
STEEPED IN
Heritage
THE RACIAL POLITICS OF SOUTH AFRICAN ROOIBOS TEA
Sarah Ives

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Heritage

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STEEPED IN *Heritage*

THE RACIAL POLITICS OF SOUTH AFRICAN ROOIBOS TEA

Sarah Ives

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In loving memory of
Robert James Caldwell

The greatest service which can be rendered to any country is to add a useful plant to its culture. —Thomas Jefferson

If South Africa had to name a national drink, it would certainly be Rooibos tea. This golden-red brew discovered by the Khoisan is a flavour as indigenous as licking the sweat from a Kudu's snout. —"Southafricanisms: Rooibos Tea," Why Go South Africa website

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Preface

As I sit in a San Francisco coffee shop writing about rooibos tea, the plant's growing region seems even farther away than the two ten-hour flights to South Africa's Western Cape. Music blares while hipsters with tight jeans, hooded sweatshirts, and baseball caps with ironic messages such as "I ♥ Wall Street" pour specialty coffees and serve house-made baked goods. Dozens of hopeful young entrepreneurs type on their laptops, surrounding me with the energy of the "second tech boom." At the counter, the menu advertises Five Mountains Tea. Listed second, under "Nile Valley Chamomile" and above the more local "Pacific Peppermint," is "Cedarburg[1] Rooibos." One cup costs $2.50—or, at the current exchange rate, about twenty South African rands. Why the high price? The menu advertises "single origin, heirloom, sustainable" tea with flavors of "malty grains, cedar, raisins." It is "not caffeinated but high antioxidant." What does heirloom rooibos mean, I wonder? What does the company mean by "sustainable"?

Curious, I use the coffee shop's free Internet to peruse Five Mountains Tea's website. It calls rooibos the "world's first tea (tisane/herbal) from the South African Khoisan tribe." Under its certification labels (USDA Organic, Single Origin, Sustainable Harvest, and a fourth that is too blurry to read), the website provides details about the tea:

> *Varietal:* Aspalathus Linearis. In the legume family, Rooibos (Red Bush), fine needle like leaves
> *Profile:* malty grains, cedar, raisin
> *Process:* Sustainably harvested legume > withered indoors > lightly rolled > fully oxidized > re-rolled > re-withered > fully dried
> *Attributes*: Non-caffeinated, antioxidant rich, calming, low tannins. Rich in vitamins and minerals such as vitamin C, calcium and iron

Preparation: 1 Tbs. per 8 oz., 195°F, 5–7 min. For iced tea, steep tea strongly, allow to cool, pour over ice
Region: Cedarburg Mts. Western Cape province, South Africa. Deep sandy soil. Low rainfall. 200–500m elev.32°S, 19°E
Garden: Citrusdal

The price, the location, the description, the aura of the tea, all come together to create feelings of desire and distinction that arise from an imagined geography celebrating the idea of both global connectedness and exotic, distanced foreignness. An Internet search for academic work on rooibos garners more than six thousand results, virtually all about its health benefits. The articles are filled with scientific-sounding terms, such as bioactivity, antigen, flavonoid, and clastogen—terms that require experts to decode. To those untrained in the nuances of tea chemistry, clastogens and flavonoids appear as mysterious and unfamiliar as the African wilderness.

Writing about the social world of coffee, Paige West (2012) describes a similar experience of encountering her research in a New York café. She reflects on the effort exerted by multiple people in multiple parts of the world to get a cup of coffee from the fields of Papua New Guinea to a shop in the United States. This labor, she describes, is not just the physical toil in the fields or the movement of the coffee from place to place or even the brewing of the coffee by the local barista. Instead, she explores the multiple forms labor takes, such as reproductive labor, alienated factory and farm labor, marketing labor, and artisanal labor, to produce value in a global economy. Sitting in the San Francisco coffee shop, I found myself wondering: What kinds of value do descriptions of the tea's territory, healing powers, and taste foster in the social world of rooibos? What, in turn, are the effects—both material and symbolic—of this value on the people in the growing region?

South Africa's rooibos region provides a dramatic example for understanding the world through a commodity. While rooibos marketing aims to enchant the tea for global consumers, residents of the region expressed their own form of place-based enchantment—an enchantment that celebrates rooibos's indigeneity and its unique ecosystem but could also erase the presence of nonwhite people's labor and histories on the land. *Steeped in Heritage* ultimately takes up residents' struggles over rooibos, its land, and its cultural ownership to understand how communities negotiate uncertain landscapes: places of imperiled ecosystems in the face of climate change and precarious social relations in the postapartheid era.

Acknowledgments

This book grew out of a dissertation submitted to Stanford University's Department of Anthropology, but the ideas go back further to my first trip to South Africa as an undergraduate studying geography and environmental studies at Dartmouth College. As with most research projects, *Steeped in Heritage* emerged accidentally. I had initially planned to study in Zimbabwe, but a series of political upheavals led to a last-minute switch to South Africa. My time at the University of Pretoria began a fifteen-year engagement with the country and introduced me to a key part of South African hospitality: rooibos tea. When I entered my host family's home for the first time, I was met with the words: "What tea would you like? English or rooibos?" I asked, "What is rooibos?" Ironically prescient perhaps, "What is rooibos?" ultimately became the subject of an inquiry I would return to over and over during my doctorate and beyond. After many years and research projects, the answer I uncovered was far from simple.

I could not begin to give proper thanks to all those who offered support during each stage of this project. I am deeply in debt to the people of the rooibos-growing region for their time, generosity, hospitality, and patience. They laughed with—and sometimes at—the *Amerikaanse meisie* as I negotiated the social and ecological terrain of the rooibos world.

The book would not have been possible without the help of many individuals and institutions. I thank James Ferguson, my graduate adviser at Stanford University. He provided guidance throughout the research and writing process, from grounding my ideas to pushing my theoretical engagements to commenting on numerous drafts. My dissertation committee, Liisa Malkki, Paulla Ebron, and Lynn Meskell, provided invaluable feedback and encouragement. Through her close readings during a writing seminar, Liisa helped me find my voice whenever I buried it in academic language.

In South Africa, scholars at the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of the Western Cape and the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at the University of Stellenbosch provided instrumental support and advice during my fieldwork. The Environmental Monitoring Group and Indigo Development and Change assisted with my understanding of the climate aspects of the rooibos-growing region. In addition, Alison Montgomery was a vital resource for working through the everyday negotiations of fieldwork. This project was generously funded by the Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship, the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the IIE Student Fulbright, the U.S. Department of Education, Stanford's Department of Anthropology, and Stanford's Center for African Studies. A postdoctoral position in Stanford's Program in Writing and Rhetoric provided funding during the writing stage.

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Steeped in Heritage also benefited from panel sessions at conferences, including the American Anthropological Association's annual meeting; the Association of American Geographers' annual meeting; the African Studies Association's annual meeting; "Land Divided: Land and South African Society in 2013 in Comparative Perspective" at the University of Cape Town; "Climate Change and Culture" at the University of Prince Edward Island; and "Political Ecologies of Conflict, Capitalism and Contestation" at Wageningen University and School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Portions of this book appeared in *American Ethnologist* (2014) and *American Anthropologist* (2014), as well as in *The Sage Handbook of Intellectual Property*. The ideas benefited greatly from the editors and anonymous reviewers of these publications. I also thank Gisela Fosado and Lydia Rose Rappoport-Hankins of Duke University Press, and the anonymous reviewers they enlisted, for their assistance in sharpening my final contribution. Several other Duke University

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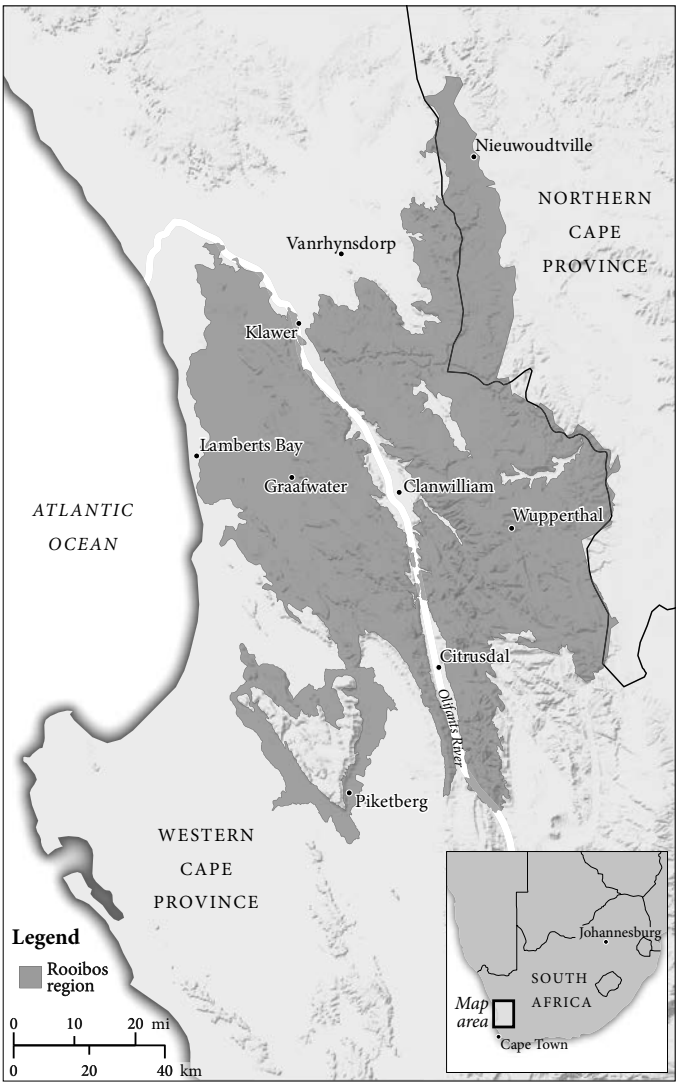
Last, thank you to Mike Montgomery for his unconditional support and patience during the research and writing process, and for sharing my passion for a daily cup of rooibos tea.



MAP FM.1. Map of the rooibos-growing region. Created by Tim Stallman based on information supplied by Mike Wallace, Western Cape Department of Agriculture, South Africa.

