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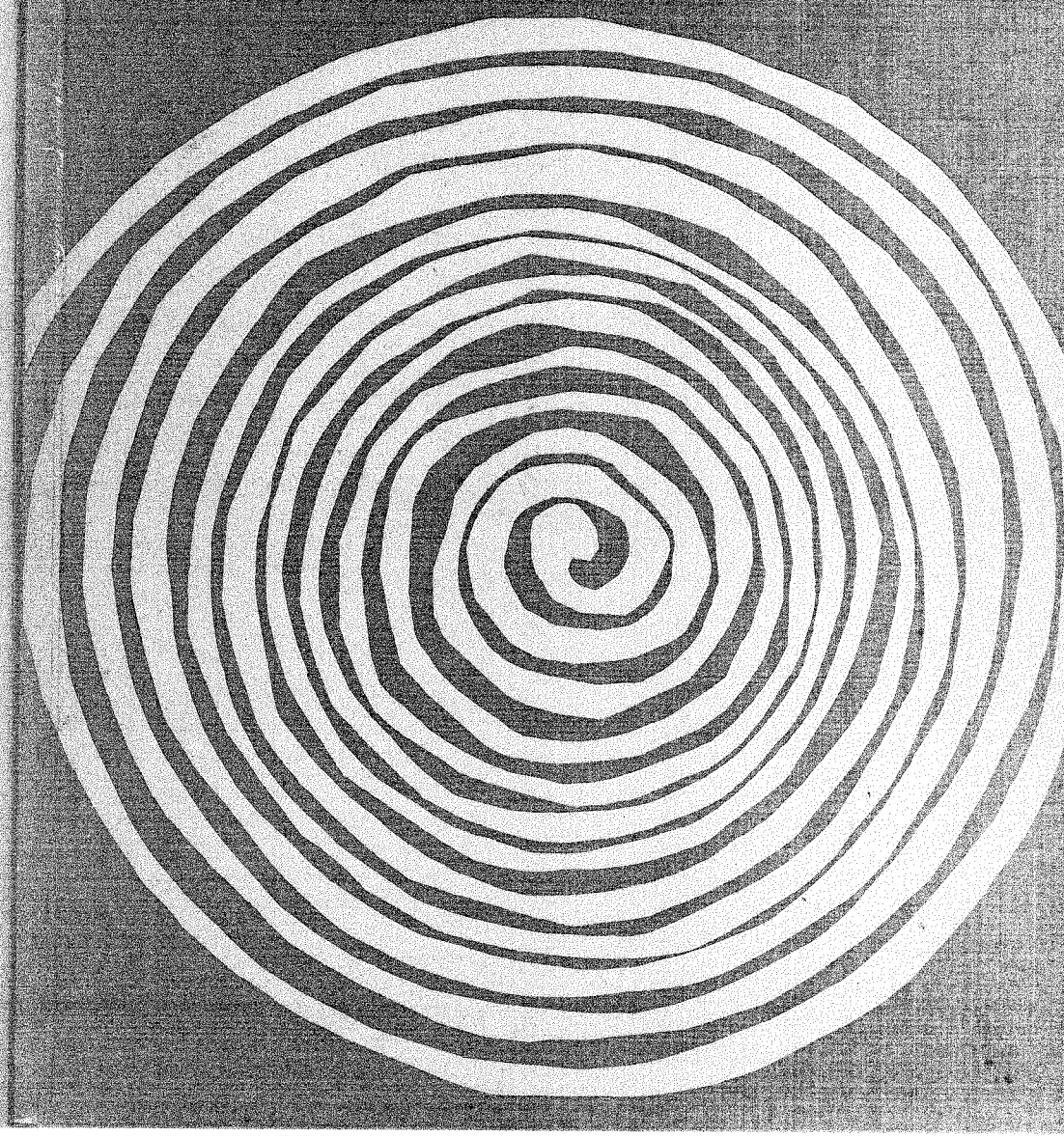

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Introduction

Johannes A. Smit

Using material collected in 1992, Bernth Lindfors tabulates data of the teaching of anglophone African national literatures at South African universities according to his well-known Better Ultimate Rating Plan. This scheme serves to quantify qualitative discriminations made by teachers, to identify patterns in institutional data and to discover the extent to which the English curriculum at universities in postcolonial situations have been decolonised (or Africanised) since independence. Among others, his main finding is that African literature is still marginalised when compared to traditional EngLit. Pointing out that even though his measuring instrument may be crude and the data incomplete, his conclusions will remain. Addressing the issue of the teaching of South African anglophone literature inside South Africa and in other parts of Africa, he proposes a Pan-African syllabus. Such a syllabus should be based on the teaching preferences of both North and South, be a multicultural enterprise and reflect the remarkable racial, social, temporal and national heterogeneity of Africa itself.

In their response to Bernth Lindfors, Judith Coullie and Trish Gibbon state that they do not disagree on the necessity that the curricula of South African universities should reflect (and reflect on) their South Africanness and Africanness or that traditional Englit be dethroned. However, they criticise his views related to processes of canonisation and his uncritical views concerning methodology. On the *former*, the notion of canon as such, value-judgements (or ideology) informing canonisation (also a Pan-African syllabus) and the relationship between institutional practice and field of study should be radically interrogated by both staff and students. Arguing that Lindfors's views on heterogeneity and diversity are incompatible with his advocacy of a critical consensus on a Pan-African syllabus, they state that traditional Englit should not be utterly ostracised but rather serve to provide a basis on which students may interact with peers at European and American universities. Moreover, such knowledge will enable them to interrogate the

ideologies which fuelled dreams of Empire. On the *latter*, Coullie and Gibbon provide more accurate data concerning the 1992 course prescriptions at the UDW English department and criticise the logic and moral behind Lindfors's use and interpretation of data. In order to effectively participate in processes of transformation, they contend, the most important is to open a space of contestation that is a necessary part of democratic social life.

Concurring with Coullie and Gibbon on the continuous reform or (ideologically speaking) decolonisation of South African curricula, the need to familiarise pupils and students with their own national literary heritage and on not completely ostracising traditional Englit from South African syllabi, Lindfors explains why his measuring procedures should not be dismissed in terms of the labels attached to it by Coullie and Gibbon. Concerning the additional information of UDW's prescriptions in 1992, he puts forward a new interpretation of the data they provide and conclude that it does not change much of his original findings. Lindfors further contends that he does not impose an alternative African canon on English departments and criticises Coullie and Gibbon's radical approach or idiosyncratic enterprise to processes of canonisation. Since South African literature is a relatively new field for many a South African lecturer, decisions on text prescriptions should be a collective activity, continuously open to innovative change and guided by good communal judgement. Furthermore, it may be more important to prepare students to interact with peers in Africa in terms of African literature than with peers in the West. Lindfors concludes his argument by briefly proposing in what order—according to the dictum of a moving from the known to the lesser known—various literatures may be prescribed in South African English syllabi and how it may impact on South Africa's cultural identity.

Sikhumbuzo Mngadi confronts the politics of history as discourse. The justification of this focus is that colonialism and imperialism saw in history the most efficient vehicle through which to promote its agenda of total occupation of colonised spaces. Since colonised African communities have repoliticised history to reaffirm their place in world history through their anti-colonial historical interpretation, Mngadi attempts to show the manner in which African communities have proceeded to 'take on the coloniser'. He argues that there have been deliberate attempts to reintroduce the precolonial past as having been curtailed in the process of developing the project of a specifically African enlightenment. The counter-move to this characteristically nationalist-orientated historical contestation were attempts to negotiate the intricate middle space between collusion with imperial history and its reverse opposite. This latter mode of historical interpretation tended to evince a

sense of history betrayed, in that its apparent 'lack of decisive political function', as it were, was for those who favoured a more organicist historicism, vulnerable to cooption. On the contrary, it is precisely the continuous quest for the articulation of the middle-space which brings to the fore the complexities inherent in the spaces of contestation.

Focusing on Apartheid's crisis in the 1980s, H.J. Vermeulen develops Lacan's theorising to explore the so-called Afrikaner psyche as reflected in Pieter Fourie's play, *Die koggelaar*. A brief sketch of symptoms of the crisis in racist Afrikanerdom and its representations in some Afrikaans plays is followed by a review of the content of the play, its reception and a justification of a Lacanian approach. Developing Lacan's Schema L to allow for various articulations of psychoanalytic theory, Vermeulen uses these insights to explore the significance of the play in terms of the theory and his earlier situating of the play in its historical, social and familial context. Finally, the possible significance of reviews such as his own is questioned.

With particular reference to the re-worked play, *Medea* (directed by Mark Fleishman and Jenny Reznek, with the Jazzart dancers), Miki Flockemann's contribution explores how theatre serves as an index of the processes of social and cultural transition, the interaction between directors/dramatists/performing artists and critics, and how this may be important in the teaching context. The central argument is that the adaptation of the Medea myth serves as an example of a work that shakes off the ghosts of the past even in the process of invoking them, and in so doing, makes space for something to grow. As such, it can be useful for discussing issues associated with multilingualism, working in culturally heterogeneous teaching contexts while simultaneously avoiding some of the pitfalls associated with multiculturalism in the South African context. A few views on what multiculturalism, identity formation and cross-cultural exchange in a multicultural (non-hierarchical teaching) context signify, as well as the role of theatre and more particularly the interactive role of audience and students with the performance of a play, are then provided. Finally, the production of the re-worked *Medea* and the responses of students on issues of knowledge, power, (en)gendered identity and culture as these relate to our phase of transition, are reviewed.

Richard Bartlett examines some of the paradoxical representations of South Africa in the literature of Mozambique. He treats a few poems, short stories and novels. These representations are arranged according to the divisions of the time of the *assimilado* elite, the rise of a nationalist ideology, the armed struggle as well as the era of independence and the civil war with Renamo. Alternating the argument between Mozambican relations with Portugal and

South Africa, Bartlett argues that despite South Africa's exploitative influence on Mozambique, it is rarely treated as such. In the context of migrant labour, it mainly functions as substitute centre but there is no evidence of writing back to it as there is of a writing back to Lisbon. He concludes that here, post-colonial theory needs to include in its theorising the interrogation of centre-periphery relationships in regional context.

In dealing with the recent spectre of the older Western censure of the existence of African philosophy, Mabogo P. More identifies Western man's valorisation of 'reason' as the primary determining factor for the return of this controversy. He consecutively addresses the articulation and hypostasising of Western man's self-image and how African people are perceived from within this construct. He argues that it is primarily this collusion which effects the racist and often veiled rejection of African philosophy and uses two recent South African publications to demonstrate the argument. Dislodging reason from its (male) Western moorings, More emphatically shows that since all human beings have the capacity for reason, it does not have to be demonstrated that they participate in rational (philosophical) activity.

The review article of Tsenay Serequeberhan's *African Philosophy. The Essential Readings* primarily focuses on the African philosophical agenda as it developed during the 1980s. Overviews are provided of the historical explanatory approach, first and second order philosophy and common features of African philosophy. This is followed by overviews and critical observations concerning the critical dialogue on ethnophilosophy, philosophic sagacity, national-ideological philosophy, professional philosophy, hermeneutical-historical philosophy, dialogue on modernisation in Africa, African resistance to the myth of the European Civilising Mission and the deconstructive and reconstructive challenge in African philosophy.

African Literature Teaching in South African University English Departments

Bernth Lindfors

In the winter of 1992 I spent two months in South Africa doing research on trends in recent literary criticism on African literature in English. It was my first extended visit to the country, so I rented a car for a month in order to travel to as many university campuses as possible to meet colleagues and make use of libraries. I was also curious to find out how much African literature was being taught at these institutions, so I started collecting course descriptions and book lists as I made my rounds. My aim was to discover which African authors and which books by those authors were prescribed reading in English courses taken by South African university students. What, in other words, was the instructional canon in anglophone African literature studies in South Africa? Of all the hundreds of African authors, dead and alive, whose works were available in English, which ones were now deemed worthy of serious academic attention? Who counted, and who did not?

I had carried out a similar survey six years earlier by collecting such pedagogical data from twenty-six universities in fourteen other anglophone African nations and then tabulating the results on charts that assigned a numerical ranking to authors and books prescribed most frequently in literature and drama courses. The scheme, which I called the Better Ultimate Rating Plan, was an effort not only to quantify qualitative discriminations made by teachers but also to discover the extent to which the English curriculum at these universities had been decolonised since independence. Were new African texts displacing some of the musty British classics that had totally dominated the syllabus during the colonial era? Was the study of English being Africanised?

1992 was an interesting time to raise analogous questions in South Africa, for it was squarely in the middle of what Nadine Gordimer, following

Gramsci, has called an interregnum (Gordimer)—a transitional phase—in this case two years after the release of Nelson Mandela from prolonged detention and the concomitant unbanning of the ANC and two years before the country's first truly democratic election. Some white universities had already started admitting black students in significant numbers a few years earlier, and there had been a great deal of public discussion about the need for curricular reform in a changing educational environment. In 1990 the Institute for the Study of English in Africa had published a collection of twenty essays by high school and university teachers entitled *Teaching English Literature in South Africa*, a volume aimed at ventilating opinions

> during a crucial period of political and social change ... from as wide a cross-section of the teaching community as possible (Wright 1990).

So the debate was already well under way, and modifications of the old Curricula Britannica were being introduced at every level of English teaching. Today there is no South African university English programme that does not offer some instruction in African literature.

That's the good news. The bad news is that the reforms have not gone far enough, that African literature on most campuses is still a marginalised step-daughter of traditional EngLit, which remains the queen mother of all its undernourished anglophone offspring. Moreover, in South Africa the battle for official recognition of indigenous literary legitimacy has only been half won, for native sons and daughters have crowded out most of the interesting foreigners from parts further north, the result being a kind of geographical apartheid in which Africa above the Limpopo is underrepresented in the pantheon of African letters. South African university students are now introduced to a sample of their own national literary heritage, but they are taught very little about Nigerian, Ghanaian, Kenyan, Zimbabwean and other anglophone African national literatures.

The data which follow have been gleaned from 139 course descriptions at 22 South African universities in the year 1992. This is not a complete inventory of all English courses in which texts by African authors were used. From certain campuses—notably Potchefstroom, Natal at Pietermaritzburg, and the Vista University campuses—it was not possible to obtain detailed descriptions of all the English courses offered in that year, but the sample, covering more than ninety percent of what was taught in English Departments in nearly one hundred percent of South African universities, is sufficiently large to permit gross generalisations to be made. A more comprehensive and more refined survey might change some of the final tabulations, resulting in slightly higher scores for some writers and slightly lower scores for others, but I believe the final results would remain more or less the same. What we

have here then is a crude measuring instrument capable of producing nothing more than a few brute truths.

