the *Self* only takes place in an elitist gallery space, whilst "on the street" her represented identity in *Looking Back* is still the *other.* This is possibly due to the fact that the brown identity in the new South Africa is still faced with a diaspora identity that is brought forth by "not being black enough" (Adhikari 2005: xv; Erasmus 2001: 24).

Hybridity and diaspora in Leora Farber's Aleorosa: *Induction* (2004-2007)

Farber's *Aleorosa: Induction* (figure 2) forms part of the photographic, video and installation series *Dis-Location/Re-Location* (2004-2007). Farber herself, like Searle's *Colour Me* series, plays the solo-protagonist in the series. In contrast to Searle's naked body Farber, however, is decadently, fully dressed in Victorian attire. In *Aleorosa: Induction* Farber is sitting in a rose garden, with a white painted house and veranda in the background. The garden is full of white roses. She is sitting on a cane garden chair, with a decadently embroidered cushion with flower patterns. There are two tables visible in the photograph, one on her left and another on her right hand side. The table on Farber's right hand side behind her [from the viewer's perspective to the left] is covered with a white tablecloth, accompanied with a silver, Victorian tea set. On the small glass table on her left side [from the viewer's perspective to the right] is a small crocheted cloth with a wicker basket, containing indigenous aloe plants. The woman [Farber] has short dark hair and she is wearing a straw sun hat. She is dressed in a Victorian style, brown corset possibly made of animal skin with a long, white skirt underneath. Her head is slightly tilted towards her left arm and it seems as though her eyes are closed. She is busy implanting aloes in her arm with what appears to be embroidery scissors. Lastly, the photograph appears to be visually manipulated with a softened, hazed foreground toward the bottom of the image.

Figure 4
Leora Farber, 2004-2007. *Aleorosa: Induction*, from the *Dis-Location/Re-Location* series, archival pigment print on soft textured fine art paper, edition 1/9, 65x65cm (source: Law-Viljoen (2008: 119).

Farber's *Aleorosa: Induction* is the first photograph in a seven part photographic narrative called *Aleorosa. Aleorosa* in turn forms part of the complete series *Dis-Location/Re-Location* which again is divided into three main narratives namely: *Aleorosa, Ties that Bind Her* and *A Room of Her Own.* In the series Farber as solo-protagonist re-imagines three different identity narratives that being of: (i) the Victorian Jewish immigrant Bertha Guttmann (1859-1934) who arrived in 1886 for an arranged marriage to the Jewish business man Sammy Marks[3] (1844-1920); (ii) her grandparents as Jewish migrants who arrived during the 1930s immigration wave in South Africa from the East bloc and their subsequent first generation South African born children (Farber focuses especially on her mother) and lastly (iii) her own autobiographical identity narrative as an acculturated second generation South African woman of Jewish descent in post-apartheid South Africa (Farber *in* Klopper 2008: 14-15). All three identity narratives are bound together by different experiences of de/acculturation, diaspora and finally an account of cultural hybridisation from a female Jewish perspective. The monumental project was mainly photographed at the Sammy Marks Museum, Guttmann's and Mark's previous home on the farm Zwartkoppies, outside of Pretoria. As such *Aleorosa: Induction* (as well as the *Dis-Location/ Re-Location* series as a whole) is visually contextualised and mainly references Guttmann's Victorian experiences as an immigrant from Sheffield, England.

Guttmann led a typically social and frivolous life of a rich man's wife with fourteen staff members at her disposal (Mendelsohn 2008: 27). As a product of her time, Guttmann kept following the colonial traditions and values of her country of origin in "exotic" Africa. Farber (*in* Smith 2002) defines the body as a:

> vehicle through which we experience the world as through which that experience is mediated. It is a metaphor for the duality between interior and exterior, nature and culture, private and public. I use it

> as a means of uncovering the untidy layers beneath the pristine, within a western paradigm (Farber in Smith, 2002).

In contrast to her husband there isn't much historical record available for Guttmann (Mendelsohn, 2008: 29-30). This is a typical product of a Victorian patriarchal society in which woman were marginalised as home makers and therefore never dealt with so called official business. Guttmann's marriage to Marks was also framed by this patriarchal perspective, typical of the time as illustrated in one of his letters to her:

> I should like you to bear in mind and mark carefully for future that when I tell you anything especially as to people's characters, *you will allow me to be a better judge than you are, and it is only natural I should be*... (Mendelsohn 1991: 182. Italics by the authors).