Introduction

THE "ROOIBOS REVOLUTION"

> Deep in the heart of South Africa, in the mountains and valleys of the Cederberg region near Cape Town, vast vistas, fields of verdant green bushes, fill the landscape. Traveling throughout this precipitous expanse, one may not suspect that this bright bush, which the locals refer to as "Rooibos," could be such a versatile and remarkable herb. Rooibos tea remained virtually unheard of for centuries, known only to the Khoisans, a tribe of South African Bushmen. . . . The secret of this delicious herb nearly vanished into oblivion due to the environment and landscape, as the isolated tribe dwindled away and eventually disappeared. . . . Luckily, Rooibos tea was re-discovered in 1772 by botanist Carl Humberg, who then brought it back as a beverage. . . . Thus, the Worldwide Rooibos Revolution had begun. —CHRIS CASON, "Rooibos Tea"

The Cederberg region of South Africa is a dry, seemingly marginal place, with brown-gray plants that appear to come alive with a brief surprise of color after the winter rains, only to retreat again to brown-gray when the rains fail and drought sets in. During the summers I lived in Clanwilliam, a small town that housed a tea-processing plant, the landscape seared with heat and left everyone searching the sky (or the weather forecast) for rain. Rainfall in the region was highly variable. Some areas received less than 150 millimeters per year, and surface water was limited. A sign posted next to a large dam regularly updated the water level as its capacity decreased daily through the summer—90 percent, 70 percent, 25 percent—only to rise again in the winter—30 percent, 75 percent, 98 percent. For residents of this farming region, it was a life measured by cycles.

I first visited the area in the winter of 2009. About three hours of driving separate Clanwilliam from Africa's southwestern tip. The journey takes you

from Cape Town's skyscrapers through the informal settlements that surround the city to long stretches of wheat fields, punctuated by the occasional small town. Eventually, a steep road winds its way up a high pass and marks the passage from the vast open fields to the rocky shrubs of the Cederberg. The short Southern Hemisphere winter could be deceptively cool, and during my first visit the mountains were white with snow from a recent storm. When residents learned that I planned to live there from 2010 to 2011, they only hinted at the harsh conditions that were to follow. Months later, everyone seemed to delight in asking me, "How are you surviving in this heat?" Or, "I thought about you when the weather went back above 45 degrees [Celsius]," teasing smiles spreading across their faces. For more than a hundred years, farmers had battled the long summers with irrigation to produce crops that had evolved in faraway ecosystems: potatoes, grapes, and citrus. Beyond the edges of these fields, however, residents also harvested indigenous rooibos plants and used the bush's leaves to create an earthy tea.

A native plant, rooibos is adapted to the region's hot, dry summers. The narrow needle-like leaves from which the tea derives have limited surface area to minimize moisture loss. Driving to a rooibos farm in the early stages of my research, I found myself hopelessly lost in a maze of dirt roads. The vegetation all looked the same—indigenous bushes and blooming protea flowers. I couldn't tell where the farm ended and the uncultivated land began. Far from cellphone reception, I started to feel desperate until I came across a group of farmworkers walking to the pavement that I had left behind miles before. "*Waar is die plaas, asseblief?*" I called out in Afrikaans, the most commonly used local language, asking where the farm was located. One worker laughed, probably as much at my American accent as at my seemingly redundant question. "*Dit is die plaas*," he responded. As I looked around, rows of rooibos plants began to form in front of my eyes among the rocks and shrubs. I laughed—*this* was the farm. Unlike the neat rows of local grape or citrus fields, rooibos farms can blend so seamlessly into the landscape that an untrained—or panicked—eye can miss them.

This book explores how rooibos farming is entangled with political, economic, and environmental struggles over land, labor, and ideas of native belonging. Much lore surrounds the tea. The "remarkable herb" Chris Cason (2004) describes, "remained virtually unheard of for centuries, known only to the Khoisans [*sic*], a tribe of South African Bushmen." "Luckily," he continues, the tea was "re-discovered" and now serves consumers around the world. In the last hundred years, rooibos has moved from wild plant gathered for local consumption to a global commodity. Now comprising about 10 percent of the

global herbal tea market, rooibos can be found in trendy cafés as far afield as Hollywood, Munich, and Beijing (Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries 2014). By 2011, about five thousand people worked at rooibos farms and processing plants, and rooibos had become an approximately $70 million-dollar industry (Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries 2011).

Tea marketers describe rooibos as a cure-all that will do everything from preventing cancer to thwarting the effects of aging. Advertisements alternately refer to the tea as an exotic commodity, a traditional Indigenous[1] medicine, and South Africa's national beverage. These depictions, however, are more than mere marketing flourish. Many local residents describe the tea as "Mandela-like," imbued with charismatic qualities that supposedly would heal the unhealthy body, the divided nation, and the depleted land. In this way, rooibos is rife with semiotic possibilities. Cultivating rooibos is as much about harvesting an indigenous plant as it is about producing a storied commodity. Rooibos tea packaging is nearly always accompanied by brochures, origin narratives, and images. These stories require a production of locality—a natural, indigenous, exotic locality that is either unpeopled (the African wilderness) or populated only by "natives" who are envisioned as a natural part of the Bush and not fully or securely human.

This book, then, is not just about rooibos but also about how people claim their belonging in relation to an uncertain political, economic, *and* ecological future. By exploring the ironies and surprises that surround the plant/commodity, *Steeped in Heritage* looks at how people envision themselves as attached to places and how those attachments play out in fierce contestations over nature, race, and heritage in a land where climatic shifts are pushing the indigenous ecosystem southward. How do residents grapple with their "precarious" identities, and how do they articulate their own concepts of what it means to be indigenous when their uncertain claims to belonging in place merge with the uncertainty of the rootedness of place itself? I will show how residents' relations with rooibos as a commodity, as an indigenous plant, and even as an extension of the self help to answer these questions.

Arjun Appadurai (1986) argues that we have reached a "commodity ecumene" defined by relationships that link people around the world through consumption. These relations are punctuated by connections and disconnections, productions and erasures. Consumers prefer to be ignorant about some aspects of food production, yet they are also captivated by the lore of food origins. By purchasing food from other countries, they construct a meaningful cognitive geography about the world and their place in it (Fischer and Benson 2006). Tea consumers in the United States and Europe can fantasize

about preserving a wild "African Bush" or draw comfort from the idea that their purchases help "Third World" laborers earn livelihoods or maintain a particular way of life. For some consumers, the ethics of consumption centers on a self-fashioning that removes them from global inequality or complicity in environmental destruction.

Rooibos's global commodity chain brought farmers and workers into dialogue with transnational movements centered on indigenous products. By examining the industry's emphasis on the plant/commodity's indigeneity, I explore the effects of combining indigeneity and the market—in an area where both heritage and the market were hotly contested. "Rooibos tea is a fabric of society," a white farmer said as we sat in his office sipping tea and looking across his fields. In tension with effusive narratives about rooibos's nativity, the region was peopled with two groups who do not fit easily into discussions of indigeneity: "white Afrikaans" and "coloured" South Africans. Coloureds, a South African racial category, were often considered impure and denied nativity to anywhere, while Afrikaners espoused a "white African indigeneity" that was itself fiercely contested by coloured and black South Africans who stylized them as "settlers" from Europe.[2] Afrikaners could trace their history in the region as far back as the seventeenth century. They are descended primarily from Dutch Calvinists, as well as from Germans and French Huguenots, though mixing occurred among all European groups and even across racial boundaries that were porous during the early years of colonization. Often labeled an "African ethnic group," many Afrikaners did not feel a connection to Europe; rather, they believed that southern Africa was their essential homeland. Coloured South Africans, with a diverse heritage of Khoisan (or "Bushman"),[3] white settler colonists, and slaves and laborers brought from other parts of Africa and Asia, were saddled with stereotypes of inauthenticity.

The discourse of a pure, ecologically indigeneous rooibos worked alongside pathologized, deterritorialized concepts of coloured and Afrikaans identities. It is this apparent contradiction that was central to social and ecological relations in the region. Rooibos was unquestionably indigenous, its naturalness supposedly outside of politics; yet, the plant's naturalness was the source of its economic, cultural, and spiritual value and engendered its very politicization as compared to other crops. Rooibos and its ecological indigeneity brought together nature, place (as a physically and ecologically delineated region and as a geographical imaginary), race, and politics in very concrete ways. Both coloured and Afrikaans residents appeared trapped in a liminal state—neither unequivocally African nor European, yet intimately connected to the indigenous ecosystem that they cultivated and called their home. They were the

people of *this* place, but also the people of *no place*. Perpetually entangled in power-laden relations of dependence and conviviality, they lived side-by-side existences marked by compromise (du Toit 1993; Mbembe 2001).

Some politicians and development workers tried to "redeem" and "explain" coloured identity by relabeling it, using the term "native Bushman." However, coloured residents often resisted attempts to be emplaced as native, a label that held both the promise of rehabilitating their supposedly pathological identities and the threat of temporally incarcerating them in a state of primitivism or even extinction. Instead, they drew on their connection to rooibos, pointing to the plant's indigeneity for evidence. In doing so, they expressed a temporally different heritage—one that is coalescing in the present and is unencumbered by a culturally indigenous identity. They showed how the object (rooibos) and not the culture (coloured or Khoisan) served as the focus of their belonging and their hopes for an economically viable future. Residents of the rooibos region undoubtedly lived in Appadurai's "commodity ecumene," as the tea linked them to packagers, companies, and consumers around the world. A global tea market searching for "new," "exotic" herbal teas affected the lives and livelihoods of workers, farm owners, and other residents. Yet the intimate negotiations of belonging through and with the indigenous plant brought together experiences of geographical precarity with economic precarity and racial—even ontological—precarity that an exploration of rooibos as a transnational commodity alone could not capture. To residents, rooibos could shift between commodity, native plant, and moral subject. In addressing residents' alternate politics of indigeneity, this book explores the kinds of activism these claims both open up and foreclose.