Table One: Authors

Authors	Titles	Courses	Grades	Institutions	Totals
Fugard	12	36	4	17	69
Gordimer	11	39	5	13	68
Coetzee	6	37	5	15	63
Paton	3	17	5	13	38
Mphahlele	3	16	4	11	34
Head	5	15	4	9	33
Schreiner	1	13	4	12	30
Serote	2	14	4	10	30
Abrahams	4	11	5	8	28
La Guma	4	12	4	6	26
Plaatje	1	11	4	10	26
Ndebele	1	12	4	7	24
Ngugi	13	35	4	12	64
Achebe	6	31	4	15	56
Soyinka	11	17	4	11	43

Table One lists the South African and other African writers who scored more than twenty points in this survey. Point totals were arrived at simply by adding scores in four categories: number of titles plus number of courses plus number of grade levels (1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year, honours, M.A.) plus number of institutions. For example, Nadine Gordimer earned 68 points because 11 of her books (including two of her short story collections and all her novels except *Occasion for Loving*) were assigned in 39 courses at 5 different levels in 13 South African universities. Athol Fugard scored a point higher but should perhaps be ranked slightly lower because two of his play collections—*Three Port Elizabeth Plays* and *Selected Plays*—repeat some of the ten individual titles already on his list. In any case, it is clear that Gordimer and Fugard are at the top of the teaching canon, followed closely by J.M. Coetzee, all six of whose novels published before 1992 were being taught somewhere in South Africa. After the Big Three the numbers taper off quite sharply, with only Paton, Mphahlele, Head, Schreiner and Serote scoring in the thirties and Abrahams, La Guma, Plaatje and Ndebele in the twenties.

Had we lowered the qualifying score to 15, we could have included such names as Dikobe (19), Smith (18), Bosman (17), Mda (16), and Plomer,

Tlali, and Mtwa/Ngema/Simon (15). There are several additional authors—Du Plessis, Essop, Matshoba, Modisane, Kuzwayo, Sepamla, and Breytenbach—who managed to score between 14 and 10, but they and others beneath them evidently have not yet earned much academic respect. In all, a total of 86 South African authors had their books taught in South African university English courses in 1992, but several of them, including some rather prominent figures in South African literary history—for example, Brink, Brutus, Butler, Campbell, H. Dhlomo, Jacobson, Jordan, M. Kunene, Livingstone, Millin, Rive—were nearly invisible in the survey for only one book by each was being taught in a single university English course in South Africa in that year.

This does not necessarily mean that these low profile authors were altogether forgotten or ignored. The poets and short story writers among them might have infiltrated the syllabus through anthologies, but since selections from anthologies seldom are specified in course descriptions, it was impossible in this survey to assign numerical value to every anthologised piece by every South African author. Some of them would have been taught, others not. And besides, a few anthology appearances would not have raised the total score of any of the trailing authors to the level of the half-dozen front-runners in the pack.

Of the non-South African African writers on the list, only three—Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Soyinka and Achebe—earned a qualifying score. Two others would have made the list if the qualifying standard had been dropped to 15: Armah (19) and Dangarembga (17). After that, it was very slim pickings indeed, with only four more—Lessing, Sembène, Okara and Emecheta—scoring above 10. In all, only 38 writers from other parts of Africa had their books taught in South African university English courses in 1992. Some big names—Awoonor, Clark-Bekederemo, Farah, Okot p'Bitek, Oyono, Senghor, Tutuola—were taught in only one course in one institution. Others equally important—most notably, Beti, Equiano, Okigbo, Rotimi—were not taught at all.

Table Two: Books

Titles	Courses	Grades	Institutions	Totals
Fugard, *Boesman and Lena*	14	4	11	29
Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country*	13	5	11	29
Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm*	13	4	12	29
Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*	14	4	10	28
Plaatje, *Mhudi*	11	4	10	25
Serote, *To Every Birth its Blood*	12	4	9	25
Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*	11	4	9	24
Ndebele, *Fools and Other Stories*	12	4	7	23
Gordimer, *The Conservationist*	10	3	7	20
Abrahams, *Mine Boy*	7	4	7	18
Dikobe, *The Marabi Dance*	8	3	7	18
Coetzee, *The Life & Times of Michael K*	8	3	6	17
Gordimer, *July's People*	9	4	4	17
Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*	14	4	12	30
Ngugi, *A Grain of Wheat*	11	3	8	22
Achebe, *Anthills of the Savannah*	7	4	6	17
Ngugi, *Petals of Blood*	9	3	5	17
Armah, *The Beautyful Ones ...*	6	3	6	15
Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*	7	3	5	15

If we turn now to Table Two, we can see which books were assigned most frequently. Among the South African texts the lead is shared by Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, and Fugard's *Boesman and Lena* (though one couldn't always be absolutely certain that this was the play assigned for reading when *Boesman and Lena and Other Plays* was the edition put on the book list for a course). Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue*, Plaatje's *Mhudi*, Serote's *To Every Birth its Blood*, Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, and Ndebele's *Fools and Other Stories* also score high enough to be ranked among South Africa's canonical texts, but where is Nadine Gordimer's *magnum opus*? There seems to be little agreement about which of her books is the most significant. *The Conservationist* earns a middling place on the list and so does *July's People* further on down, but none of her books has earned a commanding position in the pecking order. Much the same could be said of Coetzee. Like Gordimer, he has two books on the list, the preferred title being *Waiting for the Barbarians*, but even that one doesn't fare as well as those by other authors who seem to be best remembered for having produced a single masterpiece.

One might note in passing the near absence of books by exiled and formerly banned writers, Abrahams's *Mine Boy* being the exception that proves the rule. Maybe 1992 was still too early for some of these authors to have been fully rehabilitated and integrated into university syllabuses, but in the future one would hope to see more attention given to the best of them—Breytenbach, Brutus, Head, Kunene, La Guma and Nkosi, for starters.

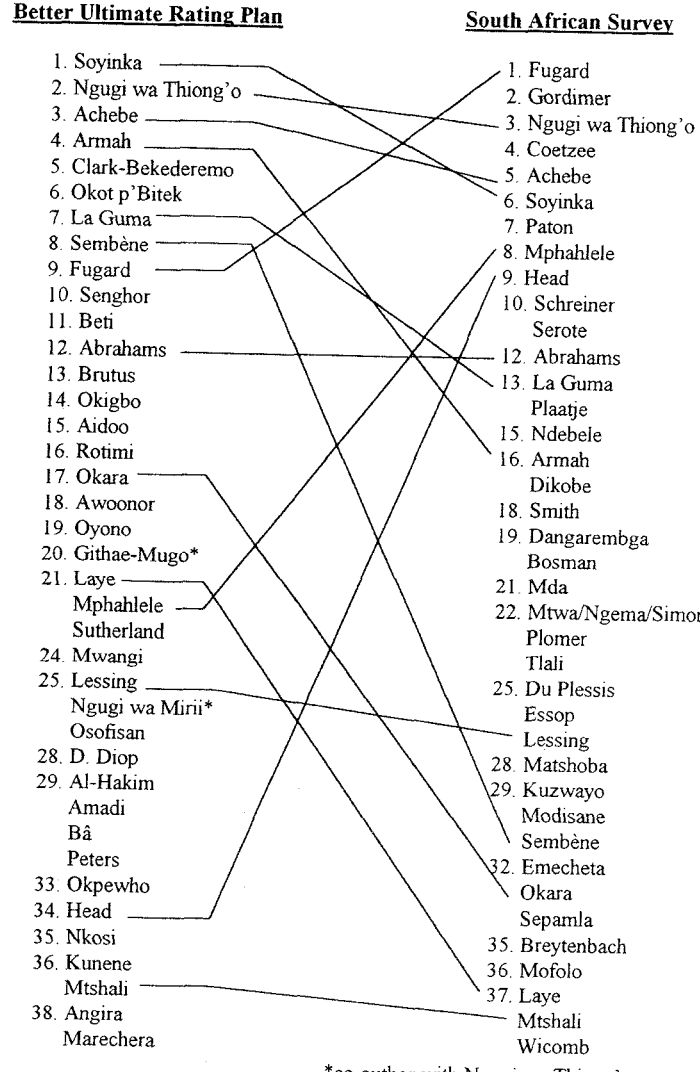
One would also hope to see more books by writers from elsewhere in Africa being used in South African university classrooms. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, followed at some distance by Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*, are the favourite selections now, and a handful of other novels by

Achebe, Ngugi, Armah and Dangarembga are read with some regularity, but why aren't more than one or two campuses reading, say, Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, *The Road*, or *Death and the King's Horseman*, to name only a few works by Africa's first Nobel Prize winner in literature? And what about all the other African classics? Of the 35 non-South African African titles listed in the Better Ultimate Rating Plan as preferred texts in other anglophone African nations, in 1992 in South Africa only 5 were being taught in 6 or more courses, 5 in 3 to 5 courses, 7 in only 1 or 2 courses, and the following 18 were not taught at all:

Okigbo's *Labyrinths, with Path of Thunder*
Soyinka's *Idanre and Other Poems*, *A Shuttle in the Crypt*, and *Madmen and Specialists*
Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *I Will Marry When I Want*
Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa*
Beti's *The Poor Christ of Bomba* and *Mission to Kala*
Armah's *Fragments* and *Two Thousand Seasons*
Sembène's *Xala*
Okara's *The Fisherman's Invocation*
Oyono's *The Old Man and the Medal* and *Houseboy*
Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*
Achebe's *Morning Yet on Creation Day*
Clark-Bekederemo's *Song of a Goat*
Aidoo's *Anowa*

Of course, one could turn this around and ask why at universities in other African nations are so few books being read by South African authors who are widely taught in South Africa. West, East and Central African university teachers do prescribe a bit of Fugard and a slice of Abrahams, but why don't they assign Gordimer, Coetzee, Paton and Schreiner to their students? Is there a colourbar or boycott in operation here? Not a colourbar surely, because those same university teachers also do not have their students read much of Mphahlele, Ndebele, Serote, Plaatje or Dikobe either. Head has been making some headway in the tropics recently, but hers may be a special case, fuelled as much by the growth of women's studies as by an increasing interest in feminist issues throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Perhaps greater reciprocity is needed on both sides of the geographical divide. The North needs to read more from the South, just as the South needs to read more from the North. Each nation or region may have its own hierarchy of educational priorities, but gaining a better understanding of neighbouring peoples and cultures must certainly be near the top of the list everywhere. And what better way could there be to improve mutual understanding in the entire continent than by reading masterworks of contemporary African literature?

Table Three: Teaching Preferences



*co-author with Ngugi wa Thiong'o

To show where the major differences in African literature teaching in North and South lie, I am attaching another table (Table Three) which sets the results of the Better Ultimate Rating Plan and the present survey side by side. This will enable us to see more clearly the adjustments that would be called for if we were to attempt to construct a Pan-African syllabus based on the

teaching preferences of both North and South. Obviously there is not much overlap in these lists. With the exception of Fugard, white South African writers are not being read up North, but eight black South African writers are being studied, three of them—La Guma, Abrahams and Brutus—quite seriously. In the South, on the other hand, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Achebe and Soyinka have been recognised as major talents, but only half a dozen other Northerners have been considered worthy of scrutiny. Southerners read Abrahams as attentively as Northerners do, tend to value Fugard, Head, and Mphahlele significantly higher and Armah, La Guma, Sembène, Okara and Laye significantly lower than Northerners do, and display very little regard for Brutus, Nkosi and Kunene. Lessing commands a modest measure of respect in each camp, but Mtshali is viewed by both as a minor talent. Several newcomers—particularly Ndebele, Dangarembga and Mda but also Kuzwayo and Wicomb—have made a favourable impression in the South but no conspicuous dent in the North, possibly because the data sample from up there is too old (having been gathered in 1986) for them to have elicited any response, positive or negative, since their books had not been published by then. There may be a slight time warp as well as pronounced demographic differences skewing the comparison of these two canonical rosters.

Table Four: University Prescriptions

Universities	Fug	Gor	Ngu	Coe	Ach	Soy	Pat	Mph	Hea	Sch	Ser	Abr
Bophuthatswana	*		*		*	*		*				
Cape Town	*	*	*	*		*					*	
Durban-Westville			*		*						*	
Fort Hare	*	*	*	*	*	*					*	
Natal, Durban	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Pietermaritzburg		*	*	*	*			*	*	*	*	*
North, Qwaqwa	*				*		*			*		
North, Turfloop	*		*	*	*	*	*	*		*		
Orange Free State	*			*						*		
Port Elizabeth	*	*		*			*	*		*		*
Potchefstroom	*			*			*					
Pretoria	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Rand Afrikaans	*	*		*			*		*	*		
Rhodes		*	*	*	*	*					*	*
South Africa	*	*		*	*		*	*		*		*
Stellenbosch	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Transkei			*		*	*	*	*				*
Venda	*	*			*						*	
Vista	*		*				*		*			
Western Cape		*		*	*				*	*		
Witwatersrand	*	*		*		*	*	*	*	*	*	
Zululand	*				*	*	*	*	*			*

One last table (Table Four) lists South African universities, showing where works by the twelve writers deemed most important by South African university teachers were being taught in 1992. Only two institutions—the University of Stellenbosch and the University of Natal at Durban—taught all twelve, but the University of Pretoria taught the first eleven, and the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Natal at Pietermaritzburg taught as many as nine each. On the low end of the scale the University of Durban-Westville, the University of the Orange Free State and Potchefstroom University taught only three each (but, as mentioned earlier, the records for Potchefstroom are incomplete). The average per campus was somewhere between six and seven of these writers taught in a three, four or five year literature programme. That's not very many, but at least it's more than was the case a decade or two ago.

Several interesting patterns are discernible in the institutional data. For instance, the University of the Orange Free State, the University of Port Elizabeth, Potchefstroom University, and Rand Afrikaans University taught nothing by Achebe, Soyinka or Ngugi wa Thiong'o, but the University of Bophuthatswana, Fort Hare University, the University of the North at Turfloop, and the University of the Transkei (all former Bantu universities) as well as the Universities of Pretoria, Stellenbosch and Natal at Durban (the ones with the most inclusive curricula) and Rhodes University taught all three. The Orange Free State taught only white writers, Rand Afrikaans University taught all the whites but only one of the blacks, the University of Durban-Westville taught only black writers, the University of Bophuthatswana taught only blacks except for Fugard, the University of the Transkei taught only blacks except for Paton, and the University of the North at Qwaqwa taught only whites except for Achebe. The rest—by far the majority—taught a very mixed bag.

It may never be possible to achieve a perfect consensus on what should and should not be taught in university English courses in the new South Africa, but a generous mixing and mingling of talented writers from different racial, social, temporal and national backgrounds appears to be the most satisfactory way to balance competing interests and produce a syllabus that is both representative of the best from the past and inclusive of the best from the present. One would hope that such a syllabus would also to some extent accommodate itself to local circumstances and be capable of reflecting the remarkable heterogeneity of Africa itself, with its many diverse and complicated expressive cultures. University English literature teaching in South Africa—indeed, anywhere in Africa—should be a profoundly multicultural enterprise.

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Saints and Sinners in the Canonisation of African Literature: A Reply to Bernth Lindfors

Judith Lütge Coullie & Trish Gibbon

Bernth Lindfors set out, in 1992, to gather information about the syllabi of English Departments in South Africa, in order to assess their responsiveness to the profound political changes which were taking place. But his project was not merely one of information gathering: he strove to evaluate the curricula in terms of their loading of African and South African texts against 'the old Curricula Britannica' (p. 6). In a compilation of empirical data drawn from course descriptions at 22 South African universities for the year 1992, Lindfors concludes that

> African literature on most campuses is still a marginalised stepdaughter of traditional EngLit, which remains the queen mother of all its undernourished anglophone offspring (p. 6).