Simultaneously Guttmann as a Victorian white privileged woman, married to a very successful businessman, *othered* her mainly black staff members. She for example writes to her husband regarding the requirement for extra staff members at their home: "and not counting the necessary Kaffirs to do all the children's quarters..." (*in* Mendelsohn 1991: 184). In the same letter to her husband Guttmann writes: "I have been the Housekeeper which is a good billet for a wife" (Mendelsohn 1991: 184). Guttmann and Marks accordingly adhered to the typical colonial Victorian, hegemonic hierarchy: Marks as a white man being at the top of the household hierarchy, followed by white male children, then Guttmann and female children and lastly their black staff members. It is also important to note that black men were placed above black woman within a patriarchal order. Although both Guttmann and Marks were Jewish and could therefore possibly been subject to anti-Semitism (which at the time surged worldwide) this is unlikely because (i) Marks was a respected and wealthy businessman and an advisor to Paul Kruger and (ii) they were already acculturated to Anglo-Jewry. In accordance with Shain (1994: 17) Anglo-Jews were seen as white equals, in contrast to the 1930s immigrants from the East bloc (such as Farber's grandparents).

Immigration and subsequent migrant identities, however, in agreement with Bhabha (1994) is traumatic and brings forth feelings of displacement and alienation. We argue accordingly that Marks especially rather falls into Cohen's (1997: 26) second criteria of diaspora and Fludernik's (2003: xii) subcategory of colonial diaspora (as discussed earlier) mainly because Marks came to South Africa willingly for economic opportunities and not due to for example Jewish exile. Guttmann as a Victorian woman, however, came to South Africa for an arranged marriage and alternatively experienced unwilling diaspora that is associated with trauma and later even resent. Hence the title of Farber's series *Dis-Location/Re-Location* is a direct reference to Guttmann's (and her grandparents') experience of de-acculturation of her previous home (Sheffield) and acculturation with the new (so called exotic Africa). Simultaneously Guttmann's new home at Zwartkoppies was one of isolation as Marks was constantly away on business (cf. Mendelsohn *in* Law-Viljoen 2008: 23).

In the selected photograph *Aloerosa: Induction* Farber (as Guttmann, figure 4) is clothed in a corset, dress, gloves and sunhat, whilst sitting by herself in a typical English rose garden (English tea set included). The image is colour framed by whiteness: white dress, white gloves, white chair, white table cloth and white roses (which remind one of the Tudor symbol *The White Rose of York)*. Whiteness can inherently be compared to the hegemonic view of whiteness being "pure". Accordingly the viewer, at first glance, is confronted with a typical Victorian colonial scene. The subject (Farber), however, is planting an aloe, native to southern Africa, into her arm with embroidery scissors (figure 5). The staged so called female gender codes in *Aloerosa: Induction* (for example her poised posture) are immediately disrupted with this action as it

deconstructs the so called patriarchal perspective of being a civilised lady. The implanting of the aloe can further be interpreted as masochistic and painful but Farber's (as Guttmann) facial expression, in contrast, is calm and collected.

Figure 5
Leora Farber, 2004-2007. *Aleorosa: Induction* (detail), from the *Dis-Location/Re-Location* series, archival pigment print on soft textured fine art paper, edition 1/9, 65x65cm (source: Law-Viljoen 2008: 120).

Induction therefore becomes a metaphor for the start of Guttmann's de/acculturation process and subsequent diaspora which will lead to complete cultural hybridity. Guttmann de-acculturates from her "pure" Western, Victorian identity (represented by Victorian attire and the English rose garden) and acculturates (represented by indigenous aloe's as well as the corset which is made from animal skin) with southern Africa. As such her identity starts to change as the aloe – which metaphorically represents Guttmann's confrontation with her new home, new cultures and social contexts in southern Africa – becomes part of her. This can be illustrated by the rest of the *Aleorosa* photo narrative which portrays the transformation process as the aloe grows and becomes more and more part of her metaphorical body such as in *Aleorosa: Propagation* (figure 6). Finally as the acculturation process is completed Farber/Guttmann become part of the landscape as seen in *Aleorosa: Supplantation* (figure 7).

Figure 6
Leora Farber, 2004-2007. *Aleorosa: Propagation*, from the *Dis-Location/Re-Location* serie, archival pigment print on soft textured fine art paper, edition 1/9, 65x65cm (source: Law-Viljoen 2008: 121).

Figure 7
Leora Farber, 2004-2007. *Aleorosa: Supplantation*, from the *Dis-Location/Re-Location* series, archival pigment print on soft textured fine art paper, edition 1/9, 65x65cm (source: Law-Viljoen 2008: 126).

As such the work *Aleorosa: Induction* becomes a framed hybridised moment of transition – a liminal space, which is accompanied by diaspora and alienation. The liminal space as portrayed by *Aleorosa: Induction*, although visually contextualised by Guttmann's narrative, inherently also represents Farber's Jewish grandparents experiences in the 1930s as well as her own experiences of whiteness after 1994 with the transition of power.