"WE HAVE NAMED OUR rooibos tea cooperative Ebenezer," said Theunis,[4] a coloured farmer who lived in the northernmost part of the rooibos region, straddling the Western Cape and Northern Cape provinces. "It's a biblical term that means God has carried us here. We had a lot of fights to lease this rooibos land." Theunis described how "Ebenezer" came from a passage in the Book of Samuel about an Israelite victory over the Philistines. The name literally means "the stone of help." Later, reflecting on the region's intense and personal struggles over rooibos ownership, I looked up the passage: "Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, until now the Lord helped us" (Samuel 7:12). Theunis's use of "Ebenezer" seemed to encapsulate more than his fight for rooibos land in an area where white farmers owned almost all of the farm

acreage. The words possessed an uncertain temporality: *Until now* God has helped us. Theunis remained unsure about the future of his tea cooperative and his own livelihood. Would he be able to compete with the agribusinesses that were increasingly involved with rooibos production? *Until now.* Would his crops survive the changing ecological climate observed in the region? *Until now.* Despite the lack of definitive answers, Theunis celebrated and gave thanks for his access to rooibos after centuries of dispossession. Rooibos and its indigeneity formed an integral part of his sense of belonging and his ability to earn a living on the dry, nutrient-poor land. The rooibos he grew was a "gift from nature" and his "stone of help," memorializing his temporary victory in and with the land.

Theunis considered himself lucky. Most coloured residents did not have access to land. Today, commercial farmers—who are almost exclusively white—oversee the cultivation of approximately 93 percent of rooibos, while small-scale coloured farmers, unable to access significant amounts of land, cultivate less than 7 percent (Sandra Kruger and Associates 2009).[5] Commercial farmers expressed their own feelings of connection to—even love of—the land. "Rooibos tea started from the wild," Kobus, a white Afrikaans farmer who lived down the road from Theunis, said. He was interested in ecology and had read natural history books about the area. As we walked across his vast farmland, he stopped occasionally to point out wild rooibos plants growing at the edge of his cultivated tea fields. "Rooibos is part of the fynbos family," Kobus added. "Fynbos is the smallest of the world's six flower kingdoms. It's what makes it special, unique. It's only in South Africa, only here." He stroked the needles of a tea bush next to him. "Come, let's have a cup." As the sun went down and the escarpment faded from view, we walked back to his thatched-roofed farmhouse. Strange shadows formed when the colored lights of the rugby game showing on the television inside flashed across the open fields. Thinking that I heard baboons barking nearby, I scrambled to catch up with Kobus, who walked steadily across the dusty soil, his dog nipping at his heels.

The story of rooibos tea unfolds in the margins. Punctuated with rumors of public fights, political corruption, and corporate greed, it is a story about globalization and isolation, neoliberal economic reforms and postapartheid politics. It is about "whiteness" and "colouredness," migrants and indigeneity. Finally, it is a story of economic and ecological uncertainty and of the ways residents of a rural farming community understood and experienced these tensions. Yet significantly, it is also a story about the crop itself, an indigenous plant with particular qualities that make it valuable and intensely political. When farmers discussed price volatility in the area's other major agricultural

industries—citrus, grapes, and sheep—they described currency exchange rates or trade agreements. When discussing the rooibos market, however, a farmer said, "Everything is personal." *Steeped in Heritage* explores how firm distinctions between the natural and cultural landscapes blurred and gave way to a hybrid ecology of belonging. The geography of the landscape merged with the biography of the people and informed their entangled histories.

Though deeply personal, the stories told by coloured farmers such as Theunis, by white commercial farmers such as Kobus, and by farmworkers, marketers, scientists, and politicians resonated with theories of race, globalization, and contemporary capitalism. The book specifically addresses connections between race and nature in the context of a commodity that was celebrated for its ecological indigeneity and of people who did not fall straightforwardly into the category of culturally "Indigenous." In the Cederberg region, links between race and nature formed a terrain for the exercise of power and the legitimation of political, social, and economic hierarchies and violent exclusions. Control over natural resources and knowledge of botany played a considerable role in consolidating white residents' power and in naturalizing Afrikaans belonging.

Struggles over rooibos took place in a region in which possibilities for wage labor were becoming precarious and the majority of land remained in white hands. According to the South African government, 25.5 percent of the population was unemployed.[6] With both land tenure and employment uncertain, mobilizations around cultural ownership took on growing importance as political rallying points and means of economic survival. Detailed ethnographic work in the rooibos region shows that such claims emerged in unexpected ways. Coloured people rejected a spatially incarcerating idea of cultural indigeneity, *even as they recognized the Khoisan as the original users of the rooibos plant and often acknowledged their (partial) descent from these groups*. Rather than embracing a primordial attachment to the landscape through genealogical ties to a culturally indigenous past, both coloured and Afrikaans residents found economic possibilities in and metonymic identification with rooibos. Yet these plant-human connections remained inextricably tied to the violent racial histories mapped to and still existent in the ecosystem.

As its economic value increased, rooibos's role in contestations over belonging also rose. Formerly seen as just a wild plant and local beverage, rooibos became a culturally significant commodity through which coloured and white residents measured their indigeneity and, more broadly, their belonging in South Africa and in a "globalizing" world. At stake was not the conventional scholarly concept of "indigenous"—as an enduring, even timeless, relationship between people and place. Rather, residents expressed a different kind of

claim to indigeneity based on a relationship among plant, place, and person. This claim unsettled rooted, essentialized framings of indigeneity that had violently incarcerated "natives" under apartheid. Instead, it allowed for a different politics of indigeneity that was potentially more flexible, encompassing, and emancipatory.

As many scholars of anthropology, geography, and history have demonstrated, territorial governance and natural history have been linked in both colonial and postcolonial projects (Beinart and Wotshella 2011; Mukerji 2005). Political ecology studies combine "social construction of nature" literature with classic political economy tropes, such as peasant resistance against forces of capital, to argue for geographically and historically contextualized concepts of a landed, resource-based economy. Using this framework, scholars discuss issues such as environmental degradation as part of the logic of capital (Neumann 1998; Peet et al. 2011). While I draw on this literature, I also demonstrate how the rooibos landscape narrativized the region's social and ecological relations in ways that went beyond metaphor or human control: Agrarian struggles were material, symbolic, and generative. These struggles reproduced particular kinds of relations in the rooibos economy through kinship that included not only the transfer of rooibos knowledge from generation to generation but also a symbiosis between indigenous plant and person.

Despite this espoused symbiosis, relations between the human and nonhuman in the context of the rooibos region's racial landscape complicate celebratory connections between people and nature: White residents did not always consider coloured and black people to be securely or fully human. This physical and structural violence informed the region's social and ecological relations, as well as the rooibos industry's past and future. While racial thought in South Africa has long collapsed the distinction between "nature" and "native people" in an exclusionary way, I examine those same entanglements in a manner that attempts to unpack the colonialist vision of the two spheres. Can the celebration of plants as actors in the landscape also marginalize certain categories of people? To address this question, I explore how plant/commodities such as rooibos and the land on which they grow constitute a set of relationships. By examining a niche, indigenous commodity in connection with these symbolic and material struggles, I look at the tensions in the mutually fashioning dialectic between people and things, humans and nonhumans.

From its earliest history—from Marx to Malinowski to Mauss—the cultural significance of objects and exchange has been a classic concern of social science. Following Sidney Mintz (1974, 1986), scholars have used commodities such as sugar to explore articulations among production, consumption, and

the social, economic, and political forces shaping the world (Appadurai 1986; Burke 1996; Chalfin 2004; Chatterjee 2001; Freidberg 2009; Paxson 2010; Taussig 1980; Tsing 2003; Wolf 1982). Most recent social science research on commodities has focused on theories of neoliberal globalization. Consumption in particular has become increasingly prevalent in theories of late capitalism as the "prime mover" of neoliberal capitalism, "a force that determines definitions of value, the construction of identities" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 780). The changing agrarian landscape of the rooibos region is certainly informed by globalization and consumption; however, I see such a focus as acting only in the context of intimate relations among plant, ecosystem, farmers, and workers.

Drawing on the social relations in the tea-growing region, I argue that narratives about commodities can create their own forms of alienation. While Mintz's examination of sugar provides a critical analysis of global commodity chains, both nature and labor appear estranged. He concentrates more on the *process and the movement* of the thing through the world system than on the thing *itself*. Extending Mintz, I rethink the terms of relationality between production and consumption, white and coloured, indigenous and foreign, people and plant, labor and capital, and how this constellation of relations informs economically, politically, and ecologically significant senses of place and belonging. Through the idea of the "gift," Marcel Mauss (1990) looks at the sociality and inalienability of certain objects. For rooibos farmers such as Theunis and Kobus, love for rooibos held a symbolic meaning different from love for nonindigenous crops, because in loving rooibos, they were also loving South Africa—or, more precisely, their corner of the Western Cape. Rooibos was nature and God's gift to the region, and in turn, residents described rooibos as an inalienable part of their existence.

A Social and Natural History

> The unique microclimate of the tiny geographical region allows for the best quality natural teas to be grown in the area. The harsh climate and fertile soil combine to form [a] rare herbal treasure. —DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, AND FISHERIES, *A Profile of the South African Rooibos Tea Market Value Chain*

The rooibos-growing region begins about 200 kilometers north of Cape Town and extends just across the border of the Northern Cape, with the majority of land within the Western Cape's Cederberg municipality. For millennia, the area was inhabited by hunter-gatherers who are sometimes called "San." Around the beginning of the first millennium AD, herders, sometimes called

"Khoi," introduced pastoralism (Adhikari 2010a; Penn 2005). In the rooibos region, residents typically referred to the San and the Khoi, groups that were dynamic and fluid, by the merged name "Khoisan." The land had a relatively low carrying capacity, and the Khoisan were mobile, as they typically followed the seasonal rainfall. They left their mark in the thousands of paintings still visible on rocks throughout the region.

Europeans—associated predominately with the Dutch East India Company—arrived in the rooibos-growing area in the mid-seventeenth century. Colonization came slowly but violently. Colonists set up farms but often abandoned them to move back to the Cape of Good Hope, the heart of early settlement. Eventually, demographic pressure led colonial families to claim land for permanent settlement, and the region increasingly became a place of conflict among Dutch East India Company officials, white settler colonists who wanted "freedom" from the company, the Khoisan whose land they dispossessed, and escaped slaves (Mitchell 2008; Penn 2005). Dispossession occurred through various means, including violent conquest, treaty (although it is unclear whether the Khoisan entered into treaties freely or with full understanding of their consequences), and the impact of a small pox epidemic in 1713 that led to the deaths of many Khoisan. Conquest included the murder, enslavement, and rape of people and the theft of livestock by colonial marauders. By depriving pastoralists of their livestock, colonists also robbed them of their livelihoods, thereby forcing them into labor, into a hunter-gatherer subsistence, or into moving farther and farther north as the colonial frontier pushed up the continent.