This conclusion is arrived at through a process, initially, of conducting a popularity poll whereby he establishes 'the twelve [African/South African] writers deemed most important by South African university teachers' (p. 13) and secondly, by rating universities in relation to the number of prescriptions they made of these 'top twelve'. (The relative proportion of African and South African texts to the old British canon is not revealed). Few of us engaged in the business of teaching literature at South African universities would quarrel with Lindfors's argument that South African universities' curricula should reflect (and reflect on) their South Africanness and Africanness. Indeed, many (if not most) English department curricula had begun the move away from the 'traditional EngLit' (p. 6) canon in the nineteen eighties. Nevertheless, in spite of agreement on this fundamental

question there are many points on which we must take issue with Lindfors. First of all, implicit in his essay is the assumption that a new canon of African and South African texts should be established, and conformed to. The notions of a new canon and of national and continental conformity to such a canon are both highly questionable. Furthermore, one must challenge Lindfors on his methodology: in ranking university English departments on a kind of saints-to-sinners continuum in accordance with the number of *most popular* South African and African texts which feature on prescribed book lists, Lindfors has used inaccurate data, and in questionable ways.

Let us begin with the canon-building issue. Upon reading Lindfors's paper 'African Literature Teaching in South African University English Departments', one might be forgiven for thinking that the last thirty years of theoretical developments, conceptual shifts and political challenges in the field of literary studies had passed him by without notice. Lindfors demonstrates a completely uncritical notion of canonicity. He claims that the usefulness of one of his tables lies in its ability to demonstrate 'the adjustments that would be called for if we were to attempt to construct a Pan-African syllabus' (p. 11). Here and elsewhere[1] the implication is that such a project would be worthwhile. Canonicity is in contention in literary studies throughout the world, and it is an issue of particular sensitivity and contestation where literary fields are relatively new and still developing. Since Foucault, it has become a commonplace within disciplinary studies to acknowledge that disciplines set up their fields of study through their own discursive practices, in a process that is neither neutral nor value-free. In 1982, in his introduction to *Re-Reading English*, Peter Widdowson (1982:3) made the following remarks:

> 'Literature' is, in effect, being recognised as the construct of a criticism which, while assuming and proclaiming its 'descriptiveness', its 'disinterestedness', its 'ideological innocence', has so constituted Literature as to reproduce and naturalise bourgeois ideology as 'literary value'. Literary value, therefore, as perceived by criticism in the 'great tradition' of master works or 'classic' texts, correlates closely with the values of liberal individualism in general, and substantially helps to underpin them.

Lindfors might well agree with this, and argue that his concern with the extent to which the literary field in South Africa has been 'decolonised' (p. 5) is precisely a concern to dis-establish the dominance of traditional EngLit. However, what he would like to see, it would seem, is its

[1] Consider, for example: 'It may never be possible to achieve a perfect consensus on what should and should not be taught in university English courses in the new South Africa ...' (p. 13); this implies a desire for precisely such consensus.

replacement with an alternative 'African canon'. But the notion of a canon or its value is not open to debate. Toril Moi makes exactly this point in the course of her critique of aspects of Anglo-American feminist criticism. The point is not 'to create a separate canon' of women's or African writing, but 'to abolish all canons' (Moi 1985:78). Lindfors's opposition to what he terms 'the old Curricula Britannica' operates within the same limitations; his revealing terminology of 'masterpiece' (p. 9), 'masterworks' (p. 11) and 'African classics' (p. 10) demonstrates the operation of such criteria within his own critical discourse. As Moi (1985:78) argues, 'a new canon would not be intrinsically less oppressive than the old'. Reading on with Moi (1985:78), but substituting 'African' for 'feminist', we have this:

> The role of the [African] critic is still to sit quietly and listen to [the authoritative African] voice as it expresses authentic [African] experience. The [African] reader is not granted leave to get up and challenge this [African] voice; the [African] text rules as despotically as the old [traditional EngLit] text.

The kind of substitution that is implicit in the Lindfors position might well achieve no more in cultural and educational institutions than neo-colonial 'transfers of power' achieved in political and economic institutions. Under the veneer of the progressive advocacy of African and South African Literature (drawn together under that truly American term 'multi-culturalism'), Lindfors is promoting a deeply conservative view of literary studies that privileges the *content* of curricula over approaches and methodologies, and so elides any examination of approach and its informing ideology. The effect is to discount the efforts of those English departments that have attempted a far more radical transformation of the curriculum than merely substituting one set of canonical contents for another.

There are times in the course of his paper that Lindfors speaks of the fields of African and South African Literature as though they have some objective, empirical existence quite outside and independent of the institutional practices that produce them—'what better way could there be to improve mutual understanding in the entire continent than by reading masterworks of contemporary African literature?' (p. 11)—but there is also, underlying the entire survey, an implicit recognition of the *interdependent*, if not positively *determining*, relationship between institutional practice and field of study. The canons that Lindfors identifies are the consequences of 'teaching preferences' (p. 12) and 'educational priorities' (p. 10). This is precisely the process that needs to be foregrounded and interrogated—the process whereby critical discourse *can be seen* to set up the field and establish the 'canon'. The question 'Who counted, and who did not?' (p. 5) is insufficient: we need to know *why* they counted. On what or whose terms?

Read in this way, the university departments that score the highest (and consequently appear to be the most saintly and progressive) in Lindfors's tables, could be interpreted quite differently as being the most conservative, in 'fixing' the canon, in limiting its parameters and, through determining its contents, also limiting the range of discourses and theories that are 'appropriate' to literary study. (To admit radically different, non-canonical contents might well mean that the whole category of Literature, as well as the practices that have institutionalised it, are interrogated.)

However, on the basis of the very limited empirical data provided in this paper, we can draw no such conclusions. The prescription of twelve authors over four or more years of study tells us nothing about how those texts are taught, what links are established, how courses are constructed, or what intertextual relationships are set up. Nor does it tell us anything about the 'educational priorities' that are currently shaping curricula in South African university English departments such as meeting the needs of a rapidly changing, and, in many respects, severely disadvantaged student body. The issues here are extremely complex for both academic staff and students, including such things as institutional access, cultural differences (including the 'alien' culture of the university itself), textual accessibility, linguistic and conceptual competence, and confronting a very wide, and frequently inappropriate, set of expectations. From this perspective, Lindfors's paper is so superficial as to be positively misleading.

But there is another important misconception underlying this notion of conformity to a canon: one way of achieving the goal of effective teaching is to be responsive to the specific and changing needs of students. In 1992 student populations from one university to another were significantly less uniform than they are today. (The racial and class composition of the student bodies of many universities tended still—in spite of anti-apartheid policies, in most cases—to attest to the impact of racist legislation affecting universities.) In this context, uniformity of syllabi is not only irrelevant, it is positively undesirable. Diversity amongst South African English departments' curricula must be understood at least in part as a response to diverse student populations and needs.

Furthermore, Lindfors's ultimate aim, namely, to encourage African universities 'to construct a Pan-African syllabus based on the teaching preferences of both North and South' (pp. 11f), is an extraordinary suggestion that may also bespeak a questionable attitude to Africa. Would he consider proposing that all university English Departments in continental America or Europe should strive to achieve critical consensus? It seems unlikely.

Moreover, his argument is itself internally inconsistent as he later pleads for the kind of heterogeneity and diversity which is incompatible with critical consensus. The analysis concludes with the following:

> a generous mixing and mingling of talented writers from different racial, social, temporal and national backgrounds appears to be the most satisfactory way to balance competing interests and produce a syllabus that is both representative of the best from the past and inclusive of the best from the present. One would hope that such a syllabus would also to some extent accommodate itself to local circumstances and be capable of reflecting the remarkable heterogeneity of Africa itself, with its many diverse and complicated expressive cultures. University English literature teaching in South Africa—indeed, anywhere in Africa—should be a profoundly multicultural enterprise (p. 13).

The problem is that the diversity to which Lindfors refers is confined to continental Africa. As has been said, we are in perfect accord with Lindfors's insistence that 'traditional EngLit' should be dethroned, but many would argue that this does not mean that it should be utterly ostracised (as indeed it would have to be if one were attempting to score well in Lindfors's hit parade, given the fact that one can only prescribe so many texts for undergraduate reading lists). Why would English departments want to encourage such parochialism? Surely our students deserve to be able to meet with their peers at European and American universities and not be utterly ignorant of literatures in English produced out of Africa? Furthermore, many of our students who major in English intend to pursue teaching careers, and it would be extremely irresponsible of us not to equip them with *some* knowledge of British and American literature, examples of which they will undoubtedly be required to teach at secondary school level. Even more important is the move to extend students' acquaintance with the literatures of the pre-colonial and colonial worlds so that the ideologies which fuelled dreams of Empire might be interrogated. We would argue, too, for the inclusion of texts which have emerged from the rest of the post-colonial world. In the current context of the globalisation of world economies and cultures, to restrict our students' literary knowledge to the products of Africa is to severely disable them and limit their intellectual horizons.

This brings us to the second area of contention: Lindfors's empirical data is not all that accurate, and the information is used merely to shore up a project of canon-building. On the issue of accuracy, we cannot comment on the data used for other universities, but that for the University of Durban-Westville is certainly erroneous. 1992 prescriptions included a further six of Lindfors's canonical twelve (Gordimer, Coetzee, Paton, Head, Schreiner and Abrahams) which significantly raises the university's score from *three* to *nine*. This error has arisen because Lindfors left out of his calculations the UDW honours course prescriptions while crediting other universities with their prescriptions for honours courses as well as course-work Masters programmes. In a survey such as this, it is surely necessary to discriminate between those universities which offer post-graduate courses in African,

South African or post-colonial studies and those which do not. Failure to do so produces weird distortions in the findings. Lindfors is not comparing apples with apples, but a packet of apples with a crate. In a numerical ranking system the crates are obviously going to look more generous. The measuring instrument used by Lindfors is indeed crude, as he himself concedes; however, it produces not 'a few brute truths', but a few brute falsehoods. For instance, even if we overlook the distorting attention to the undergraduate syllabus only, we still find errors. Lindfors incorrectly asserts that UDW's English department 'taught only black writers' (p. 13). In 1992, Menan du Plessis's *A State of Fear* was required reading for undergraduates, as was Shula Marks's *Not Either an Experimental Doll*. These omissions arise because Lindfors includes only those authors who scored more than twenty points, points which were computed

> by adding scores in four categories: number of titles plus number of courses plus number of grade levels (1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year, honours, M.A.) plus number of institutions (pp. 3-4).

The rationale behind this scoring process is hard to imagine; why, for example, should the spread of grades inflate a score? Surely some texts might not be deemed to be suitable for all grade levels; why should this indicate a lowered score? Furthermore, the decision to ignore authors whose works are taught at only a few institutions might well have been motivated by convenience, but again the omissions result in skewed—indeed, falsified—conclusions. At UDW at undergraduate level alone (allowing, again, for the failure to consider the honours prescriptions) Dangarembga, Emecheta, Soyinka (his anthology of African poetry), Ousmane, Okot p'Bitek as well as Dikobe, Tlali, Moloi (who does not even warrant a mention by Lindfors) and Mtwa/Ngema/Simon are disregarded.

Of concern, too, is Lindfors's decision to ignore anthologised authors. UDW's prescribed anthology of poetry (which includes poets of all race groups) for our 1800 first year students is factored out of the equation 'since selections from anthologies seldom are specified in course descriptions' (p. 8). One can sympathise with the difficulties involved in having to find out precisely which anthologised works are taught, but since the point is to examine what *is* taught, surely that is what has to be addressed.

We are less interested in scoring points at this level, however, than in pointing out that Lindfors's canonical system excluded any acknowledgement of the prescription at Durban-Westville of twenty-odd texts by African and South African writers within courses that have a sharp theoretical focus and that frequently transgress the literary and geographical boundaries within which Lindfors conceives of literary studies, and allow for a much wider set

of textual relationships within the literary world.

The ranking of texts according to popularity is, to say the least, a tautological enterprise: the most valuable texts are those that are most valued. But Lindfors's measure of value as the frequency with which texts are prescribed begs a number of questions. Why, for example, should conformity over 'the writers deemed most important' be sought? Lindfors asks 'where is Nadine Gordimer's *magnum opus*? There seems to be little agreement about which of her books is the most significant' (p. 9). This is a red herring. Divergence can be construed as the result of a healthy non-conformity, a thoughtful selection of texts to fit specific course objectives and student needs. Nor can one agree that because certain authors are taught at only a few universities 'they have not earned much academic respect' (p. 8) or are considered to be 'minor' talents (p. 12); similarly, favoured authors are not necessarily 'studied seriously' (p. 12). But perhaps most disturbing about Lindfors's drive towards conformity and critical consensus amongst English Departments is the moralistic implication that failure to teach the texts which feature on his hit parade is at best unfortunate, at worst a perpetuation of apartheid ideology. This kind of moralism is clearly unwarranted, given the incomplete data, the slanted interpretative process and the questionable motivation.

Lindfors is to be commended for drawing attention to the issue of de-colonisation in South African university English Departments, but one simply cannot accept at face value his conclusion that 'traditional EngLit' had retained its supremacy; moreover, the narrowness of his focus obscures too many critical issues in this period of national and institutional transformation to be really useful. Transformation of institutional practices requires changes that are much wider and deeper than merely changing the content of curricula, and in this political context it is less important to be prescriptive about what changes should take place, than to open up institutional discourses to the contestation that is a necessary part of democratic social life.

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Interrogating the Interrogators: A Reply to Coullie and Gibbon

Bernth Lindfors

I am glad to see that Coullie and Gibbon agree with me on certain fundamental principles: 'that South African universities' curricula should reflect (and reflect on) their South Africanness and Africanness' (p. 15), 'that "traditional EngLit" should be dethroned' (p. 19) from its position of supremacy in South African university English programmes—in other words, that university literature study in South Africa, as in other parts of Africa, should be decolonised. We seem to share at least one common ideological position: an insistence that further curricular reform is needed so that South African undergraduate and postgraduate students will gain greater access to their own national literary heritage. We all believe in destabilising the *status quo*.

However, Coullie and Gibbon do not like the instrument I devised for measuring the relative standing of writers and texts taught most frequently in South African university classrooms. They attempt to dismiss it as a 'popularity poll' (p. 15) or 'hit parade' (pp. 19,21) based on 'inaccurate data' (p. 16) or at least on 'very limited empirical data' (p. 18), 'incomplete data' (p. 21) that have been used in 'questionable ways' (p. 16) and subjected to a 'slanted interpretative process' (p. 21) in order to achieve goals of 'questionable motivation' (p. 21). They think that I am trying to impose 'an alternative "African canon"' (p. 17) on English departments, a canon to which all South African university English teachers would be expected to conform.

But what seems to bother them most is the fact that their own institution, the University of Durban-Westville, scored poorly in my survey, so they take pains to introduce new data that boost UDW's numbers, thereby giving the impression that their own English programme is more 'progressive' or 'radical' (p. 17) in its approach to curricular revision than those at many other South African universities, a claim in some ways belied by the very evidence they elect to cite.