Conclusion

This article set out to investigate the de/acculturation of identity as portrayed in Searle's *Looking Back* and Farber's *Aleorosa: Induction* photo installations distinctively. This was done by firstly giving an introductory contextual framework regarding South-Africa's colonial and apartheid eras. Specific focus was placed on the brown and Jewish migrant identity narratives. Thereafter a theoretical understanding of the postcolonial constructs diaspora, hybridity and liminality were investigated. In summary the postcolonial constructs chosen for this article individually deal with spatial complexities of identity that emphasise different spaces or experiences, physical or psychological, that fuse and concurrently represents a new space. These constructs were used as a visual framing reference during the reading and interpretation of Searle's installation *Looking Back* and Farber's *Aleorosa: Induction.*

Searle's and Farber's distinctive art careers began mainly after 1990. Both being born in 1964 and raised during the apartheid regime one can argue that their distinct art oeuvres were influenced and shaped by the country's long colonial heritage and apartheid. Leora Farber, in contrast, is a second generation, white, English speaking South African woman of Jewish descent. Her grandparents immigrated to South-Africa during the 1930s from Lithuania and Latvia in order to flee anti-Semitic persecution that surged across Eastern Europe. Farber grew up during the apartheid regime as a privileged white woman in Johannesburg. Searle and Farber both make use of inter-texts that suggests this colonial influence such as Searle's use of spices and Farber's use of a Victorian, Jewish, migrant narrative/s. Both Searle's and Farber's photographic installations are visually outlined by the self-exploration, re-evaluation and re-positioning of identity before 1994 by different layers of narratives. Simultaneously both artists comment on subjective identity formations after 1994. After 1994 the de-colonial power struggle for a so-called psychological independent and liberated state and nation continues in South Africa as identity narratives are constantly under the limelight and in flux. Conclusively both artists use their collective and autobiographical or personal identity narratives before and after 1994 to inform the selected photo installations that were chosen for this article.

Both Searle's *Looking Back* and Farber's *Aleorosa: Induction* deal with issues of alienation, displacement and diaspora, which are inherently associated with processes of de/acculturation. In this regard, Searle works directly with the female collective brown identity heritage. Farber in her turn intertwines three different female Jewish narratives. Searle's and Farber's diverse heritages are presented in both installations distinctively by the artists themselves as solo-protagonists. Accordingly their bodies become surrogates of discourse by which layers of identity complexities are investigated. With reference to Butler's argument that performance cannot be understood outside of the context of repetition, we state that by repetition an old cycle can be broken and a new one produced. Therefore Searle and Farber as postcolonial protagonists reclaim their own distinct and individual historical and spatial identity narratives by re-performing de- and acculturation processes of different origins. In conclusion one can then argue that Searle's *Looking Back* and Farber's *Aleorosa* becomes a liminal space in which the

de-acculturation and acculturation process can be completed as hybridity is embraced and an experience of psychological diaspora fades.

Notes

1 During the apartheid era people generally referred to brown individuals as Coloureds according to Article 5.4 [c] of the Population Registration Law of 1950. However, since 1994 a difference of opinion exists as to how to address so-called brown/Coloured people (Rooy, 2011: iv; Adhikari , 2009: xv). For the sake of consistency and to avoid possible criticism of discrimination, the term brown people is used in this article in conjunction with the terms "whites" and "blacks" except when referring to a hegemonic viewpoint within the context of apartheid.

2 The postcolonial dichotomy between Self and O/other, in accordance with Lacan (1986), is generally used to describe and critique hegemonic hierarchy that took place during colonialism (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1999: 170-171). The Self becomes the subject whilst the O/other is shaped by their gaze and therefore the lesser object. During colonialism white men were seen as the Self whilst black men for example were seen as the other. From a patriarchal viewpoint white men as the Self however view white woman as the Other. Black or brown woman therefore experience three layered othering: as a woman, as black and as a black woman.

3 Sammy Marks was generally known as "President Paul Kruger's [formerly president of the ZAR, 1977-1881] Jew" or "the uncrowned king of the Transvaal". Marks was a very successful Jewish businessman originally from Lithuania. Although originally from Eastern Europe Marks assimilated with England, as most of his business was done there, before arriving in South Africa. Together with his successful business endeavours Marks' later successful relationship with Kruger brought him more financial stability (Mendelsohn, 2008: 27; Giliomee & Mbenga 2007: 190; Farber *in* Klopper 2008: 15).

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Moya Goosen is a lecturer in History of Art at the NWU, Potchefstroom Campus. She completed an Honours and a Masters degree in Art History at the North-West University. She is currently working on her Ph.D. thesis in Art of History.

Rita Swanepoel is an Associate Professor at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University. She is also the leader of the research niche *Visual narratives and creative outputs through interdisciplinary and practice-led research* at the NWU.