In the initial years of colonization, both the Khoisan and the colonists practiced a kind of transhumance: They moved from place to place to subsist off the agriculturally marginal land. Homesteads were largely impermanent (Mitchell 2008). Like the Khoi, early colonists made their livelihoods as pastoralists, and for both groups, cattle appeared to be more important than land. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the colonial government and the farmers themselves did not firmly enforce property boundaries; rather, they claimed features on the land, such as the extremely important waterholes (Penn 2005). Farmers protected their newly claimed assets at gunpoint, supported by a "commando system" that acted as a semiformal militia made up primarily of white farmers, who were often supplied with gunpowder by the Dutch East India Company. They were responsible for the virtual genocide of the Khoisan—killing the men and capturing women and children to work on their farms (Adhikari 2010b).

It was not until the frontier's closure in the early nineteenth century that

private land tenure became codified, as surveying, mapping, and fencing redefined the landscape and concretized the dispossession of the Khoisan that commando "extermination" had already largely carried out. As colonists moved to a more sedentary form of farming, they demanded labor in the form of chattel slaves (an amalgam of people of African and Asian origins whom settler colonists often brought from Cape Town) and indentured captive Khoisan. Through these multiple forms of violence, the Khoisan of the rooibos region eventually lost their languages (adopting Afrikaans), their access to land, and their freedom from European enslavement or indentured servitude. They came to form a highly exploitable, and almost entirely landless, laboring class that served the white farming community's shift toward rooted agricultural production. In this bonded labor, distinctions between "imported" slaves and Khoisan were fluid and largely constitutive of the region's coloured population today.

Demographic and land-use changes also permanently altered the ecosystem. Settlers' animal husbandry practices resulted in overgrazing, while their guns increased the scale of hunting to unsustainable levels. These factors led to the eventual extermination of entire species in the region, including the elephants (or *olifants* in Afrikaans) for which settlers named the river that flowed through the region and the eland that were central to San spirituality (Parkington 2003). Yet throughout this violent history, rooibos continued to grow wild in the mountains, consumed by people who would dry and ferment the needles on large, flat rocks.

While local people had consumed wild rooibos for centuries, most contemporary residents said the tea became a commercial industry around the turn of the twentieth century. Residents described an immigrant Jewish trader, Benjamin Ginsberg, who journeyed throughout the Cederberg Mountains to buy wild tea plants from coloured and white farmers. Eventually, farmers began cultivating the tea on large, white-owned commercial farms, as well as on the meager amounts of land that some coloured residents managed to retain despite their almost total dispossession. An apartheid-era marketing board formed in the 1950s, facilitating the expansion of the industry as it began processing and distributing the tea throughout the country and, eventually, the world.

Despite the industry's growth, the tea's cultivation was primarily restricted to the ecological region where it also grew wild, the fynbos biome. The biome consists of just 71,337 square kilometers of the extreme southwestern parts of South Africa (Oettle 2012). As part of the Cape Floristic Kingdom, the biome experiences long, hot, dry, and windy summers and short, wet winters. The

rooibos plant, like other fynbos, is adapted to the harsh climate. Deep roots access underground water, and lateral roots absorb rainwater before it evaporates (Hawkins et al. 2011). As the tea made the passage from wild to cultivated, its genetic structure changed. Although wild and cultivated rooibos differ in terms of size and other biological attributes, they share the scientific name *Aspalathus linearis*, and despite the selection of certain rooibos genotypes for cultivation, its wild cousins remain, surrounding the cultivated rows of tea.

Climate was central not only to the growth of the plant, but also to the lives and subjectivities of the people who lived in the region. Because black Africans constituted only 5 percent of the local population, white and coloured residents often invoked a distinct *demographic exceptionalism* in which they saw themselves as part of a unique "haven" and not necessarily part of South Africa as a whole. They invoked an *ecological exceptionalism* in relation to rooibos and the fynbos ecosystem in which it thrived. Discussions of fynbos almost always centered on its endemism.[7] The Cape Floristic Kingdom supports more than seven thousand species of plants—80 percent of which are endemic—and sections of the rooibos-growing area form a global biodiversity hot spot.[8] Both coloured and Afrikaans residents repeatedly asserted that rooibos's economic and symbolic value stems in large part from its regional specificity. Rooibos is "good" because it is indigenous, and the rich plant community survived despite and through intensive agriculture. Many of the area's residents unwaveringly accepted the idea of nature as apolitical (but moral) and a realm unaffected by human interference, despite the fact that rooibos was cultivated.

Because of farmers' and marketers' emphasis on ecological endemism, even the chemistry of the plant became significant to the rooibos narrative and to the people who grew and consumed the plant. Rooibos's chemistry, explained a researcher wearing a white lab coat in a sterile Cape Town laboratory, made it "antispasmodic, anti-obesity, anti-microbial, anti-cancer." According to her, scientists have discovered approximately nine thousand flavonoids in plants. Aspalathin, however, is found only rooibos. While scientists did not yet understand exactly what role the flavonoid plays, they conjectured that it helps protect rooibos against oxidative stress caused in part by environmental factors. The plant is unique, researchers insisted, because it developed, thrived, and gained healing powers in a "difficult" environment. Residents often used similar narratives to represent their own struggles and triumphs in the region, whether it was coloured farmers describing lives informed by the timing of the rain and the coming of the harvest or Afrikaans farmers using their husbandry to justify their rightful governance over the land.

"The industry is very unique, and I am very proud to be part of an indigenous, homegrown export product," a tea marketer said. While his company exported tea to countries such as Sweden and China, we spoke in a small office located on a dusty road in the heart of rooibos country. "To think that it's a fynbos and natural and to create a brilliant, healthy product. It's 100 percent homegrown, non-invasive. . . . We have a healthy, sustainable, organic offering to the rest of the world." I had many conversations like this one with marketers, farmers, and workers. The discourse was filled with extraordinary stories of healing for people and the environment, and the tea's global commodity status began to affect local valuations of the plant's "miracle-like" qualities.

Beyond South Africa, tea has served as a power-laden sign in the fight over colonial and postcolonial representation (Besky 2014; Hung 2014; Sen 2014). The history of tea consumption, Piya Chatterjee (2001) argues, is the history of the domestication of the exotic. Tea is an alluring commodity because its distance from the familiar gradually transformed into the symbol of a quotidian, English definition of civility and taste, the measure of civilization. Hidden in this shift from the "strange" to the "familiar," Chatterjee (2001: 21) asserts, is the very history of empire: "the mappings of exoticism, the continuous struggles over symbol and sign, and the cultural cartographies of conquest."

Rooibos's miracle-like qualities seemingly left it open to any kind of signification. "Rooibos: It's More Than Just a Tea," read the headline of an article about the many wonders that rooibos contains (Skade 2012). Another article, titled "Magical Properties of Rooibos," stated, "We know about its good properties, so if we can look more into those good properties, it would not only improve our health, but the economy too" (Ndongeni 2012). Rooibos will supposedly help people lose weight, gain weight, and control diabetes; it will promote longevity, make skin more youthful, cure acne, prevent cancer and Parkinson's disease, guard vision, protect the liver, improve male fertility, soothe colicky babies, promote sleep and relaxation, provide comfort, and on and on.

"What's interesting is that in tough times, people drink more tea," a tea executive said. "It's cheap. It makes people feel comfortable. Tea and makeup, both those things go up. . . . Tea makes people feel good. . . . We're having record month after record month during the tough economic times." Another marketing narrative describes the tea with particularly dramatic language: "If

South Africa had to name a national drink, it would certainly be Rooibos tea. This golden-red brew discovered by the Khoisan and popularised by Benjamin Ginsberg is a flavour as indigenous as licking the sweat from a Kudu's snout" (Why Go South Africa 2012). Descriptions of South Africa focus not only on its ancient past and its charismatic animals but also on the role of Europeans in rediscovering and popularizing the country's assets for a modern, global audience. The world's largest flavor company, Givaudan, selected rooibos as one of the flavors "to watch" in its annual forecast for 2007, and concoctions such as Vanilla Rooibos Lattes have featured regularly in the United States as Starbucks' "Drink of the Day." Portrayals of South Africa skip from ancient history to the immediate present and future, to South Africa as a "place to watch." The marketing erases years of colonial violence, apartheid-era dispossessions, and continuing inequality. Instead, as the executive said, rooibos simply "makes people feel good."

In the triumphant discourse about rooibos, themes of land and belonging so prominent in South African history, activism, and scholarship combine with a postapartheid rainbow ideal of non-racialism and ethnically neutral calls for unity bolstered by "Proudly South African" business models. Yet in contrast to the redemptive and celebratory tales of rooibos's natural and indigenous healing power, the tea grows in a precarious place. The Cederberg was a social and ecological landscape in which many inhabitants faced uncertain futures, livelihoods, claims to belonging, and even a precarious ecosystem in the face of climate change.

After the official end of apartheid in 1994, the late 1990s marked a period of economic stagnation and changing relations of production in South Africa's agricultural sector. These combined forces led to a surfeit of unemployed people who wondered if they would ever find jobs in agriculture again. Postapartheid elation was soon met with uncertainty about the role of the new government, neoliberal economic policies, and the realization *or* desertion of the apartheid resistance movement's leftist ideology (Barchiesi 2011; Peet 2002). In this context, life for many South Africans was defined by precarity. An existance without predictability or security affected people's material and psychological welfare. South Africa remains one of the most economically unequal countries in the world, as measured by the World Bank's GINI Index.[9] According to South Africa's Department of Social Development (2012), the country ranks in the world's top ten in terms of alcohol consumption. Drug use is "extremely serious" and more than twice the global average. Violent crime statistics, while improving, still remain among the highest in the world. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, South Africa

had the tenth-highest rate of homicide in the world (out of 187 recorded countries) and the highest homicide rate of the world's forty largest countries.[10] More than a quarter of the population is unemployed,[11] but the rate of people out of work is estimated to be as high as 50 percent (du Toit and Neves 2014). This poverty is also predominately rural, with 72 percent of the poor residing in rural areas (Neves and du Toit 2013). Many poor in the rooibos region and places like it found themselves unable to find steady work on farms, obtain urban jobs, or make a living as smallholders.