Further, they manifest a severe allergic reaction to the term 'canon', leading them to endorse uncritically Toril Moi's proposal 'to abolish all canons' because a 'new canon would not be intrinsically less oppressive than the old' (p. 17). In short, they want to go beyond British canon-busting to South African canon obliteration, a no-holds-barred approach to text selection for university English courses that gives teachers absolute freedom to prescribe whichever books they wish, for whatever reasons they deem appropriate, rather than be constrained in any way by the practices, policies or opinions of their peers who teach in the same field. To put it another way, they want to substitute the tyranny of the individual teacher for what they regard as the tyranny of a tradition of texts. Everybody else's teaching preferences and educational priorities are to be, in a word (their favourite contestatory word), 'interrogated' (pp. 17,18,19), by which they seem to mean not just questioned but distrusted and disregarded. Only the solitary teacher's unfettered choices, deriving from 'a healthy non-conformity, a thoughtful selection of texts to fit specific course objectives and student needs' (p. 21), have any legitimacy. All communal standards should be abandoned. The whole syllabus should always be up for grabs.

Coullie and Gibbon may be surprised to learn that on this last point I nearly agree with them, but not because I share their enthusiasm for a *laizzes-faire*, anything-goes brand of pedagogy that puts students at the mercy of the whims, healthy or unhealthy, of non-conformist teachers. Rather, it is because I accept curricular change as a natural and inevitable process, at least over the long haul. Coullie and Gibbon are disturbed by my use of words such as 'classics' and 'masterworks' (p. 17) because they conceive of canonicity as something stable, fixed, rigid, immutable and therefore intrinsically conservative and coercive. But I believe just the opposite: namely, that any literary canon is inherently unstable, dynamic and ever-evolving, that over time every canon mutates, taking on new properties and shedding old ones which no longer retain any vitality or validity; that today's classics may become tomorrow's forgotten or remaindered books. Some contemporary masterworks will have staying power, others will not, so a teaching canon will always be undergoing revision and renewal. We do not read everything our grandparents used to study, and we cannot expect that our grandchildren will study everything we nowadays choose to read. Since each age will define its own set of valued texts, no literature curriculum stands a chance of becoming permanent. Today's teachers will not be handing down to their successors a tablet of sacrosanct curricular commandments cut in stone. Times change, needs change, values change, people change, so the texts assigned in literature courses will also inexorably change. In that sense—the sense of eternal flux—the syllabus is always up for grabs.

But the grabbing, to have any authority, should be a collective activity,

not an idiosyncratic enterprise. If South African university English teachers are to be given the liberty to decide which South African texts are to be taught to South African students, all of them should have a say in what gets selected. I do not mean to suggest that each institution's English faculty ought to assemble annually and hash out their differences before nailing on the chairman's door a list of next year's required readings, even though this would be a commendably democratic manner of proceeding. Rather, since South African literature is a relatively new field, one in which many teachers will have little formal training, it may be useful for everyone concerned to examine what is being done on campuses other than their own before committing themselves and their students to readings that may be totally unrepresentative of what the majority of their professional colleagues who are already teaching in the field consider to be of sufficient merit or importance to be taught. After all, South African literature is not what you think it is or what I think it is; it is what South African teachers and critics in concert think it is. It is a communal set of discursive practices that defines a field.

Having discovered how the field is commonly defined, teachers may, of course, choose to disagree with the definition and go their own ways. The discovery process is only the beginning of their work; thereafter they must decide what to do with this new knowledge. If they wish to reject the practice of their peers and chart a different course entirely, they must at least be aware of what it is they are rejecting. They must question not only the curricular decisions of their colleagues but also their own.

A little humility here might help. If, for example, it happens that a large majority of South African English departments teach something by Athol Fugard, usually *Boesman and Lena*, does it make any sense that in 1992 the English faculties at Rhodes, Western Cape, Transkei, Durban-Westville and possibly Pietermaritzburg ignored his writings entirely? Is his work important in South Africa or is it not? Most South African English departments seems to think so. Perhaps Coullie and Gibbon could tell us why they and their colleagues at Durban-Westville think not.

I am not advocating consensus and conformity, only enlarged awareness and informal decision-making. Radical deviation from a widely accepted corpus of texts may be justifiable in certain circumstances but not necessarily in all circumstances. Nonconformity to a tradition of texts (a canon, if you like) may be at least as much a disservice to students as would be a mindless, unquestioning adherence to those same texts. There needs to be some room for innovation, some latitude for introducing new works, but if a syllabus is too quirky, too deliberately iconoclastic, or too highly flavoured with a teacher's personal or political concerns, students may get a very distorted notion of South Africa's literary history. Total flexibility in curricular design is no improvement over hyper-rigidity.

I hope it is now clear to Coullie and Gibbon that my aim in constructing a crude instrument for measuring the relative standing of local authors and their texts was not to impose or 'establish' a teaching canon but to discover the one that was already in place, albeit during a time of social, political and educational transition. I did this initially for my own benefit, but I thought I should pass along what I learnt to colleagues in South Africa, who like teachers everywhere else, are faced each year with the same vexing problem of determining none too arbitrarily who or what to teach to their students. Perhaps, if they could compare their own text selections with those of others, they would be better equipped to 'interrogate' their own textual practices and pedagogical practices. Perhaps, confronted with their own assumptions, they would be forced to think a little more deeply about their field, their department, even about themselves. And who knows? One day they might decide to take a giant leap and teach a book they had never previously considered teaching, much less reading. In the process, they might stand a chance of improving themselves professionally, for they might actually learn something new.

Coullie and Gibbon did not like what they learnt from my survey so they tried to discredit it, asserting that it had no validity because it relied on 'inaccurate' (p. 16), 'very limited' (p. 18), 'incomplete' (p. 21) data. They also tried to trivialise the exercise, calling it a 'popularity poll' (p. 15) and 'hit parade' (pp. 19,21) as if the serious decisions made by South African university English teachers in selecting texts for classroom use were as empty-headed as the whistles heard at beauty pageants or the pop music played by adolescents. One can understand their name-calling as a diversionary tactic—the sort resorted to in absence of a reasoned argument—but their outright blunders are more difficult to fathom. For instance, how can we credit their complaints about 'inaccuracy' when their own remarks are so riddled with misinformation and mathematical mistakes? One wonders if they truly comprehend the weight and significance derived from the cumulation of statistical data. I stated in my paper that my survey was 'not a complete inventory of all English courses in which texts by African authors were used' because I had not been supplied with comprehensive data from all campuses. I was aware of omissions from Potchefstroom, Pietermaritzburg and the Vista universities, but I was not aware that UDW had failed to furnish me with their honours course prescriptions, so I could not report that a portion of their data was missing. Let me make amends now: based on the new information that Coullie and Gibbon have brought forward, I herewith award UDW six more asterisks on my Table Four, giving their department due credit for teaching Gordimer, Coetzee, Paton, Head, Schreiner and Abrahams in their honours course.

I confess I am still a little puzzled why only three of the high canoni-

cals (Ngugi, Achebe, Serote) are taught at lower levels of their curriculum, but perhaps English teachers at UDW are so busy interrogating what others in South Africa value that they have little time or taste for home-grown literary works, preferring instead to stuff their students with British and American texts so that those few who may be fortunate enough to 'meet their peers at European or American universities' will have something in common to talk about. (One wonders, of course, what would happen if those European or American peers wanted to converse about Fugard, Soyinka or Mphahlele; would the UDW student, ignorant of these indigenous giants, desperately try to steer the discussion back to *Piers Plowman* or the Leatherstocking Tales? And what would happen if the UDW student chanced to meet peers at Ghanaian, Kenyan, Ugandan or other tropical African universities? Would he or she have anything interesting to say to them about their own anglophone literatures? Why are Coullie and Gibbon so intent on preparing all UDW undergraduates for a conversational encounter with the West? Why do they assume that their students will have no desire to enter into a meaningful dialogue with the rest of Africa?)

But I'm beginning to digress. Let's return to the less speculative domain of mathematics. Coullie and Gibbon believe that because I neglected to include reading lists from the UDW honours course in my survey, the results of that survey are altogether invalid. Yet if we absorb their new data into the scoring scheme, what is changed? As was mentioned earlier, UDW does earn a few more asterisks on Table Four, giving it a less embarrassing quotient of canonicals than before (nine out of twelve instead of three out of twelve). But are the other Tables affected significantly? No, they are not. Their triumvirate of Fugard, Gordimer and Coetzee are still on top in Table One. The same texts reign supreme in Table Two. The comparative columns in Table Three remain intact. There may be a few minor modulations here and there, but the UDW numbers do not alter the ultimate outcome. My conclusions thus still stand. To repeat what I originally asserted:

> the sample, covering more than ninety percent of what was taught in English Departments in nearly one hundred percent of South African universities, is sufficiently large to permit gross generalisations to be made. A more comprehensive and more refined survey might change some of the final tabulations, resulting in slightly higher scores for some writers and slightly lower scores for others, but I believe the final results would remain more or less the same. What we have here then is a crude measuring instrument capable of producing nothing more than a few brute truths (Lindfors 1996:6f).

These brute truths, far from being 'inaccurate', 'limited', 'slanted' and 'skewed' are still brutally true.

Indeed, what Coullie and Gibbon deem 'brute falsehoods' and 'weird

distortions' (p. 20) in my survey appear to flow from their own wilful misconstrual of what I stated. They allege that 'Lindfors incorrectly asserts that UDW's English department "taught only black writers"' (p. 20), whereas it should have been clear from the context of my remarks on Table Four (dealing with institutional data) that I was referring here solely to the group of 'twelve writers deemed most important by South African university teachers' (Lindfors 1996:13). Of these twelve, the evidence I had in hand (which through no fault of my own did not include the honours course data) showed that UDW taught only Ngugi, Achebe and Serote. So my statement was true. Coullie and Gibbon's statement, on the other hand, was an equivocation, for two sentences later they admit to being aware that 'Lindfors includes only those authors who scored more than twenty points' (p. 20). (Even here they are inaccurate; they should have said 'more than twenty-seven points', for La Guma (p. 26), Plaatje (p. 26) and Ndebele (p. 24) were also omitted from Table Four, having scored a little too low to make it into the canonical top dozen).

Coullie and Gibbon also claim that I reached 'skewed—indeed, falsified—conclusions', because

> [a]t UDW at undergraduate level alone (allowing, again, for the failure to consider the honours prescriptions) Dangarembga, Emecheta, Soyinka (his anthology of African poetry), Ousmane, Okot p'Bitek as well as Dikobe, Tlali, Moloi (who does not even warrant a mention by Lindfors) and Mtwa/Ngema/Simon are disregarded (p. 20).

This I deny. No one who had a book prescribed on an available South African university English course reading list was disregarded. Some of them simply scored so badly that they couldn't be counted as numerically significant. When quantifying data, what one looks for are the biggest numbers; the smaller ciphers don't merit close attention. Moreover, editors of anthologies—Soyinka in this case—earned no points at all. If Coullie and Gibbon expect UDW to be credited with an extra asterisk simply because someone in their department assigned an anthology with Soyinka's name on the cover, they are barking up the wrong empirical tree. If one adopted such a standard I imagine Michael Chapman would have to be ranked among South Africa's top dozen canonicals.

As for anthologised authors (as opposed to anthologising editors), I still see no compelling reason to include such marginal figures in my survey. Should a two-page story by Casey Motsisi or a three-line haiku by Dennis Brutus weigh as heavily in the final reckoning as, say, a play such as *Boesman and Lena*, or a novel such as *Waiting for the Barbarians* or *Petals of Blood*? If not, how can one define in numerical terms their relative importance? This would require deploying a nuanced algorithm well beyond

my computational abilities. However, if Coullie and Gibbon wish to attempt such refined comparative measurements, they are welcome to fritter away their wits devising their own foolproof canonical calibrational scheme, but I hope they won't expect the rest of the academic world to accept their arbitrary assignments of value as anything other than statistical nonsense. They would be substituting sheer subjectivity for honest objectivity.

Coullie and Gibbon believe that I want traditional EngLit to be 'utterly ostracised' (p. 19) in South Africa. I don't know how they arrived at this conclusion, for I certainly said nothing of this sort in my paper. My primary concern was to show that while South African university English departments had made some progress in incorporating South African texts into their literature programmes, they had not as yet done much to introduce their students to the literatures of the rest of Africa. To do so, they would of course have to trim their offerings of British literature, but I never suggested a wholesale 'replacement [of that literature] with an alternative African canon' (p. 17). A substantial displacement, yes, but a complete expungement of British (and American) literature, no. I agree that it would be useful for South African students to know something about English language literatures produced outside Africa, but I feel that they don't need to know as much about them as they currently are required to learn. Indeed, it seems to me that their time would be better spent in learning more about their own literary heritage and about the vigorous literatures emerging in neighbouring African nations. It's a question of achieving a better balance in their literary diet.

Coullie and Gibbon defend the *status quo* by arguing that

> many of our students who major in English intend to pursue teaching careers, and it would be extremely irresponsible of us not to equip them with *some* knowledge of British and American literature, examples of which they will undoubtedly be required to teach at secondary school level (p. 19).

Undoubtedly? Is the secondary school syllabus so impervious to change that African texts cannot be substituted for some of the foreign matter still clogging the pedagogical pipeline? Should curricular revision stop short of the high schools? If universities start requiring their students to read more African texts, isn't it likely that those very students will subsequently play a role in indigenising literature study at the level at which they wind up teaching? Why should university English departments perpetuate the past when they could be charting the future? Why not lead the way rather than follow?

Since Coullie and Gibbon are suspicious of my motives and doubtful of my morals, allow me to attempt to put their minds at ease by laying my cards face-up on the table. Here is an outline of what I would regard as an ideal literature curriculum for South Africa. Basically it would consist of three more or less equal parts:

1. South African literature.
2. Other African literatures.
3. Other anglophone literatures (including British, American, Caribbean, Indian, Australian, etc.).

First year students would concentrate primarily on South African literature, oral as well as written. In the second year, they would move into other African literatures while maintaining a focus on South African Literature, and in the third year they would be introduced to the literatures of the English-speaking world, particularly those produced in colonial and postcolonial conditions. The honours course would be an international smorgasbord organised thematically around related texts drawn from different anglophone traditions. The MA course would afford an opportunity for concentrating on aspects of a single national literary history.

Such a curriculum would put South Africa squarely at the centre of the literature programme, especially in the first year, when students would be immersed in their own national literary culture. From there they would move outwards to other parts of the anglophone world, not restricting their focus to the British Isles. It seems to me that this type of curriculum, by progressing from the indigenous to the foreign, from the known to the unknown, would be much more valuable and interesting to them than the old-fashioned, heavily British syllabus that most South African university English departments still slavishly follow.

What is fundamentally at issue here, is South Africa's cultural identity. Will South Africa continue to consider itself a distant outpost of the West or will it begin to see itself as an integral part of Africa? One expects it will wish to be allied with both worlds yet will seek to maintain its independence from each, preferring the kind of international integration that does not require surrendering its own unique national character. South African university English departments can assist in this crucial process of self-definition by putting South African literature first and setting other African literatures on an equal footing with Western literatures. A rainbow nation deserves a rainbow education.