In social science scholarship, themes of precarity often focus specifically on labor. In the European usage of "precarity," Franco Barchiesi (2011) writes, workers' conditions signify labor's declining centrality to people's lives. The South African context adds a racialized component to labor relations. Speaking of South Africa, Barchiesi argues that the precariousness of black workers' lives should be analyzed as a "social and existential reality akin to what Claus Offe (1997: 82) termed 'shakiness and harmful unpredictability'" (Barchiesi 2011: 9). For Offe, precariousness emerges in the contrast between the declining centrality of the "labor contract" in a social world where "jobs are insecure ('precariousness of work') and the norms that keep work central for individuals and households affected by the retrenchment of public programs and the official praise of work over welfare ('precariousness of subsistence')" (Barchiesi 2011: 9).

Barchiesi contends that South African government discourse celebrates work, production, and a morality based on personal responsibility despite enormous social disparities. The government heralded becoming a worker as the most virtuous expression of citizenship in the postapartheid nation (du Toit and Neves 2014). People from liberal commentators and social scientists to leftist critics seemed to agree that employment was the solution to the country's social problems. As a result, many political actors criticized demands that were not directly linked to labor market participation. The country's poor were turned into statistical categories, such as "disillusioned" or "active" jobseekers, "structurally unemployed," "informal microentrepreneurs," and "non-working populations" (Barchiesi 2011). But what if one could not "become a worker" because of the changing labor market? Despite politicians' rhetorical flourishes, unemployment, poverty, and disillusionment persisted in South Africa.

To Barchiesi's and Offe's idea of precarity, I add another dimension: geographical precarity. By this form of precarity, I imply that residents' uncertain claims to belonging *in place* merged with uncertainty of the *rootedness of place itself*. Farmers feared that rooibos's identity as an indigenous plant might become estranged from its territory if climate change shifted the ecosystem

southward. Analyzing a classic botanical metaphor, James Clifford (1988: 338) asserts that "the idea of culture brings with it the expectation of roots, of a stable, territorialized existence." In the twenty-five years since Clifford wrote those words, social scientists have challenged ideas of territorialized existence by exploring transnational commodities and people, such as refugees, global financiers, or migrant workers, who move across space. Social scientists have not, however, paid the same kind of careful attention to the movement of ecosystems (Tsing 2015). By and large, they assume a nature that stays in place. Plants grow in their proper ecosystems, and ecosystems remain bounded in particular geographical locations. Yet current climate models predict increasing temperatures and decreasing rains in the rooibos-growing region—and farmers have already observed changes in their rooibos cultivation (Archer et al. 2008; Lötter 2015; Lötter and Maitre 2014; Oettle 2012).

Steeped in Heritage investigates how climate change unsettles not just livelihoods but also cosmologies: How does the *uprooting* of an indigenous plant affect ideas about indigeneity as *rooted* in place? What are the stakes involved for both the people and the plants? And, specifically, how do you "deterritorialize" a people—coloured people—who have never been allotted a territory in the first place, who are supposedly always alien to everywhere and whose very identities are denied cultural or place-based authenticity? The effects of precarity were magnified in a setting in which claims to belonging were becoming increasingly prominent as both sources of livelihood and foci of political mobilizations (Ives 2014b).

With this discussion of precarity, I place the concept in its historical, political, and ecological context, as well as in the context of changing labor dynamics in South African agriculture. A government study from 2013 indicated a shift away from employing large teams of permanent workers who live on the farm and toward seasonal and off-farm labor (Employment Conditions Commission 2013). Recent data indicate that nearly half of all agricultural jobs are now temporary, a percentage that is likely to increase with further casualization across the sector (Munakamwe and Jinnah 2015; Visser and Ferrer 2015). This casualization implies more than just a loss of job security. For many workers, the farm was not an impersonal place of "businesslike labour relations"; it was their home (Addison 2014: 300).

With this sense of "home," the distinction between coloured farmer and farmworker could be blurry and dynamic. Some coloured farmers worked on white commercial farms in addition to tending their own crops or had worked on commercial farms before accessing their own land. These farmers had friends, family members, and fellow church members who were workers. At

the same time, many farmworkers had lived and worked for generations on the same farm and espoused a sense of ownership of the tea similar to that of coloured farmers, despite their dependence on white farm owners. They felt alienated from the fruits of their labor but not from their embodied relations with the plant and the soil.[12] In this racialized landscape of poverty, unemployment, and alienation, there emerged yet another form of precarity: the precarious subjectivities of the coloured farmers and workers who cultivated the tea.

Uprooting Indigeneity: Articulating the Indigenous in South Africa

Notions of who and what belong in certain locations have come to the forefront in discussions over cultural and biological indigeneity in a "globalizing" world. Fears of homogenization in the face of globalization have engendered obsessions not only with the idea of disappearing cultures, but also with the loss of biodiversity and ecological knowledge (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; Gausset et al. 2011; Geschiere 2011; Nyamnjoh 2006). The contemporary movement of peoples on a worldwide scale, Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delany (1995: 2) argue, disrupts order and uproots people from the places where their "stories and identities make sense," challenging both identities and the hegemonic order. With the majority of private land still under white ownership, cultural identity seems primed to take a central place in political and economic mobilizations in South Africa in particular (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009).

I want to emphasize that *Steeped in Heritage* focuses on people (coloureds and Afrikaners) who challenged the idea of a culturally indigenous identity yet were deeply implicated in discussions of indigeneity through their claims to belonging with an indigeneous plant. In her discussion of indigeneity in Indonesia, Tania Murray Li (2000) points to the political risks and opportunities posed by different framings of indigeneity. She highlights the dangers of asserting that certain groups *opportunistically or artificially* adopt Indigenous identities or that they suffer from a kind of ethnic false consciousness. Academic discussions of ethnic identity framed in terms of an "invention of tradition" imply "that maximizing, goal-oriented 'actors' switch or cross boundaries in pursuit of their ends" and thus approach questions of identity in "consumer terms, as a matter of optimal selection" (Li 2000: 150; Brosius 1999; Hodgson 2002). Li's arguments are significant in that they recognize hundreds of years of oppression of people who identify as Indigenous. For most, there is far more at stake than semantics. As Li contends, a group's self-identification as Indigenous is not natural, "but neither is it simply invented, adopted, or imposed.

It is, rather, a positioning which draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle" (Li 2000: 151; see also Alfred et al. 2006).

Dorothy Hodgson examines how these positionings "emerge" in Africa,[13] where the colonial history influences the "key terms of political struggle"—that is,

> the state as dominant organizing principle for governance, law, social welfare; the nation as modernist ideal embraced by African leaders; citizenship as mode of belonging; ethnicity as form of collective identification and mobilization; property as way to understand and access land; development as goal of African leaders; and modernity as aspiration of leaders and people. (Hodgson 2011: 9)

She explores how cultural minorities such as the Maasai have adopted the term "indigenous" relatively recently "as a tool for mobilization" (Hodgson 2011: 3; Igoe 2006). While few claim to be "first peoples," she argues, they do claim a "similar structural position vis-à-vis their nation-states as indigenous peoples in the Americas and Australia: the maintenance of cultural distinctiveness; a long experience of subjugation, marginalization, and dispossession by colonial and postcolonial powers; and, for some, a historical priority in terms of the occupation of their territories. . . . They argue for what scholars and advocates have termed a 'constructivist,' 'structural,' or 'relational' definition of indigenous that encompasses and reflects their situation, rather than more 'essential,' 'substantial,' or 'positivist' definitions" (Hodgson 2002: 1042).

Ideas of cultural indigeneity among white and coloured rooibos residents were problematic to the patterns of engagement and struggle described by many scholars and activists for reasons that cannot be separated from the region's profound and enduring inequities. Like the Maasai, coloured residents pushed back against "substantial" understandings of indigeneity. Unlike the Maasai, however, they did not claim a "structural" definition of indigeneity in its place; nor did they describe themselves as a sovereign people seeking decolonization.[14] Yet their claims to belonging through an indigenous plant shed light on contemporary racial dynamics that are often limited by accounts of colonialism that work with a settler/native, white/black binary.

The United Nations provides a universalizing concept of indigeneity. Its official declaration on Indigenous peoples begins as follows: "It is estimated that there are more than 370 million indigenous people spread across 70 countries worldwide. Practicing unique traditions, they retain social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant soci-

eties in which they live. . . . They are the descendants according to a common definition—of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means." In this description, the United Nations emphasizes "firstness," subordination, and distinction. Recognizing the difficulty of providing one, all-encompassing definition for the term "Indigenous," the United Nations instead offers an "understanding" of the word. Considering the diversity of Indigenous peoples, an official definition of "Indigenous" has not been adopted by any body in the United Nations system. In its place, the system has developed a modern understanding of this term based on the following:

- Self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member.
- Historical continuity with precolonial and/or pre-settler societies.
- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources.
- Distinct social, economic, or political systems.
- Distinct language, culture, and beliefs from non-dominant groups of society.
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.[15]

According to the United Nations, "native people" can define themselves, albeit within a framework of indigeneity that positions time (a connection to the past) and space (an uninterrupted link to a place) at the forefront. Because this concept of indigeneity is determined by the historical moment of imperialism, the term "Indigenous" appears almost meaningless outside the context of modern colonialism. It is also strikingly analogous to apartheid-era ideologies that called for maintaining and reproducing "distinctive" peoples and cultures in separate environments and through (supposedly) separate systems of governance. In a similar fashion, the anthropologists Guillermo Delgado-P and John Brown Childs (2012) define Indigenous peoples as populations who encountered Europeans for the first time five hundred years ago and who maintained their own languages, intellectual sovereignties, views of biomass, ideas about naturecultures, and diachronic notions of place-space called "homelands."

While Delgado-P and Childs, the United Nations, and other scholars and organizations attempt to be expansive in their understandings of indigeneity, undergirding these definitions are ideas of authenticity and a connection between place and culture (Igoe 2006; Lee 2006). But place is more than just a neutral, physical setting or "passive target for primordial sentiments of at-

tachments" (Rodman 1992: 641); it is culturally and historically contextual. In apartheid South Africa, connections between people and place were infused with control and power. Legislation cemented associations between land and ethnicity, defining people as belonging to specific ethnic groups and then relegating those ethnic groups to place-based "homelands" (or Bantustans), employing the same language as Delgado-P and Childs but toward explictly violent ends. When using an ideological framework that links culture to place, coloured identity can seem unredeemable. How do you repatriate a people who supposedly have no essential home, and whose ethnogenesis many believed emerged from the shame of rape?

Lynn Meskell (2012) poses the question: How do you define "Indigenous" in South Africa? Is everyone who is not white considered Indigenous? Or are the Khoisan the lone "true," "authentic" Indigenous people? Under the United Nations definition, the only people who could be deemed Indigenous in the rooibos context would be the Khoisan, who, most residents assert, no longer "exist" in the region, having died out long ago from disease, violence, or slow incorporation into the coloured population. Even if we take the category "African" to signify indigeneity, many whites have used the term to assert that they, too, are African by birthright. The debate over "firstness" and who can and cannot be an authentic South African has profound historical and political implications. White colonists used the presumed extinction of the Khoisan and the claim of simultaneous arrival of the black or Bantu population to justify their own landownership and belonging, even though archaeological evidence has long proved otherwise (Meskell 2012; Mitchell and Whitelaw 2005).

Links between indigeneity and land are familiar themes in the humanities and social sciences. In relation to Africa and other non-Western regions, scholars often address themes of deep, organic, bodily connections to land that are assumed to be related to ancestors' presence (Lan 1985). For example, in many parts of South Africa, people buried their children's umbilical cords in the soil. Scholars such as Jacob Dlamini (2013) and Renee Sylvain (2002) have addressed the problematic nativism that essentializes this relationship in atavistic ways. Sylvain discusses how in postapartheid southern Africa, criteria for indigenous status can become "ontologically saturated with essentialist and primordialist conceptions of culture" (Sylvain 2002: 1075) For this reason, Dlamini argues, many South Africans formed a connection to the land not through their "traditional cultures" but as modern subjects who linked property ownership with civilization. Yet coloured people were given no homeland, no codified autochthony, and scarce property ownership; discursively, they did

not "emerge from the soil" (Geschiere 2009). On the contrary, they supposedly came from the illegitimacy of miscegenation.

In the rooibos region, residents negotiated and narrated their belonging in ways that linked subjectivities to an indigenous plant in complex and at times unexpected ways. While Afrikaners asserted that their cultural survival hinged on a place-based identity, coloured people resisted attempts to be emplaced as "native Bushmen," a term many considered derogatory. For coloured populations, if the "native" label and its links to apartheid-era policies of control held the promise of redeeming their supposedly pathological identities, it also posed the threat of temporally incarcerating them in a state of primitivism or even extinction as "Bushmen." Instead, many coloured people in the rooibos-growing area provided a different framing of indigeneity as a relationship among people, place, and plant. Their framing allowed for fluidity in a way that redefined heritage, not only as a claim to a "traditional" past, but as a potential for the future (Ives 2014a). The intimate yet tense relationships between coloured and white communities, the object of their labor, and the potentialities of their cultural belonging were reframed by a commodity chain grounded in the sale of an indigenous plant.

Plants, Commodities, and Totems

> [The social world is] produced through social relationships between organisms. These organism can be people, ancestors, spirits, animals, and plants. The social relations are not neutral and economic; they are familial and poetic. — PAIGE WEST, *From Modern Production to Imagined Primitive*

Residents often said that rooibos developed its valuable form because of its "proper" fynbos ecosystem and its "proper" local cultivators: farmers whose families had lived in the area for generations. While the tea had become a global commodity, in the growing region people and plants came together in an imagined culturally and geographically rooted world that ensured the quality and authenticity of the tea. Indeed, the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of rooibos were everywhere in Clanwilliam, the center of rooibos processing. The sweet aroma of fermenting rooibos wafted over town when the wind blew in the right direction. The churning of the processing plant could be heard at nearby houses. Rooibos signs were scattered about the municipality, and rooibos companies sponsored local events: the arts festival, the triathlon, the flower show, school sports tournaments, and so on. Tea and other rooibos products were sold at nearly every store, and tourists could do tastings at the local factory or a rooibos café.

Rooibos, as both a "wild indigenous plant" and a "global commodity," politicized and policed the shifting and highly moralized boundaries between nature and culture, delineating who and what does and does not belong in the landscape. For many people, rooibos had the capacity to be a commodity, a native plant, and a moral subject. In *Capital, Volume One*, Karl Marx (1990 [1887]) refers to commodities as social phenomena endowed with *thing-like* status and embedded in an economic calculation. Farmers, however, rarely described rooibos cultivation and exchange as fantasized relations between "objects." Instead, they often asserted that rooibos was not an "object" at all. It was *more than a thing*; it consisted of "what is excessive in objects, as what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their mere utilization as objects . . . ; the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols, and totems" (Brown 2001: 5). In anthropological scholarship, totems commonly refer to animals or plants that are thought to have a special spiritual connection with a particular group of people. Totems usually come with a specific myth (Durkheim 1982; Evans-Pritchard 1969; Malinowski 1922). Most local residents would not say that they "worshiped" rooibos, though they certainly told many totemic myths. Yet residents did ascribe a metaphysical quality to rooibos: a connection among the plant, the ritual of consumption, and the "holy act" of cultivation.

Social scientists have produced a vast literature that focuses on how examinations of commodities can "unveil" the workings of global capital and reveal "what is really going on." Many scholars have critiqued these works as decontextualized and lacking attention to the sensuousness of objects themselves. As Jane Collins (2014: 27) writes, we need to "crack open" commodities "to recover some of what neoclassical economics makes us forget: living, breathing, gendered, and raced bodies working under social relations that exploit them; bodies living in households with persons who depend on them and on whom they depend; and bodies who enter into the work of making a living with liveliness, creativity, and skill."[16]

Steeped in Heritage works alongside ethnographically informed scholarship on coffee and tea such as Paige West's (2012) exploration of the social world of coffee and Sarah Besky's (2014) and Debarati Sen's (2014) research on labor and justice on Darjeeling tea plantations.[17] In a similar way, I address how the rooibos industry uses images of primitivity to sell the product, while it simultaneously masks the structural relations that contribute to regional poverty. Like Besky, I am sensitive to the multiple forms of labor in the industry that go beyond the production of tea to include the production of feelings. However, my attention to the intertwined social and natural history of rooibos provides a different framework to think through contemporary issues of globalization,

economic transition, and climatic changes. Anna Tsing (2013: 40) argues that, to understand fully the alienation in capitalist commodity production, scholars need to pay attention to the "life worlds" not just of the living, breathing bodies described by Collins, but also of nonhumans, including plants. While tea scholars such as Po-Yi Hung (2014: 374) examine how tea landscapes can become the "material form" of dilemmas around the "incompatible desires between being primitive and being modern," I focus on the intimate—and highly racialized—relations among plant, ecosystem, farmers, and workers.[18]

Throughout *Steeped in Heritage*, I am cognizant of critiques by scholars such as Ian Hodder (2012) who argue that, despite recent attention to the coproduction of humans and things, most anthropologists do not look closely at the things themselves. As a result, I attempt to explore the semiotic and material aspects of rooibos as a plant and a commodity in both its production and consumption. I address rooibos's particular ecological conditions, its smell and taste, and the biological aspects of its celebrated healing properties. However, as an anthropologist concentrating primarily on the relations between people and plant, I recognize that I remain open to Hodder's critique. I, too, predominantly focus on the human. Yet, I argue, addressing the relations between the human and nonhuman in the context of the rooibos region's racial landscape adds a profound complexity to multispecies relationships: White residents did not always consider coloured and black people fully human. This stance represented a deep physical and structural violence that informed the region's social and ecological relations, as well as the rooibos industry's past and future. Central to that future, I assert, were residents' articulations of indigeneity—not as a static, binary relationship between people and place, but as a potentially more fluid relationship among people, place, and plant.

The Cartography of Steeped in Heritage

I divide the book into five chapters. I begin by exploring the people involved in rooibos farming: How do they wrestle with their "precarious" identities, and how do they express their own concepts of what it means to be indigenous? Chapter 1, "Cultivating Indigeneity," discusses how South Africa's past made claims to indigeneity particularly complex and politicized: The country's history shows both the potentially emancipatory and troubling results of embracing an ethnic identity. In this context, many coloured people in the rooibos-growing community expressed a form of heritage that was not merely a one-to-one fixity of people to place. Instead, it was something more encompassing and flexible. Despite a rejection of a culturally indigenous heritage for

themselves, coloured community members claimed a connection to rooibos, drawing on the tea's indigeneity for evidence. The manner in which they described this belonging challenges understandings of indigeneity as a form of ethnic essentialism or as a rallying cry for political activism. Their claims allowed for fluidity in a way that redefined heritage not only as a connection to a traditional past but also as a potential for the future.

Chapter 2, "Farming the Bush," continues the discussion of indigeneity and belonging through and with rooibos. By shifting attention to the cultivation of the plant itself, the chapter addresses the constellation of symbolic and material dependencies among the region's residents, rooibos, and the ecosystem as a whole. Yet the chapter also shows that the idea of this symbiosis simultaneously produced multiple erasures, including that of coloured and black workers' labor. In South Africa, ideas about race, indigeneity, and nature have been problematically intertwined in centuries of racial discourse about subhuman or nonhuman others. By examining a local history of human-nonhuman relations, the chapter explores how ecological facts become culturally meaningful and socially and politically active, in addition to being economically essential to regional livelihoods. The landscape was a physical library of the region's past and its future, embodying both its histories of violent dispossession and its narratives of belonging to a beloved ecosystem. Using detailed ethnographic examples, I articulate a theory of the Bush, or *Bos* in Afrikaans, by exploring the intertwined concepts of fyn*bos*, rooi*bos*, and *boes*man (Bushman).