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The Antinomies and Possibilities of 'Radical' Historical Consciousness: The Case of Three South African Playtexts in English

Sikhumbuzo Mngadi

In an appropriately titled essay, 'Dreams of Home: Colonialism and Postmodernism', Ian Baucom theorises the phenomenon of *identity* as dependent on its repeatability. Rejecting the myth of 'unitary origin' expressed in colonial discourse of English-ness, he constructs the English identity as 'dis-unified',

> gesturing rather desperately, towards a myth of unitary origin. An origin that in colonial space can only define itself as a lack, as a defining absence. Reaching back across the sea, the petit-european's identity is split as it returns its gaze to an image of home. An image that ... can neither be original by virtue of the act of repetition that constructs it, nor identical—by virtue of the difference that it defines. Consequently the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative, and its articulation as repetition and difference (Baucom 1991:7).

An incident takes place in Credo Mutwa's *UNosilimela,* which reminds us that the act of reconstructing 'homely' identities is at once an act of manufacturing evidence to compensate for the 'loss' of home to the world—a condition that feeds to sustain a feeling of 'unhomeliness' in one's 'home'. There is an almost pervasive insistence, in this text, on a notion of difference that does not differentiate, on a racial hierarchy that is not racist. Reading *UNosilimela*, one is constantly struck by a sense in which the terrain the text maps, deploys and ultimately claims as the final order of (racial) cosmologies

and geographies, reminds us that the subject of the dream is in fact the dreamer. The African geography and subject that in the text is supposed to re-emerge from the rubble of self-destructive European technology is, it seems to me, effectively a manufactured product of sexual and quasi-ideo(bio)logical labour. We see Nosilimela, the protagonist, guided through the textual landscape by an 'erect phallus', that is at the same time meant to remind her of her 'roots', her African-ness.

In the text, Nosilimela leaves what the text constructs as the warmth of her home in the land of the AmaQhashi for the city, because she could not, as she says, stand the 'tribal stuffiness' of country life. She becomes involved with the Roman Catholic Church as a 'highly qualified school teacher'. After serving in this church, we are told, 'she became dangerously ill, partly due to a *feeling of guilt and confusion that boiled from the deeps of her soul*' (e.a.), and was admitted at Baragwanath Hospital for treatment. She was subsequently thrown out of the hospital because she refused to be treated by doctors whom she overheard discussing, 'for all the world to know', the symptoms of her illness, 'as if they were discussing the symptoms of a sick and mindless animal' (Mutwa 1985:14).

There is a very specific case about *identity* (and, more especially, an African identity) the text is implicitly making here, which is that it can be fixed eternally on the 'tablet' of an imagined biological peculiarity of an African subject, despite forces which disrupt its homogeneity and immobility. It is my assumption that Nosilimela, after her contact with the Roman Catholic Church, remains undeniably African. To me, however, this is a subject position more than it is an essence, because the significance of the contact is that it makes a return to a pristine, historical African identity a fanciful wish. In fact, more than it (the contact) enables a questioning of the possibility of a return to this unified African identity, it actually puts into question the very notion of *a* pre-colonial African identity: sexless, classless, ageless, contextless. In Freudian terms, this wish is often expressed and fulfilled in the image of the mirror, which foregrounds reflection and repeatability. Language, which offers itself as a substitute for the mirror, is seen to be able not only to represent but, also, to re-present.

What justifies this assumption of a repeatable 'native' identity in *UNosilimela,* is the space within which it is to be repeated, which remains visibly (but not conceptually) African. Theorising a similar spatial dependence of identity, Kwame Appiah (1993:15) considers the case of the ancient Greeks and Greece in the following terms:

> Thus Hippocrates in the fifth century BC in Greece seeking to explain the (supposed) superiority of his own people to the peoples of (Western) Asia by arguing that the barren soils of Greece had forced the Greeks to become tougher

> and more independent. Such a view attributes the characteristics of a people to their environment, leaving open the possibility that their descendants could change, if they moved to new conditions.

The amaQhashi in *UNosilimela* are, by comparison, portrayed as a superior people. Their superiority derives from the same notion of adaptability in an environment protected by the ancient gods. This adaptability in the play is given a socio-historical dimension, so that the environment, as in the case of the Greeks, is historicised. But the text's spatial and conceptual matrices are closed to the possibilities of future 'migration', in that the conceptual is in the text determined by the original African space. The play, it should be recalled, bestrides two conceptual and spatial epochs in the history of South Africa. A recognition of this seemingly unimportant factor, enables a reading of the perceptual field in which the African 'native' identity is constructed, as thoroughly lacking, if not accompanied by, its conceptual pole. The text could, outside this equation, be read as an essentialisation of space as determining the nature of African identity. Put differently, the emergence of a contending geography in what was thought to be a unified geo-political landscape, challenges the 'exilic' trope (with its rhetoric of loss) that in the text accompanies a reading of the protagonist.

If the *postcolonial* is theorised as that condition which obtains immediately once contact is made with what was termed 'foreign'—foreign culture, identity, landscape—then an act of proclaiming, or even of suggesting, one's African-ness is an act of displacement. It is, moreover, a defensive nationalism, for 'loss' (as is 'exile') is an increasingly unhelpful term in conceptualising the postcolonial African identity. Nosilimela's wanderings in the city are couched in terms of this sense of loss: loss of identity, of (traditional) morals. As it has been already pointed out, the implications of the male gaze (which guides the movements of Nosilimela almost throughout), for what could finally be characterised as African are too vast and complex to be underestimated. If this gaze functions both as agent and antagonist through which this sense of loss is given expression throughout the text, then how can one avoid seeing this Africanity as primarily gendered, despite the textual desire to remain neutral? Firstly, Nosilimela meets Alpheus Mafuza who marries her and leaves her for a 'rich man's daughter' in Johannesburg. Next she finds herself before the court of a Xhosa headman, accused of being a 'Tshaka' (a Zulu). On denying her identity, she is accused of 'being oversexed', and is ordered into the headman's bed. She escapes into an initiate's hut, and is dragged before Njendala, 'the Phondo *inkosi* (chief), who finally rapes her, on the advice of his wives, to cure his sexual impotence. Returning, for a brief spell, to the land of the Zulus, she is cursed eternally by old Zulu women who

symbolically turn their backs on her (it should be remembered that in traditional [patriarchal] Zulu culture, old women are given the status often reserved for men, as they are no longer capable of becoming mothers). She migrates to northern Natal and becomes a 'highly qualified school teacher' in the Roman Catholic Church, and finally falls ill with an inexplicable disease, except that she says to an old woman:

> my ancestral spirits are angry with me for having forsaken them and become a Christian .... Each Sunday I have to undergo a ritual in church, the ritual of symbolically eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the son of the whiteman's God. Each time I do this, I *feel* a traitor to my people and I *feel* as though every one of my ancestors has turned his back on me (e.a.) (Mutwa 1985:34).

It is this *feeling* which finally lands her in Baragwanath hospital, having fallen 'dangerously ill, partly due to the *feeling* of guilt and confusion that boiled from the deeps of her soul' (Mutwa 1985:35). What accompanies the text's construction of Nosilimela's 'true' African identity here, is what David van Schalkwyk (1990:45) terms a 'Pathetic Cartesianism' (I feel, therefore I am). However, the point I made earlier about the male gaze that partly constructs this identity needs to be elaborated. It is because there is enough evidence to support a contention that this identity is less justified by African imperatives than it is by those male African values which define femininity as a 'lack' or 'lag' along the continuum of gender power relations. That Nosilimela is utilised by the text as antagonist against which a 'true' African identity could be distilled from its western 'other', especially where the phallic symbolism is *erected* as redeemer and reinforcer of true (masculine) Africanity, extends the terms of debate to include gender and power. Nosilimela is not a sexless African. She is as much a woman as she is an African. This might not have been so obvious if the text had employed agents other than those exclusively male and clearly machoistic to advance its desire to Africanise the African landscape, for this landscape transcends the unifying rhetoric of masculine Africanity.

It seems appropriate at this stage to turn to a more detailed analysis of the text, as typical of Black Consciousness (BC) discourses on colonialism with its attempt to dispose of the African space. Let us, however, recall once more that discourses of BC in South Africa in the seventies—and this includes literary discourses—spoke in many and diverse voices, so that *UNosilimela* remains typical of some but not representative of all. Robert Kavanagh (1985:xx), who collected and introduced four plays in a book in which this play appears, observes that

> though Mutwa's reverence for the African past and its values is part of what contemporary Black Consciousness is about, Mutwa's rejection of the modern

> city, its technology and its children in favour of a mystical paradise presided over by a religious hierarchy, stamps him both as a romantic visionary and a conservative.

Similarly, Piniel Shava observes that the play endorses a 'backward-looking and utopian' social vision. He further argues that at the time the play was written

> contemporary black society [had] become so proletarianized and urbanized that a return to the past that Mutwa postulates is impracticable and defeatist (Shava 1989:131).

These two observations, apart from the fact that they may too simply encourage an essentially historicist view of pre-colonial reconstruction, in the Enlightenment sense of history as progress, find 'modernity' decisively immediate to be dispensed with *carte blanche*. For Kavanagh, it is this very act of dispensing with modern reality that renders the playtext, contrary to its contemporary BC conception of the African colonial space, romantic and conservative. Kavanagh here implies Biko's argument that a 'pre-Van Riebeeck' conception of African culture is limited and limiting. Biko (1987:41) continues to argue that

> Obviously the African culture has had to sustain severe blows and may have been battered out of shape by the belligerent cultures it collided with, yet in essence even today one can easily find the fundamental aspects of the pure African culture in the present day African. Hence in taking a look at African culture I am going to refer as well to what I have termed the modern African culture.

But anti-colonial discourses, whether in the shape of *UNosilimela* (professing a return to an unmediated pre-coloniality) or 'Some African Cultural Concepts' (Biko) and *Return To The Source* (Cabral) (promoting a nationalisation of 'progressive' cultures), have been overtaken by the notion of *hybridity*. Here, nostalgia, whether for the past or for the present, is suspect, precisely because it produces immobility and a false, if not rigidly mobile binarism. In Mutwa's case, the past is historicised as a resource for a general conception of social change, which means a literal going back to the past. In Biko's and Cabral's notions of the past, pre-colonial and colonial identities are frozen within their respective historical spaces, with the express hope that both can stand or fall depending on how each contributes to a single, incorporated African national identity. Hence the mention of 'pure African culture in the present day' in Biko.

In his essay, 'The Fall of the Legislator' Zygmunt Bauman, rejects the rational Enlightenment idea of history which pits the West as eventful and

Africa and the once-colonised world as historyless (even that which pits the Western elite against its 'uneducated' and 'unenlightened' counterparts). In an elaborated critique of the (il)logic of Enlightenment modernity, he observes that

> As if following Marx's methodological precept about using the anatomy of man as the key to the anatomy of ape, the educated elite used its own mode of life, or the mode of life of that part of the world over which it presided (or thought it presided), as the benchmark against which to measure and classify other forms of life—past or present—as retarded, underdeveloped, immature, incomplete or deformed, maimed, distorted and otherwise inferior stages or versions of itself. Its own form of life, ever more often called 'modernity', came to denote the restless, constantly moving pointer of history; from its vantage point, all other known or guessed forms appeared as past stages, side-shoots or cul-de-sac. The many competing conceptualisations of modernity, invariably associated with a theory of history, agreed on one point: they all took the form of life developed in parts of the Western world as a 'given', 'unmarked' unit of the binary opposition which relativized the rest of the world and the rest of historical times as the problematic, 'marked' side, understandable only in terms of its distinction from the Western pattern of development, taken as normal. The distinction was seen first and foremost as a set of absences—as a lack of the attributes deemed indispensable for the identity of most advanced age.
>
> One such conceptualization of history as the unstoppable march of *les Luminieres*; a difficult, but eventually victorious struggle of Reason against emotions or animal instincts, science against religion and magic, truth against prejudice, correct knowledge against superstition, reflection against uncritical existence, rationality against affectivity and the rule of custom. Within such a conceptualization, the modern age defined itself as, above all, the kingdom of Reason and rationality; the other forms of life were seen, accordingly, as wanting in both respects (Bauman 1993:128f).

Thus the project of the play, *UNosilimela*, is primarily to challenge this version of modernity, and serves as a corrective to what became a justification of colonialism in Africa and the rest of the colonised and once-colonised world, mainly by Britain. As Biodun Jeyifo (1993:xxix) observes of Wole Soyinka's use of myth and ritual in many of his plays and theoretical essays, similarly, *UNosilimela's*

> artistic ... immersion in myth and ritual [is not] a demonstration of what Max Lerner and Edwin Mims identify as the need of literature to constantly seek renewal in 'rebarbarization'. [This is] perhaps more reflective of the perspective of a one-sided Western bourgeois 'high culture' concept of literature than the motivations of an artist whose cultural and historical circumstance and whose artistic sensibility have not been burdened with such dichotomous concepts of the 'developed' and the 'barbaric'. (And let us recall Walter Benjamin's dictum that every document of civilization is also a document of barbarism.)

It is, therefore, not so much *UNosilimela's* 're-enchantment' of the African space, to use Bauman's term, as it is *the way in which* it re-enchants it, that, to me, is the point of contention. Indeed, the way in which the text 're-enchants' the African space does need unpacking. Elaborating on his critique of Max Lerner's and Edwin Mim's critique of that literature which utilises myth to reconstruct the pre-colonial (and indeed postcolonial) African world, Jeyifo (1993:xxix) observes that

> nothing gives the lie to *this* reading of Soyinka's mythopoesis, Soyinka's elaborate deployment of tropes and figurations from the myths, ritual paradigms and cultural artefacts of Africa, than the fact that what we have in his essays is not one voice, one univocal point of view but many voices, many articulations, a plurivocal, polysemic and—why not?—often contradictory discourse. Variously traditionalist and modernist, pan-Africanist and liberal-humanist, individualistic and communalistic, gnostic and sceptical, unapologetically idealist and yet on occasion discreetly materialist ... [his essays] demonstrate the complexities, tensions and ambiguities of modern African literature and the discourse(s) to which it has given rise .... one of the greatest points of interest of these essays is that they very decisively refute what Hountondji has described as the 'artificial choice' between 'Westernization', or 'Europeanization', the 'teleology' decreed by so many African and foreign critics of modern African literature, especially those written in European languages, and its reactional, manichean product—a naïve, simplistic, romantic 'Africanization', 'Africanity', 'Negritude', '*authenticity*' or many of the appellations by which it is promoted as cultural nationalism.

How, then, does *UNosilimela* use myth as its organising structural and ideological principle against a clearly concerted ideological effort of Enlightenment modernity parading as 'progress'? Does the text, in a similar way to Soyinka's artistic and theoretical positions, demonstrate this 'plurivocality' and 'polysemicity' in its articulation of the 'being and *becoming*' of modern African identities? Or does it define its resistance within the 'given' and 'marked' Enlightenment dichotomous discourse of 'civilization' and 'barbarity', by merely reversing the terms of the opposition? How is our understanding of the construction of the past in modern history still to be disentangled from the 'reactional, manichean product—a naïve, simplistic, romantic 'Africanization', 'Africanity', 'Negritude', '*authenticity*' or many of the appellations by which it is promoted as cultural nationalism?' (Jeyifo 1993:xxix). These questions demand a thorough reading of a text whose author has on various occasions claimed to be marrying, in his creative and theoretical positions, those 'upward paths of [the oppressed's] culture with 'positive contributions from the oppressors' culture' (Cabral). The text, it must be remembered, remains traversed by a number of other discourses over which the author exercises no control.