Chapter 3, "Endemic Plants and Invasive People," explores the role migrants and invasive plants play in the contested landscape. As black migrants came to labor in rooibos fields alongside local coloured workers, connections between rooibos and claims to belonging unfolded in an increasingly elaborate dance. The presence of "aliens," whether they were black Africans or foreign plant species, was often—but not always—presented as a threat to the region's environmental and cultural specificity and its supposedly concomitant environmental and cultural vulnerability. This "threat" was contingent, dynamic, and entangled with politics, economics, ecology, and subjectivity. Physical geography at times gave way to postapartheid negotiations and renegotiations of spatial control, exclusion, and mobility. In this context, alien invasives emerged more as matter that was "out of control" than as matter that was "out of place" in an ecological sense (c.f Douglas 2002 [1966]). Foreign plants were not representative of the alterity of foreign people. Rather, certain assemblages of human-plant alliances and antagonisms were generative of political, social, and ecological relations—and even provided political openings.

Chapter 4, "Rumor, Conspiracy, and the Politics of Narration," explores how the stories, rumors, and cosmologies surrounding rooibos were entangled with and emerged from shifting, and at times contradictory, struggles over the plant's history, meanings, and relations. Beginning with rooibos's founding tales, narrativized histories both affected and were constitutive of people's understandings of current political, economic, and environmental trends in the region and the world. By examining a selection of rooibos rumors, the chapter considers how farm owners, workers, and community members negotiated, made sense of, and attempted to control a shifting agrarian landscape. The veracity of the stories are not the main concern, and narratives often contradict themselves and run counter to official industry histories. But I take seriously the ways in which the rumors, gossip, and cosmologies affected local residents' worldviews and had concrete effects on both the people and the plant. Through their continual retelling, the stories took on a life of their own. They became the region's daily, lived, and sedimented histories. Emphasizing the power of narration, the chapter shows how rooibos's commodity history interweaves the language of globalization, nostalgia, and class with intensely emotive ideas of ecological belonging and the changing but persistent structures of inequality in the rooibos region.

The fifth and final chapter, "Precarious Landscapes," explores how anxiety became part of daily life in South Africa, as the country saw a retreat from the hopeful and redemptive language of Nelson Mandela's Rainbow Nation to a future more uncertain and potentially threatening. In the rooibos-growing region, residents feared that something—whether it was the climate, the government, or the market—would betray them in the future. Apprehensions acquired two opposing qualities. For some, the anxiety was about constant, uncontrollable change. For others, it was about the fact that, despite the end of apartheid, little had actually changed at all: The majority of land remained in white residents' hands, and coloured residents faced seemingly insurmountable hurdles to landownership and secure livelihoods. While anxiety took different forms depending on residents' social locations, commonalities existed across social boundaries. Both coloured and white residents feared that rooibos would become a commodity and lose its miracle-like qualities. The certainty of rooibos as a stable object, anchoring uncertain lives and precarious indigeneities, seemed to be unraveling through the destabilizing economic, political, and climatic changes apparent to many residents. The final chapter specifically addresses how residents' uncertain claims to belonging in place merged with uncertainty of the rootedness of place itself. In other words, I connect fears

about rooibos's commodification to the ultimate anxiety: the possibility that rooibos's identity as an indigenous crop might become uprooted from its territory if climate change shifted the ecosystem southward.

Ethnographic Ethics: Unhinging the Reasonable

A highly localized crop, rooibos grew almost exclusively in a small part of South Africa's Western Cape and Northern Cape provinces. This book is based on fieldwork in the rooibos-growing region between 2009 and 2013, as well as continued research using archives, news articles, and correspondence through 2015. Research took me from corporate headquarters to Afrikaans farmers' barbeques and from coloured farmers' remote mountain fields to informal settlements, political rallies, government offices, church services, conservationists' offices, and union headquarters. Through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, this methodological assemblage allowed me access to the many people in the rooibos-growing community, an access that crossed the area's tightly protected racial, class, religious, and social boundaries. Researching a small, concentrated industry made it possible to interview and engage with a broad sample of people directly or indirectly involved with rooibos in the region. This comprehensive approach enabled me to examine multiple perspectives and experiences of rooibos production, processing, and distribution.

Throughout the research and writing process, I struggled with my own role in the region. Physical and structural violence became so normalized that even I—the supposedly observant anthropologist—forgot about it at times. Seeing drunken people lying face down on sidewalks or desperate unemployed men discussing suicide became as every day as the orange-red sunsets that lit up the mountains above the valley. As I formed greater ethnographic intimacies, comments about black people as "immoral" or coloured women as "sluts" were increasingly common. After months in the rural community, only extreme forms of violence seemed truly to shake me: a blood-soaked man lying in a street, a dead body at a hospital. Had the insidiousness of the mundane, everyday violence of rural South Africa become a part of my worldview? Had the banality of racism in the region made me apathetic?

While these struggles certainly bring to mind the moral and ethical implications of being a fieldworker (or a person)—and particularly a white fieldworker in a racially charged landscape—they also prompted questions about how to write someone else's "culture." *"You know, just once I'd like to read something good about my people and not just bad,"* one Afrikaans farmer's plea echoed in

my mind. *"My dog killed a black"*; and *"There was a BBC reporter here, and he said to a farmer, 'How racist you are.' But the reporters should live on a farm and see. They kill you. People from Europe or the outside don't understand."* White farmers would pull me aside, talk to me for hours, wanting me to understand. "I'm not racist, but . . . ," they would say.

In her work in a South African National Park, Lynn Meskell (2012) discusses the ordinariness of racist acts. She articulates her own struggles with how to describe the men and women with whom she worked. Many professed not to see race, much like my informants' "I'm not racist, but . . ." Meskell speaks to this "lie," which she describes as a social relationship—a communicative act "founded upon a deep history of structured inequalities that many want to bury" (Meskell 2012: 127). In her research on imperial governance in the nineteenth-century Netherlands Indies, Ann Stoler (2009: 57) describes these "lies" as a form of colonial power: "the authority to designate what would count as reason and reasonable was colonialism's most insidious and effective technology of rule." While Stoler goes on to complicate and critique this claim by showing that "colonial reason" was not pervasive, I found my own understanding of the "reasonable" unhinged, challenged, and confused on a daily basis. In reflecting and writing about my time in the rooibos region, I was often disturbed and even terrified by what I had begun to accept as normal. This terror undergirds my text and my attempts to write the complex, violent, *and* loving social and ecological relations in the rooibos industry. "I love the farm," farmers told me again and again. "Why?" I would ask. "It's a natural love." The love—like the structural racism and poverty—was unquestioned, a given. I argue that this "natural" love of the land and the "natural" enduring racism were linked through the racialized landscape.

The everyday violence and quotidian racism was unavoidable, and periodically I was jarred out of my acceptance of the region's "reasonable." Coming home particularly late one night, I was reminded of the desperation and harshness of life. Earlier that evening, I had seen a man dead from a stab wound. Not shedding a tear, I walked into my room. But I couldn't sleep. I became overwhelmed by everything that I had witnessed, but I also kept thinking that there was a whole world going on late at night that I didn't usually see. I went home on Friday nights; I locked my door; I read a little and went to sleep. Meanwhile, people were abusing drugs; they were being stabbed; they were attacked by dogs; they were getting into fights; they were bleeding and dying. Babies were sick. People were being taken to jail and released from jail. And in the morning, the sun would shine and light up the mountains, a baboon would call across the flowering fynbos fields, and I would go for a morning jog

and smile at my Afrikaans neighbors who power-walked every day, chatting about the latest gossip or the happenings on the Afrikaans soap opera they had watched the night before.

These stark contrasts inform the narrative in this book. Yet I also take seriously the idle gossip and politically charged rumors that circulated in moments like the morning walks, evening barbeques, rooibos industry events, and political rallies. Influenced by Janice Boddy's (1989) contemplation of spirit possession in northern Sudan, I explore how the "tea stories" that people told in the region formed their own sorts of ethnographies: They brought together disparate things, wrested concepts from their daily lives, and juxtaposed them in novel ways.

Notes

PREFACE

1 Cedarburg is the English translation of Cederberg (the Afrikaans for the words "cedar" and "mountain"). In South Africa, the region is spelled Cederberg, which is why I use that spelling. However, many marketing materials/tea boxes use the "English" spelling.

INTRODUCTION

1 Increasingly, journals such as the *International Journal of Indigenous Health* and media organizations such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation have begun changing editorial guidelines in relation to the capitalization of "Indigenous," much as English, Afrikaans, or South African would be capitalized. The people of the rooibos-growing region use the concept, "indigenous," in different and contested ways. Indeed, they typically rejected affiliation with international Indigenous movements. As such, I will not capitalize "indigenous" when referring to ecology or when referring to indigeneity in the rooibos region. However, I will capitalize the word when referring to Indigenous People or facets of their culture in a broad context.

2 I use the South African spelling of the word "coloured" to underscore the term's particular location in South Africa and to differentiate it from its usage in other contexts, such as the United States.

3 Language in the rooibos-growing area and in South Africa as a whole is simultaneously political and banal. Certain words, such as "Khoisan" and "Bushmen," were both controversial and used without thought. Common terminology constructed sets of categories that challenge binary thinking about race, nativity, and foreignness and even about what it means to be a farmer. Most anthropologists agree that people who speak Khoisan languages inhabited the region before white colonization. However, "Khoisan" is a problematic label, as no singular precolonial group existed. Rather, "Khoisan" is a unifying name for ethnic groups in South Africa who shared physical and linguistic characteristics distinct from the Bantu (or black) majority

(Adhikari 2010a; Barnard 1992; Wilson 1986). Often, scholars divide the Khoisan into the "foraging" or hunter-gatherer San and the pastoral Khoi (or Khoe, Khoe-Khoe, KhoiKhoi). Even these distinctions fall apart on closer inspection, as groups blended together and practiced multiple forms of subsistence, often combining hunting and gathering with herding depending on the time of year (Gordon 1992; Penn 2005; Wilmsen 1989). Colonists sometimes labeled the Khoi "Hottentot" and the San "Bushmen," words now generally considered derogatory. Residents used a variety of these terms interchangeably to describe a group considered "extinct" in the rooibos region. I will use the term "Khoisan" to refer to a general idea of the precolonial people who lived in the rooibos-growing area, as this was the term most often employed by residents.