The text deploys a number of dialogues and monologues to pursue its argument for a pre-historic African world-view. This world-view, as will be evident in its confrontation with a 'different' one, must be maintained. Failure to do so is to invite the wrath of ancestral spirits, with all forms of abominations visited on dissenters. The Storyteller's opening words immediately set out a *teleology*, on the basis of which events unfold, are negotiated by and finally returned to for fulfilment. They thus serve as a basic framework within which an African identity can be distilled from its Western 'other'.

> STORYTELLER: ... Man not only wondered about his mysterious origins but also about his still more mysterious end, and around this he also wove legends, one of which says that one day a woman shall grow pregnant and give birth to a mighty flame which will consume all but a very few sorry remnants of Mankind and that a girl will be born in the land of the Zulus who will be known as a child of the gods and she will take these few survivors and hide them in a great hole in the Drakensberg, which an iron giant created by a witch shall dig, until such a time as the gods decree that Man is fitted to possess the earth once more ....

From this cyclical cosmic structure of pre-historical Africa, emerges a 'Western' colonial cosmos, which attempts, as the text argues, to drive an ideological wedge between the legend and its fulfilment in the progress of African mankind. The following dialogue takes place on the premises of the Roman Catholic Church in northern Natal between Nosilimela and an African convert:

> UNOSILIMELA: I'm looking at this book, sister. I so wish I could read and write.
> SISTER: Yes, Nosilimela, that's nice. But you must be baptized first.
> UNOSILIMELA: Baptized? But why should I be baptized, Sister Veronica?
> SISTER: To be cleansed of Original Sin and become a Christian. If you are not baptized, when you die you will go to hell.
> UNOSILIMELA: Esihogweni: [Hell?] But that cannot be true. Do you mean that all my ancestors, all the great chiefs of the past who died before the coming of Christianity, died and went to hell?
> SISTER: You ask too many strange questions that I cannot answer.

From this setting they proceed to the mission chapel, where Sister Veronica shows Nosilimela pictures of Adam and Eve. Nosilimela is also attracted to the picture of the *black* devil.

> SISTER: Look at this picture here. This is Adam and Eve, the first people on earth.
> UNOSILIMELA: But Sister Veronica, they're white! If the first people on earth were white, where did we the black people originate? [*Sister Veronica is silent*]

Answer me, Sister Veronica, answer me as one woman answering another.
SISTER: I cannot answer. We must believe what the bible says.
UNOSILIMELA: [*still looking at the picture*]: So that's Adam and Eve. [*with sudden enthusiasm*] Sister Veronica, who's this handsome man here? But wait—why has he horns and tail? Or was his mother a cow by any chance?
SISTER: Nosilimela! That's Satan, God's worst enemy!
UNOSILIMELA: He's black! [*praising*] ... [Your parents have enough children in having you!]
He's so handsome I could fall in love with him. And you know what, Sister Veronica? He even reminds me of my dead lover .... [*uNosilimela dances and sings* ....]
SISTER [*horrified*] ... don't dance like that in the church—and don't talk to me about love!
[...]
UNOSILIMELA: I'm going to be baptized and become a Christian—for one reason only. So I can learn to read and write.
[....]

STORYTELLER: In this way did Nosilimela ka Magadlemzini of the amaQhashi become Magdalene Nosilimela Mqhashi, a member of the Roman Catholic church and thus were the doors of learning, of reading and writing, widely opened to her—at a price! And within the space of a few short years she became a highly qualified school teacher. There came a time, however, when uNosilimela became dangerously ill, partly due to the feeling of guilt and confusion that boiled from the deeps of her soul. So ill in fact was she that she had to be urgently transferred to the great Baragwanath hospital in Johannesburg. She was soon thrown out of this hospital, however, because she refused to be operated on after having overheard two doctors discussing her symptoms, as some modern doctors often do, for all the world as if they were discussing the symptoms of a sick and mindless animal.

The dialogue between Sister Veronica and Nosilimela is reminiscent of a dialogue between Anund Messeh, 'one of the earliest Indian catechists', and the Indian natives in Delhi, explored by Homi Bhabha (1994:102) in his essay 'Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of ambivalence and authority under a tree outside Delhi, May 1817'. Messeh

found about 500 people, men, women and children, seated under the shade of the trees, and employed, as had been related to him, in reading and conversation. He went up to an elderly looking man, and accosted him, and the following conversation passed.

Pray who are all these people? and whence come they?' 'We are poor and lowly, and we read and love this book'.—'What is that book?' 'The book of God!'—'Let me look at it, if you please'. Anund, on opening the book, perceived it to be the Gospel of our Lord, translated into Hindoostanee Tongue, many copies of which seemed to be in the possession of the party: some were PRINTED, others

WRITTEN by themselves from the printed ones. Anund pointed to the name of Jesus, and asked, 'Who is that?' 'That is God! He gave us this book'.—'Where did you obtain it?' 'An angel from heaven gave it to us, at Hurdwar fair'.—'An Angel?' 'Yes, to us he was God's Angel: but he was a man, a learned Pundit'. 'The written copies we write ourselves, having no means of obtaining more of this blessed word'.—'These books', said Anund, 'teach the religion of the European Sahibs. It is THEIR book; and they printed it in our language, for our use'. 'Ah! no', replied the stranger, 'that cannot be, for they eat flesh'.—'Jesus Christ', said Anund, 'teaches that it does not signify what a man eats or drinks. EATING is nothing before God. *Not that which entereth into a man's mouth defileth him, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man*: for vile things come forth from the heart. *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts; and these are the things that defile*'.

'That is true; but how can it be the European Book, when we believe that it is God's gift to us? He sent it to us at Hurdwar'. 'God gave it long ago to the Sahibs, and THEY sent it to us ...'.

Anund observed, 'You ought to be BAPTIZED, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Come to Meerut: there is a Christian Padre there; and he will shew (sic) you what you ought to do'. They answered, 'Now we must go home to the harvest; but as we mean to meet once a year, perhaps next year we may come to Meerut' .... I explained to them the nature of the Sacrament and of Baptism; in answer to which, they replied, 'We are willing to be baptized, but we will never take the Sacrament. To all the other customs of Christians we are willing to conform, but not to the Sacrament, because the Europeans eat cow's flesh, and this will never do for us'. To this I answered, 'This word is of God, and not of men; and when HE makes your hearts understand, then you will PROPERLY comprehend it'. They replied, 'If all our country will receive this Sacrament, then will we'. I then observed, 'The time is at hand, when all the countries will receive this WORD!' They replied, 'True!' (Bhabha 1994:102f).

I have decided to quote at length this dialogue, since it illustrates, with powerful subtlety, the ethnocentrism with which Enlightenment discourse addresses and authorises its imaginary native cultural space. In its desire to create, authorise and to maintain the Occident/Orient dichotomy, it is haunted by the ambivalence of its authority and of native cultural difference. Bhabha (1994:119) observes in this dialogue that

The natives' stipulation that only mass conversion would persuade them to take the sacrament touches on a tension between missionary zeal and the East India Company Statutes for 1814 which strongly advised against such proselytizing. When they make these intercultural, hybrid demands, the natives are both challenging the boundaries of discourse and subtly changing its terms by setting up another specifically colonial space of authority .... They change their conditions of recognition while maintaining their visibility; they introduce a lack that is then represented as a doubling of mimicry .... In estranging the word of God from the English medium, the natives' questions contest the logical order of the discourse of authority .... The natives expel the copula, or middle term, of the Evangelical

> 'power = knowledge' equation, which then disarticulates the structure of the God —Englishman equivalence. Such a crisis in the positionality and propositionality of colonialist authority destabilizes the sign of authority. The Bible is now ready for a specific colonial appropriation. On the one hand, its paradigmatic presence as the word of God is assiduously preserved: it is only to the direct quotations from the Bible that the natives give their unquestioning approval—'True!' The expulsion of the copula, however, empties the presence of its syntagmatic supports—codes, connotations and cultural associations that give it contiguity and continuity—that make its presence culturally and politically authoritative.

It is at this level of cultural difference that Nosilimela's conscious repudiation of mediated colonial cultural authority, in the form of the 'white' word of God, can be seen to belong to a broad spectrum of anti-colonial discourses. However, the political unconscious that animates the interplay between authority and ambivalence in the dialogue between Messeh and the Indian natives, is replaced by a deliberate political consciousness in Nosilimela's enthusiastic identification with the *black* figure of the devil. This identification represents the Black Consciousness reaffirmation of blackness as a political identity, however, at a superficial and essentialist level. What the figure of the devil represents in the context of missionary discourse is, in this identification, not repudiated, as primacy is given to the colour it bears. But the colonial stereotype of the 'other' who is unlike 'us', is in both situations disturbed, but never entirely dismissed. For it is in this disturbance that the conditionality of both absolute colonial authority and native fixity become evident in the '*hybrid* demands' of Nosilimela to be baptized for 'one reason only' and the Indian natives' refusal to partake of the sacrament as long as 'all our country [does not] receive this Sacrament'.

Another specifically colonial space of authority and native presence is established, in which the 'copulae'—the English presence, the 'dark' native or 'simian' Asiatic—can only misrecognise themselves as authoritative. It is in the mutual estrangement—the Bible no longer the Englishman's book, and fixity no longer the natives' insignia—that this colonial space emerges uncertainly. If with the discovery of the (non-European) God's Book (as the narrative injunction in Messeh's encounter with the natives stipulates), 'an indifference to the distinctions of Caste soon manifested itself; and the interference and tyrannical authority of the Brahmins became more offensive and contemptible' (Bhabha 1994:103), then the Book, for Nosilimela, represents this possible space outside the authority of inherited (romantic, masculine) Africanity and of its similar colonial opposite. It is, however, not the now-popular *syncretic* platform of multiculturalism and/or interculturalism, in which all the cultures maintain their assumed internal unicity, which are then pooled into one spectrum of 'one nation, many cultures'. If the cultural *hybrid* is theorised as a postcolonial condition in which 'the

actual semblance of the authoritative symbol' is retained, then it is equally a condition in which the presence of this authoritative symbol is revalued 'by resisting it as the signifier of *Enststellung—after the intervention of difference*' (Bhabha 1994:115).

> It is the power of this strange metonymy of presence so to disturb the systematic (and systemic) construction of discriminatory knowledges that the cultural, once recognized as the medium of authority, becomes virtually unrecognizable. Culture, as a colonial space of intervention and agonism, as the trace of the displacement of symbol to sign, can be transformed by the unpredictable and partial desire of hybridity. Deprived of their full presence, the knowledges of cultural authority may be articulated with the forms of 'native' knowledges or faced with those discriminated subjects that they must rule but can no longer represent. This may lead ... to questions of authority that the authorities cannot answer. Such a process is not the deconstruction of a cultural system from the margins of its own aporia nor ... the mime that haunts mimesis. The display of hybridity—its peculiar 'replication'—terrorizes authority with the *ruse* of recognition, its mimicry, its mockery (Bhabha 1994:115).

'Do you mean that all my ancestors, ... who died before the coming of Christianity, died and went to hell?' (Nosilimela); 'but how can it be a European Book, when we believe that it is God's gift to us?' (Indian natives); 'If the first people on earth were white, where did we the black people originate?' (Nosilimela). Faced with these disturbing questions, which 'authority—the Bible included—cannot answer', the signifier of authority is forced to remain agonistic, and its desire to remain powerful and antagonistic is suspended. Read thus, the

> hybridity of colonial authority profoundly unsettles the demand that figures at the centre of the originary myth of colonialist power. It is the demand that the space it occupies be unbounded, its reality *coincident* with the emergence of an imperialist narrative and history, its discourse *non-dialogic*, its enunciation *unitary*, unmarked by the trace of difference .... The paranoid threat from the hybrid is finally uncontainable because it breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside. In the productivity of power, the boundaries of authority—its reality effects—are always besieged by 'the other scene' of fixations and phantoms (Bhabha 1994:116).

Evidence of an antagonistic signifier of authority is not only the desire of colonial authority. It is also found in *UNosilimela,* in the text's tendency to want to explain away the colonial space. Returning to a point I hinted at earlier, the *black* figure of the devil is claimed by Nosilimela for the colour it bears, rather than for what it symbolises in the racist discourse of colonial Christianity. Here, the authority of 'blackness' as an oppositional essence, implies its colonial opposite, the authority of 'whiteness' as an authoritative

essence. Homi Bhabha observes in relation to the Indian natives' rejection of the sacrament, that 'The Word, no less theocratic than logocentric, would have certainly borne absolute witness to the gospel of Hurdwar had it not been for the rather tasteless fact that most Hindus were vegetarian!' For a similar reason, Nosilimela is reluctant to receive baptism, since 'according to our custom one does not throw water over one who is still alive'. However, beyond this, Nosilimela's position is both consciously (black) nationalist and individualist. It is this position that defines the text's romantic historical will to an unmediated past, where the discourse of history becomes reflective. Commenting on Hayden White's assertion that 'the only meaning that history can have is the kind that a narrative imagination gives to it', the *American Historical Review* (1987) goes on to observe that

> The secret of the process by which consciousness invests history with meaning resides in the 'content of the form', in the way our narrative capacities transform the present into a fulfillment of a past from which we would wish to have descended.

It is, therefore, fair to argue that the forced innocence in Nosilimela's identification with the devil typifies this *conscious* displacement of colonial-missionary inscriptions of black identity as symbolic of evil, 'darkness' and of belatedness. Consciously investing the devil with a significance it might otherwise not have been afforded, were it not black, constitutes a construction of a specifically black African genealogy and renaissance. It is not, as it seeks to be read, an *unconscious* and non-absolutist, because agonistic, disturbance of the colonial absolutist pole. If Adam and Eve represent a 'white' genealogy, then the black devil (whose mother might have been a cow), must metaphorically represent a 'black' genealogy. As the text continues to demonstrate, its reconstruction of the pre-historic and pre-colonial African past is closed and non-negotiable. I have no intention here of constructing a strict division between a *conscious* and an *unconscious* interrogation of colonial authority. As Jacques Lacan points out,

> You will also understand that, if I have spoken ... of the unconscious as something that opens and closes, it is because its essence is to mark that time by which, from the fact of being born with the signifier, the subject is born divided. The subject is this emergence which, just before, as subject, was nothing, but which, having scarcely appeared, solidifies into a signifier (in Davis 1983:860).

A traditional conception of consciousness (political, racial, class, gender, etc.), often closes this passage from the conscious to the unconscious (and vice versa), so that the conscious subject is seen to pre-exist ideology. Political agency is therefore seen to involve a restoration of the original

class, racial or gender status, expressed within the old relations of man/woman, black/white, African/Western oppositions. Where subjectivity and resistance have to be defined within a colonial space, as is the case in *UNosilimela*, agency needs to be re-theorised. It is no longer a 'paralytic, debilitating moment of the colonial practice', for a colonial to be 'caught in a kind of mimesis', a mimicking of 'western' cultures. In fact,

> in the repetition [is] not only the transmission of the coloniser's values, but a restaging of those values that actually introduce[s] a moment of slippage, contradiction and displacement of the coloniser's position too ....