4 I have changed all names and kept some biographical details vague to protect informants' anonymity.

5 The word "farmer" is highly emotive and politicized in the rooibos region. So intimately is it linked to Afrikaans identity that its Afrikaans translation, *boer*, is also another word for Afrikaner. In this linguistic context, coloured farmers were almost always labeled small-scale farmers or emerging farmers—or *klein boere* (in Afrikaans, literally translated as "small farmers"). This terminology had practical implications. With little access to land, most coloured farmers operated by necessity on a small scale. But as one farmer said, "I am not a small-scale farmer. A small farmer chooses to be small. I am only a small farmer because I have limited access to land." Another coloured farmer laughed at the term "emerging," a euphemism for coloured farmer. "Emerging into what?" he asked. In a more serious tone, an older farmer asserted, "I prefer 'small scale' because my family has been farming for generations. [I am not] emerging." By contrast, white farmers were almost always called commercial farmers. They often used this term—and the term "farmer"—proudly, unlike many people involved in the nearby wine and citrus industries, who preferred the term "producer" because it sounded more "sophisticated" and did not carry with it the burden of the stereotypical Afrikaans farmer identity. But the size of farms had concrete effects that went beyond terminology. In a comprehensive study commissioned by the South African Rooibos Council (Sandra Kruger and Associates 2009), small-scale farmers were defined as cultivating fewer than ten hectares. Large-scale commercial farmers were defined as cultivating more than one hundred hectares. Using figures from farms sampled for the study, Kruger and Associates found that commercial farms larger than ten hectares produced 97 percent of harvested rooibos, or twenty-eight times more harvested rooibos than did small-scale farms (Sandra Kruger and Associates 2009: 57). White farmers also tended to have a diverse farming portfolio that included livestock or fruit cultivation in addition to rooibos. Small-scale coloured farmers, however, tended to be reliant on rooibos and used nearly all of their available land for its cultivation. Consequently, they were far more dependent on rooibos's economic market and climatic conditions than many white farmers were.

6 Statistics South Africa, 2012, http://www.statssa.gov.za.

7 When speaking in English, residents frequently used the word "endemic" interchangeably with "indigenous," and readers will see that usage reflected in my writing.

In broad terms, "endemic" means ecologically unique to a specific geographical location. Rooibos is endemic to South Africa's Western and Northern Cape. Yet the word also has epidemiological usages that complicate its positive connotations. Endemic is an infection maintained in a population without the need for external inputs. In other words, it is an infection in a self-contained group. Anna Tsing (2012: 19) describes: "As long as the relevant other species are found—at least sometimes—inside the human body, we can study them in relations of co-habitation and dependency. If the other species is outside the human body, that is, part of the 'environment' for humans, analysis suddenly switches to a discourse of human impact, management, and control." In the rooibos-growing area, the term was undeniably positive. Any "infections" did not stem from the local population; they came from outsiders. Unlike "endemic," the term "indigenous" could have multiple and shifting connotations in the region. Indigenous plants were "good" and should be protected on moral and economic grounds. For coloured people, claiming indigeneity had both positive and negative implications. It could redeem their liminality and give them the right to make land claims or it could relegate them to a state of extinction or even negate their land claims by rendering them nomadic.

8 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "Cape Floral Region Protected Areas," 2011, http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/nominations/1007rev.pdf.

9 World Bank, "GINI Index," 2013, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI. The GINI index measures the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption expenditure among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A recent working paper by scholars at the University of KwaZulu-Natal argues, however, that the World Bank does not take into account the South African government's welfare policies (Bosch et al. 2010). They recalculated the GINI coefficient to include social security grants, as well as pensions from previous employment and annuities from investments, making South Africa "more equal" than the World Bank's measurement. This claim, however, is debated.

10 United Nations Department on Drugs and Crime, "Homicide Statistics, 2012, https://www.unodc.org/gsh/en/data.html.

11 Statistics South Africa.

12 I spoke with a government employee who was supposed to interact with farmworkers as part of his job, but he said, "It is not easy to reach the workers." White farmers, he explained, controlled workers' housing and most aspects of their lives. "You first need to contact the owners. The locals and the foreigners [stay there]. They are not easy to access." With the exception of workers who lived off the farm or also cultivated rooibos as part of a cooperative, I had similar difficulties. Initially, because workers lived and spent most of their time on farm owners' private property, I tried speaking with some after getting permission from the farm owner. Not surprisingly, these interviews tended to be awkwardly brief. Despite my explanations about who I was and the anonymity I would provide, I was never sure that the workers believed that I was not working on behalf of the farm owner. I abandoned that strategy and

instead tried multiple other avenues to reach workers: through church activities, labor-related meetings, political events, and so on. These interviews and casual conversations proved far more candid. However, I likely never reached some of the most isolated workers—workers whom people joked did not know apartheid was over. Their voices remain silent in my narrative. My analysis of workers' heterogeneous experiences should keep these limitations in mind.

13 Hodgson (2011) pluralizes Li's (2000) idea of positioning to recognize the multiple, dynamic, and sometimes contradictory ways in which a group self-identifies or mobilizes its self-identification. This multiplicity was reflective of the ideas of indigeneity in the rooibos-growing region.

14 Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith discuss relationships between indigeneity and ethnicity. They ask whether the term "ethnic" assimilates "indigenous" and makes it just another racial minority instead of a sovereign people. Ultimately, they argue that ethnic studies should not be "a melting pot but a 'coalitional intellectual project'" (Simpson and Smith 2014: 13). Coloured residents envisioned themselves as part of a racial group and spoke of their "cultural heritage" rather than any idea of sovereignty. Yet their claim to rightful belonging in the land because of their cultural ownership of an *indigenous* plant speaks to Simpson and Smith's idea of a coalitional project undeterred by sharp lines between indigeneity and ethnicity.

15 United Nations, "Indigenous People, Indigenous Voices: Factsheet," 2013, http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf.

16 Significantly, scholars such as Wilma Dunaway (2014) have critiqued commodity chain analyses for their lack of attention to gender. While I do not focus on gender as the axis of my analysis, I incorporate discussions of gender as they intersect with race and class in the rooibos region. These discussions range from examinations of the complicated masculinities expressed by male Afrikaans farmers to the role of women in coloured farming cooperatives and the ways in which my own gender influenced how people viewed and interacted with me in the region. Part of Dunaway's critique advocates moving beyond a separation between the market and the home and bringing households into commodity analyses. This critique resonates with my research in ways that extend beyond seeing the informal or non-wage contributions of women who are not actively involved with farm labor (though many coloured women did work in the fields). Through the intimate, racialized, gendered, and highly unequal notions of "family" that inform the rooibos "family farm," I explore how patriarchal ideas of nurturance undergirded commercial farming practices. But I also show how nurturance extended to the plant and soil in ways that complicate notions of women as close to nature and men to culture (Ortner 1974).

17 As an indigenous plant and herbal tisane, rooibos's commodity history differs from that of black teas such as those from Darjeeling. Indeed, rooibos's history differs from that of many African commodities as well. These commodities, such as rubber or gold, helped to consolidate colonial power and connect the colony to the metropole through dependence on export-oriented trade networks. However, rooibos did not become a globalized commodity until the late twentieth century.

18 Other scholarship on agricultural commodities in the postcolonial context has

focused on connections between people across space. In *The Modern World-System* (1974), Immanuel Wallerstein famously described the relationship among capitalism, agriculture, and the origins of the world economy. Building on the idea of a network, Ian Cook and Philip Crang (1996) describe food not only as emplaced cultural artifacts, but also as displaced practices and materials that cross boundaries. Beginning in the 1980s, consumers began showing an increased interest in the origins of their food and beverages (Fischer and Benson 2006; Guthman 2009; Sen 2014). Cook and Crang use the concept of the "double-fetish" to argue that producers attempt to limit consumers' knowledge while simultaneously emphasizing the idea of "geographical knowledge" to "re-enchant" certain foods and distinguish them from standardized food and tastes. With the exception of a brief discussion of tea boxes and geographical indications, I will not focus on rooibos consumption outside the growing region. However, I will show how this enchantment not only acted on consumers but also informed residents' own understandings of the tea.

CHAPTER 1. CULTIVATING INDIGENEITY

1 See, e.g., United Nations, "Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People," 2008, http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf.

2 Wiedouw Estate Rooibos Tea, 2013, http://www.wiedouw.co.za/rooibos_detail.php.

3 The terms "coloured" and "mixed race" should not be used interchangeably. In South Africa, the coloured community—though composed of people from different backgrounds and religions—was cemented into one group under apartheid. It became its own racial category, and because it was a racial category, being coloured meant that one could legally live, marry, and move freely only among other coloured people.

4 Statistics South Africa, 2012, http://www.statssa.gov.za.

5 Vast diversity exists among the coloured population. Approximately two-thirds of the population lives in the Western Cape and 40 percent in the Cape Town area (Adhikari 2005). Perhaps because of this concentration, the majority of researchers who address coloured history and identity focus on Cape Town and its surrounding areas (see, e.g., Jensen 2008; Ross 2010; Salo 2003; Trotter 2009; Western 1996). Many cross-regional similarities about the concept of colouredness and its fraught history exist. However, experiences of colonialism, livelihoods, relationships to land, and contemporary understandings of colouredness differed in the rural rooibos region from those in Cape Town—a city where most coloured farmworkers, small-scale farmers, and residents had never traveled.

6 Clanwilliam Living Landscape Project, Living Landscape website, 2011, http://www.cllp.uct.ac.za/index.htm.

7 Clanwilliam Living Landscape Project, "Living Landscape Pamphlet," 2011.

8 Wilcocks Commission, *Commission of Inquiry Regarding Cape Coloured Population of the Union*, UG 54 (1937), Pretoria.

9 South African Land Claims Court, 2011, http://www.justice.gov.za/lcc/index.html.

10 In 2015, Rural Development and Land Reform Minister Gugile Nkwinti delivered