It is

> that very process of what was often read as inferiorisation, hierarchy, that the lack which the colonial subject had to experience in relation to the metropolis, could be turned into a space of subversion, liberation and agency (Bhabha 1993:103).

Conceptualising agency thus is not 'bourgeois voluntarism', nor is it unjustified idealism. It is a conception of agency that is specific to the construction, negotiation and displacement of, (1) postcolonial subjectivity, (2) the edges of colonial and native discourses, and (3) authoritative colonial and native cultural poles, respectively. It is becoming increasingly unconvincing to insist on remaining 'Western' or 'African, for these ('racial') labels

> disable us because [they] propose as a basis for common action the illusion that black (and white and yellow) people are fundamentally allied by nature and, thus, without effort; it leaves us unprepared, therefore, to handle the 'intra-racial' conflicts that arise from the very different situations of black (and white and yellow) people in different parts of the economy and of the world' (Appiah 1992:285).

If the 'international/universal/global' is conceived not as necessarily the 'pseudo-international/universal/global', it is clear, therefore, that my conception of agency does not exclude the 'discursive division between the First World and the Third World, the North and the South', in relation to which Bhabha (1994:20) observes that

> Despite the claims to a spurious rhetoric of 'internationalism' on the part of the established multinationals and the networks of the new communications technology industries, such circulations of signs and commodities as there are, are caught in the vicious circuits of surplus value that link First World capital to Third World labour markets through the chains of the international division of labour, and national comprador classes .... in the language of international diplomacy, there is a sharp growth in a new Anglo-American nationalism which increasingly

> articulates its economic and military power in political acts that express a neo-imperialist disregard for the independence and autonomy of peoples and places in the Third World. I am further convinced that such economic and political domination has a profound hegemonic influence on the information orders of the Western world, its popular media and its specialized institutions and academics .... What does demand further discussion is whether the 'new' languages of theoretical critique (semiotic, poststructuralist, deconstructionist and the rest) simply reflect those geopolitical divisions and their spheres of influence. Are the interests of 'Western' theory necessarily collusive with the hegemonic role of the West as a power bloc? Is the language of theory merely another power ploy of the culturally privileged Western elite to produce a discourse of the Other that reinforces its own power-knowledge equation?

For the text, it seems that a naive counter African or black nationalism, that promotes African values of sharing as opposed to capitalist greed and consumption, the closely-knit family structure as opposed to its dispersed version under a capitalist economic order, is a possible strategic politico-economic response to this 'Anglo-American nationalism'. Nationalisms, however, are notorious for their tendency to reduce difference to an oppressive *Sameness*, especially when they are as intolerant of difference as is *UNosilimela*. It is partly due to this reason that *UNosilimela*'s attempt to deploy this strategy, produces a kind of defensive nationalism that not only makes its objective impossible but, also, counter-productive. Gayatri Spivak (1987:166f) (and other post-Marxian theorists) observes that it is

> in the interest of capital to preserve the comprador theatre in a state of relatively primitive labour legislation and environmental regulation.

If the AmaQhashi in *UNosilimela* represent this pre-colonial (or 'primitive') social and economic organisation, then capitalism stands to benefit from each one of them, in the form of migrant labour. Indeed Magadaphansi and Skigi (and a host of domestic workers in Johannesburg) in the text are not, as the text wishes us to read them, outcasts from the 'warmth and unity' of country life. In fact, as in all situations where the rural is maintained, literally, as a breeding site for cheap labour, these two subjects left their wives in the country. Now and then, in between their contracts, they visit them, make babies, who one day, like Nosilimela and others who have decided to stay in Johannesburg, will migrate to the sites of big capital as cheap labour. And if Magadaphansi, himself illiterate, could have his friend write him a letter to his wife, it means that the rural as a site of national difference, is no longer so. It is part of the global communication system often typical of the city. It also means that the identities of, and boundaries around, both the rural and the urban have to be rethought and redrawn in a perennial process of displacement.

If, at the end, the text introduces a nuclear holocaust, in which inexplicable bombs and explosions wipe out every living organism, save the AmaQhashi, who are saved from oblivion by the prophesy, then the 'new Africa' that is born out of the rubble is in fact the old, pre-historic, pre-colonial Africa. The accompanying anti-war symbolism with which the text closes, seems to me an attempt to construct a utopian resolution, a resolution for which the overall development of the text has not prepared the reader.

Such a utopian resolution is of course not strange to nostalgic nationalism. In fact, it is what constructs its boundaries, so that colonial incursions and the concomitant material reality they bring about, together with uncontainable internal tensions (of gender, class, age, ethnicity etc.), are lumped together as constitutive of the disruptive periphery. Realising the impossibility of maintaining this division, however, nationalism either wishes for the destruction of, or, if possible, destroys polysemicism. In *UNosilimela* it is the city of Johannesburg that is destroyed in the holocaust, while the rural community, the AmaQhashi, survive it. It is possible to argue that this incident and indeed the entire text, is part of an extended fable (with elements of 'science fiction') that has nothing to do with contemporary politics of historical representation. However, this reading would be ignoring various textual pointers to the fact that this text emerged not as a fortuitous event in black South African writing. It emerged from, and was influenced by the struggle imperatives of the same context as Maishe Maponya's *The Hungry Earth*. Neither is it an historical play in the conventional sense of the documentation of events. They both will the past's vindication, on a scale and in a manner described by Johan van Wyk in his analysis of the role of the father(land) in the construction of national identity in Afrikaans nationalist literature. In his analysis of two plays by J.F.W. Grosskopf, Van Wyk (1989:28) observes that

> Through the use of psycho-analysis I have come to the conclusion that nationalism constitutes a melancholy-related guilt reaction to the death of the father. Synonymous with the death of the father is the experience of the apocalyptic downfall of the fatherland as a result of capitalist expansion and the concomitant materialism. Underlying this experience is the inability to form a libidinal relationship with the world (as object). The nationalist feels threatened by the materialist world-picture which implies an object-relationship with the world.

Faced with this (un)reality of capitalist expansion, in the form of the mining industry, Matlhoko, in Maponya's *The Hungry Earth*, agonises over the loss of the 'fore-fathers' 'land to the *umlungu*' (white man):

> MATLHOKO: When this land started giving birth to ugly days, things started going wrong from the moment of dawning and peace went into exile, to become a

> thing of the wilderness. Yes, we experienced the saddest days of our lives when umlungu first came to these shores called Africa, a total stranger from Europe. We received him kindly. We gave him food. We gave him shelter. We adopted his ideas and his teachings. Then he told of a god and all Black faces were full of smiles. When he said love your neighbour we clapped and cheered *for we had a natural love*. Suddenly we drifted back suspiciously when he said you must always turn the other cheek when you are slapped. He continued to say love those who misuse you. We grumbled inwardly, smiled and listened hard as he was quoting from the Holy Book, little knowing that we would end up as puppets on a string; unable to control our own lives. And whilst we were still smiling, he set up laws, organized an army, and started digging up the gold and diamonds; and by the time our poor fore-fathers opened their eyes, umlungu was no more—he had moved to Europe. He has only left his army behind to 'take care of the unruly elements that may provoke a revolution' (e.a.) (Maponya 1983:153).

In an essay entitled 'Popular Memory and the Voortrekker Films', Keyan Tomaselli argues that if we accept the presence of an indivisible reality outside our ideological constructions of it, then there must be another way of conceptualising our representations, than that they are faulty. He argues that it is what these representations permit that needs to be teased out. I have, I believe, so far argued that the past which *Unosilimela* recalls, has always been contested. Discourses of anti-colonialism, whether Black Consciousness or pan-Africanist-orientated, often construct an African golden age, as a strategy of discursive displacement of colonialist myths. Talk of Africans as having had 'a natural love' in *The Hungry Earth*, and of Europeans as having betrayed this 'natural love' in their deceptive double-talk, is typical of the manicheanism of most early Black Consciousness (B.C.) literature. More than it being a misleading binarism, in its construction of a monolithic European identity, it gives truth to the lie that there ever was a single colonial ethnicity, that could allocate for other ethnicities convenient differences. It perpetuates what Stuart Hall identifies as 'Thatcherism': a renewed English nationalism, that seeks to transcend multinational capitalism and global network systems.

Subsequently, as in most early B.C. literature, *The Hungry Earth* seeks authentication of the enslaved African subject in violence against the European master. In the text, Beshwana finally resolves that

> Umlungu deserves to die. Let us set out to catch him and when we catch him we will hang him from the nearest tree. His servants must also be killed: they betrayed us. Let us kill the whole lot (Maponya 1983:153).

In his essay, 'Hegel, *The Black Atlantic* and Mphahlele', Percy More identifies this violent resolution in the struggle for recognition between the master and the slave in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks,* a

reconstruction of Hegel's 'Lordship and Bondage' dialectic. In this struggle, the slave knows 'freedom' outside of the subjective colonial reality. One of these freedoms is articulable in pre-colonial history which, as Fanon observes in another of his critical works, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 'by some strange logic', has been destroyed by the master in his quest for total control of the slave. What Beshwana resolves, therefore, derives from a theoretical option which, as More observes in Mphahlele's short stories, is replaced by the Enlightenment discourse of education and negotiation.

The temptation invited by these two South African subjects, Maponya and Mphahlele, is to interpret their resolutions by drawing attention to their positionality within the material conditions in which they operate: Mphahlele as part of the elite class, on the one hand and, on the other, Maponya as a radical political activist. However, this reading of what their texts finally resolve is simplistic. It constructs a rigid dichotomy between theory and 'concrete' political action, without recognising the theoreticity of practice. The question is not so much whether violence or negotiation are 'correct' resolutions to the dilemma. It is how theoretically one arrives at one or the other, that opens the impasse to a more complex reading of how we construct subjectivity through mimesis. Maponya, who is seen to represent a more 'uncompromising' radical consciousness, becomes the epitome of the 'angry young men' of British alternative theatre (Kershaw), whereas Mphahlele, encumbered with Western academic qualifications cannot but compromise the African revolution. In this equation, the African revolution, which is seen to mirror a homogeneous African golden age, is one-dimensional, aimed at getting rid of the 'foreigner' and *decadent* foreign culture.

But these resolutions are becoming increasingly unhelpful in their self-contained complacency. Abdulrazak Gurnah observes in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Matigari* the simplistic premise on which they both seek validation. Matigari, the protagonist in Ngugi's novel by that title, symbolises Kenyan resistance, the nature and direction of which is Mau Mau nationalism. All those who either refuse or simply fail to see the 'simple' divide between those who 'sow and those who reap what they did not sow', are collusive with international capitalism. If they are not, the text can only be convinced if they resume the armed struggle, which is the proud Mau Mau legacy. Other forms of resistance—resistance against the oppressive nationalistic *Sameness* (despite significant differences)—are disallowed. Also, Simon Gikandi observes in the English translation the centrism of collective heroism symbolised in the title, which he sees as typical of Hollywood cinema, where the hero embodies the conscience of an often taken-for-granted nation. Even if one were to privilege the original Gikuyu version, *Matigari ma Njiruungi* (those [Mau Mau] who remained in the

forest), the Mau Mau nationalist bias still remains as the ordering trope. It is perhaps for this reason that Ngugi's texts are comfortable with historical gender stereotypes, for in his historicisation of the past, he hardly questions its undesirability where gender power relations are concerned.

The option taken by *The Fantastical History of a Useless Man*, in its closing 'the most I can do is to be the least obstruction' (Purkey 1978:51), has been criticised as typical of liberal resignation and paralysis. However, critics of *this* position need to engage with *this* particular text, as it seems to me more acutely aware of its own assumptions than any automatic liberal claim to dubious, arrogant morality. What the text does, in fact, is to parody the traditional liberal position and its egocentric permissiveness. It inserts its parody within those moments of slippage in the monologue of nationalist egoism—where the discourse of (Anglo-centric) nationalism is failed by an unintended 'slip of the tongue': 'Azania' instead of 'Azalea' (Purkey 1978:35), or the handkerchief bearing the African National Congress ('A.N.C.') acronym, literally 'flying in the face' of controlled nationalist symbolism (Purkey 1978:32). These are textual reminders of the impossibility of a continuous and seamless colonial history. *The Fantastical History of a Useless Man* is probably one of the few texts written during this period which locates its episteme in the realm of an imagined future. It is a play not exercised by the myth of origins, nor is its location in the future of the past a promotion of a *teleology,* in which the past bears almost directly on the present, and in which the present only serves as the myth of 'the middle years' (Bhabha 1994:1). It is the Compere who introduces us to this complex (but never frivolous) relationship between the past and the future:

> COMPERE: Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen, what we are about to enact for you is the fantastical history of the Useless Man. Our fantasy and history is designed to throw light on our Useless Man's predicament as we probe his past to predict his future. For if we are truly to understand the complexity of the future, we must understand the stupidity and greed that constitutes our past.
>
> History is a strange affair! ... but the distortions that constitute its account are even stranger ... it's time to leave for the moment, and let the play unfold itself.

The Compere establishes for the play and its interpretation of the past its *textuality*. One is immediately tempted to compare the text's representational strategy to those of writers like Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's Children*), John Fowles (*The French Lieutenant's Woman*), Carlos Fuentes (*Christopher Unborn*), Dambudzo Marechera (*Black Sunlight*), Louis Borges, and many other postmodernist writers, whose representations of the future of the past are predicated on their distance from both. As Borges observes in a footnote to one of his stories, their constructions are no more than *present* memories

and *present* hopes. The present is itself not the Present. Rather, it is conceptualised as a shifting parody of the Present. Rushdie's quip, in the wake of Islamic fundamentalist threats on his life, that next time he will call the Buddha a poop, testifies to what Bhabha theorises as 'living on the borderlines of the "present"'. Here there is no possibility of nostalgia, whether for the past or for the present.

The Fantastical History of a Useless Man is not a dramatisation of one 'narrative' of South African 'history'. It is instead, a complex pastiche of history's manifestations: in commentary, in revisionist discourses that contest validation in their re-narrativisation of colonialist history, in sometimes partisan ideologism and in frank idealism and homophobia. In short, it imitates, and perhaps unconsciously endorses, all and more of these 'sources'. The text is unmistakably conscious of the (sometimes overstated) polarised context of the seventies, in which 'white' liberalism and 'black consciousness' nationalism invested history with principally contradictory futures. However, it is also careful not to overstate the nature of this contradiction, for liberalism in black consciousness theory was not merely dismissed but, redirected. When Biko (1987:26) argued that 'white' liberalism in South Africa 'must serve as a lubricating material to help change gears in trying to find a better direction for South Africa', he was aware that black consciousness was itself a form of 'liberalism', and not a Garveyan racial hierarchy, in that it sought a non-racial future. As David Hemson (1995:190) observes in a review of *I Write What I Like*, Biko might have rejected liberals 'within the fold of black strategy' but, he saw 'them as part of the potential superstructure of managed political change'.

But does this mean one has to polarise in order to theorise? What does one ignore in polarising within a convenient category of, say, race and/or gender, even if that polarisation is seen to be *only* strategic? Can it ever be *only* strategic? Perhaps we need to move away from this dichotomous mode of thinking about theory and practice, in order to be able to consider both as, to use Terry Threadgold's construction, 'semiotics of the (same) Lie' that we call representation. *The Fantastical History of a Useless Man*, it seems to me, attempts to make this point about the fiction of racial difference and other forms of difference. However, like Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*, whose complex and virtually obsessive repudiation of male 'Negro' narcissism borders on homophobia, the text's representation of Cecil Rhodes constructs too close a relationship between his imperial and his sexual identities. Here, his sexual orientation becomes literally and metaphorically a glaring 'impotence' contradicting colonial 'penetration' of the frontier. This is overkill, if one considers that the relationship between imperialism/ colonialism and sexuality was often (if not always) laden with masculine value systems and 'regimes of representation' (Mercer 1991:192). Here, the

representation of Rhodes' subjectivity is inevitably called into question, precisely because the reading of Rhodes in the text presupposes a natural passage from the imperial to its (by implication, deficient) homosexual agent.

The text subtly disturbs the coalition between Afrikaner and English subjects, in its juxtaposition of the desire to blur ideological and cultural differences with suggestive hints of the opposite. The Afrikaner Voortrekker's contemptuous 'Keep your Cape', is answered in the English Lord Carnavon's 'reasonable' naturalisation of the 'trek': 'Itinerant bunch, aren't they?' (Purkey 1978:20). This undercuts, before it could even be articulated later in the text, the myth of English and Afrikaner unity. This willed solidarity is captured later in the '1970s version of a prominent Nationalist' speech:

> You ask what this new act *we* are passing is about. This 1913 Land Act. It is designed to provide an adequate supply of labour for the mines upon which *our* economy is so dependent. And an adequate supply of labour for *our* farms, which have been for the last two hundred years, the foundation of the South African way of life. By passing this act *we* hope to prove to the outside world that those animosities which led to the outbreak of the second war of liberation have indeed been covered up, and that both Afrikaner and Englishman can live happily side by side and indeed have a community of interest in getting an adequate and secure supply of labour. It is not that *we* want to force the native to work for *us* by means of law or by coercion. It is rather that this act is designed to ensure that the native will work for *us* by force of circumstance (e.a.) (Purkey 1978:33).

Despite the ideological reasonableness and the self-effacing manner in which the mild 'othering' of the 'natives' serves to enhance the unity of the Afrikaner and Englishman, the 'second war of liberation' remains a salient contradiction in terms. But this rift extends to the arena of culture. Born of English parents, the Useless man intervenes ideologically, in a series of questions, in that space constructed for him (that is also supposed to be his heritage), between 'home' and the world:

> USELESS MAN: We've been taught all our lives that our home and our culture lie somewhere else. There's been a conspiracy, a tacit agreement that we must never look around us .... And our culture lies somewhere else .... If this was the case, the truth, what the hell were all these people doing here? Pining for their lost lives, somewhere else .... If the truth and the life and the art is 6000 miles away, what are we doing here? ... They kept their minds in Europe. They went on mindfucks in museums, browsed around bookshops and luxuriated in theatres and averted their eyes .... And what I want to know of all you visitors to Pettycoat Lane, why don't you look at Diagonal Street? (Purkey 1978:41f)

If this points to a cultural difference between English and Afrikaner, in that the Afrikaner sought independence from his 'origins' while the English

desired to re-enact them, it is also a displacement of cultural difference conceptualised in the old equations of English=civilisation/enlightenment versus native (and Afrikaner) barbarism. But it is also to repudiate the myth of an English nation away from England. To recall, by way of extending the point made by Ian Baucom (1991:7) above:

> The colonist is, however, trapped in this futile, but rather desperate, gesture toward an absent origin. He or she is caught within a perpetual allegorization of a cultural 'centre', driven by a terrible desire to coincide. It is in this agonistic space that ... the European book assumes such talismanic significance.
>
> In 'Signs Taken for Wonders' Bhabha describes this colonialist gesture toward the displaced presence of 'home' as the perpetual production of a 'metonymy of presence' (157): an inscription, within the colonial space, of fragmentary signs of the absent culture against which the colonist can invent himself or herself. The signs are, however, caught within the same double bind which disrupts the identity of the colonist desperately scrawling them onto the African or Indian terrain. They are written within the space of Derrida's double inscription: both marks of presence and, as metonyms, are re-inscriptions, marks of the erasure of presence, its disappearance (150). They exist, to cite Bhabha citing Derrida citing Mallarme, 'under the false appearance of a present'. Underwritten by an agonistic poetics of nostalgia, they represent but cannot re-present.

It is this ambivalence of the English identity fixed eternally in the pages of the colonial book, that the Useless man traces in the Anglo-centric school syllabus. 'My teacher says we've got nothing. No literature, no drama, no culture, no home ... (Purkey 1978:41). Indeed, the convenient substitute is a copy of Kenneth Clark's *Civilization*, with which he is presented by his parents as a 'going overseas gift'. Kenneth Clark is here an English talisman. The 'talismanic significance' of his *Civilization* typifies what Ngugi (1981: 31) calls 'England from England'. Baucom quotes him from *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*, where he 'describes one such colonial inscription: the murals on the walls of the Lord Delamere bar in Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi':

> On one wall are depicted scenes drawn from the English countryside: fourteen different postures for the proper deportment of an English gentleman; fox hunting with gentlemen and ladies on horseback surrounded on all sides by well fed hounds panting and wagging tails in anticipation of the kill to come; and of course the different pubs, from the White Hart to the Royal Oak, waiting to quench the thirst of ladies and gentlemen after their blood sports. Kenya is England from England (Wa Thiong'o 1981:31).

But (as the Useless man observes in this futile inscription of a distant home onto the African terrain) Baucom (1991:8) is quite quick to point out that 'Kenya cannot be England':

> England can be fetishized on the walls of the bar, but the fetish signals its own displacement, its supplimentariness. It is ... the reinscription of a figure of ruin, an allegory that in its posteriority and exteriority can double but cannot redeem the absent original. The fetish is an attempt to re-inscribe in the external space of the colony the cultural space of England.
>
> The motive force which drives this metonymic production of presence in the colony is less a crisis of representation that demands a resolution, or an angst-ridden longing for the culture on the far side of the colony—although it is both of these—than it is a problem of power.

This fetishisation of home, in the ritualisation of culture, is indeed more to do with the lubrication of an otherwise blocked passage from 'trauma to transcendance', that must serve as the basis for colonial authority. Addressing the Azalea Show, the Useless man's mother wills this power of the colonist over an imitative 'other':

> MOTHER: Having a native boy to work in your garden is much like getting a sort of labour-saving machine to perform the different gardening tasks .... he does not prevent you setting your mark on the garden and giving it the stamp of your own individuality .... For the native garden boy, unlike jobbing gardeners in other countries, seldom intrudes his ideas, or takes things to himself .... the natives, like the Athenians, love any 'new thing'. *They are the most imitative race on earth* ... (e.a.) (Purkey 1978:35f).

This power is willed and wielded on the assumption that if repeated, the subjectivity of the native can be defined in relation to that of the colonist, which must in turn serve as the norm. As Fanon observes in relation to the framing of the Negro male in colonialist psycho-sexual anthropology ('one is no longer aware of the Negro, but only of a penis: the Negro is eclipsed. He is a penis'), the Useless man's mother is only aware of the native as a 'labour-saving machine'. Without effort, 'if you show them how to do any simple gardening task they are able to do it with little practice, no matter how unfamiliar it may be' (Purkey 1978:36). This stereotype is meant to serve as an allegory, perpetuating the fiction of the European norm and its repeatability, its mimesis. But Lacan argues that

> Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage .... It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare (in Bhabha 1994:85).

Thus, even if the native gardener is seen to harmonise with the European background, what is revealed is not 'an itself', but a 'mottled' disruption of this desire for a singular, timeless, contextless, sexless, classless European

self. The Useless man's mother is already defined within a masculine European subjectivity, as constituting the undervalued 'patch' in this generalised European background. Even if she is allowed to speak a racially 'inferior' native, she is herself spoken within the narrow boundaries of a masculine colonialist political framework. *Civilization*, as text and project is, according to Rory Ryan (1990:3) (in a similar context), saturated with 'the humanist-colonial-patriarchal agenda'. If the Useless man's mother speaks the language of conquest, of the triumph of European individualism, she is unaware of her implication in this agenda of a sexually conquering civilization.

But *The Fantastical History of a Useless Man* is concerned with the staking out of positions: political (racial, class) and historical, in contemporary South African discourses of historical and political contestation. Its stated project is to parody (liberal) humanism and its articulation in the politics of the Progressive Party, within the subversive discourse of the fantastic. 'The Song of the Fantastical History', with which the text opens, testifies to this project:

> For the colonial structure/Is just about to rupture/And it ain't going to suit yer/If you're white and got your loot here—/But I couldn't face mere anarchy/So I went and joined the Prog Party,/But it came to the crunch/When my servants came to lunch/And they soon confirmed my hunch/That they're *not* a well-bred bunch.
>
> I think it's very nice in principle/To be so good and liberal/But go and give the vote to *all*?/Ag no! Not to a cannibal! (Purkey 1978:10).

Rory Ryan's widely researched article on what he terms 'Literary-Intellectual Behaviour in South Africa', provides the complex history behind discourses of humanism. In this article, he places the dialogue between contemporary theories of representation and the discourses of humanism where it belongs—in the international space. He quotes Paul Bove, to substantiate his claim that, as Bove argues,

> This humanistic project is politically and intellectually inappropriate. Its political liberalism is divisive, disciplinary, often oppressive and imperialistic; intellectually, it is self-contradictory, at best tragically belated, at most comically self-betraying. What is significant about it is its *power* (Ryan 1990:4).

He concludes his paper by quoting Paul Bove again, that

> one must promote, and continue to promote, a 'radically active scepticism' as an alternative to the habitual practices of 'culturally comfortable critics' (Ryan 1990:19).

It is this 'radically active scepticism' that is at the root of *The Fantastical*

History of A Useless Man, which, as I have already tried to illustrate in my argument, is traceable in the song of the Useless man and, with some few exceptions, throughout the text.

If, as Abiola Irele observes in 'The African Scholar', '[i]t was inevitable that the most significant developments [in African scholarship] should have taken place within the discipline of history', because

> [t]his was the most convenient terrain for taking on the colonizer, so to speak: for repudiating the colonial thesis that Africa had no history before the coming of the white man, that nowhere had the black race displayed an initiative for creating a framework of life and expression with any real human value or significance,

then very few dramatic discourses on colonial-apartheid history in South Africa have acknowledged the fact that whereas '[t]he self-serving character of the colonial thesis was patent, ... its refutation required a strenuous effort of scholarship', that did not merely reverse its dichotomous mode of carving up the postcolonial condition.

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Apartheid in Crisis: Lacan and a Contemporary Afrikaans Play

H.J. Vermeulen

The topic of this paper is Apartheid in crisis during the eighties as reflected in Pieter Fourie's play *Die koggelaar* (1988). As some commentators saw this play as a reflection of the so-called Afrikaner psyche, a Lacanian perspective on it seems an interesting avenue to explore[1].

Background

From a broad socio-historical perspective, the eighties was a rather dramatic time for South-Africa and for the Afrikaner specifically. These years started with a tremendous drought that scarred the country for years to come. As in a Greek tragedy this crisis in nature foreshadowed, as it were, the economic and socio-political predicaments that were to come.

During the mid-eighties it became clear that the South African state was on the verge of bankruptcy. Paramount were three causes: the cost of maintaining Apartheid, the war on, and within, the borders of Namibia and Angola, and the sanctions, embargoes and boycotts by the international community. This economic state of affairs led to the realisation by the leaders of the National Party that Apartheid was doomed to fail. Accordingly a paradigm shift became evident in their political rhetoric: they were beginning to sound more and more like their official opposition, the Progressive Federal Party and later the Democratic Party. The result of this shift drove the splitting and splintering of the National Party, then already

[1] The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development (HSRC, South Africa) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.

under way, to a head. After forty years of monolithic rule, this party, serving mainly Afrikaner interests, was falling apart.

Socially and culturally this political crisis found its way into the family life and religious denominations of the Afrikaner. Strife broke out within the community of especially the NG-church, up to then one of the strongest cultural and political bonding mechanisms of the Afrikaner. Like the National Party it also became subject to scission from within. This fissure sometimes forked as far down as the basis of Afrikaner unity, the extended and domestic family. Political strife between family members led to alienation and the breaking off of family bonds. The aggression let loose within these families sometimes became pathological and ended in family murder and suicide. Noticeable about the newspaper reports covering these domestic tragedies was the fact that most of them happened within Afrikaner families.

The rending apart of Afrikaner politics and culture brought the Afrikaner's whole *weltanschauung* in crisis. The socio-psychological effects of this crisis were *inter alia* disorientation, uncertainty, anxiety and fear of the future. It is therefore not surprising that aspects of this critical stage in the history of the Afrikaner were reflected and refracted by some Afrikaans plays written and performed during those years, the most outstanding of them probably being Reza de Wet's *Diepe grond* (1986) and her *Nag, Generaal* (1988); D. Opperman's *Stille nag* (1989); Pieter Fourie's *ek, Anna van Wyk* (1986) and his *Die koggelaar* (1988).

The latter play was chosen because it dramatises most convincingly the trauma the racist Afrikaner psyche went through during the middle and late eighties.

The writing of this play was completed in 1986 and it was performed in all the major cultural centres of South Africa during 1987-1989. Within the context of the play, the word *koggelaar* means *inter alia* a person or personified figure who mocks, taunts, challenges, derides, provokes, etc. The scene is that of a Karoo farm in the grip of drought. The protagonist is Boet Cronjé, a typical Afrikaner *boer* (farmer). The antagonists are the drought, God and the racial other. The intermediaries are Boet's father Ben, his mother Beta, his wife Anna, their son Little Ben, the 'coloured' farm-hand Anker and Boet's breeding ram. The crisis dramatised by this play starts with the drought. It is a crisis of survival—of the farm, its people, animals and veld. This disaster soon becomes a family, a religious and a politico-cultural crisis. (Note the traces of the eighties here.)

The reception of *Die koggelaar* from 1987 to 1989 can be classified under three headings: rejection, ambivalence and acceptance.

Rejection

The Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State cancelled a production of this play in 1987. After much infighting this institution allowed the play to be performed in 1989. In reaction to this performance representatives of the NG-church of Hospital Park, Bloemfontein, requested their members not to attend plays like *Die koggelaar*, their objection being the scene where Anna appears naked on stage and the 'misuse of the name of God' in the play. But as Professor S.A. Strauss (1989:10), theologian at the University of the Orange Free State, pointed out both aspects objected to were sensitively treated. One therefore suspects an ideological motive behind the surface argument: the confrontation of some Afrikaners by their mirror image was probably the real problem they had with this play.

Critics like Phil du Plessis (1987:20) may also be classified here. The heading he used for his article says it all: 'Slim het Sy Baas Gevang met te Veel Kopwerk'. (Cleverness Caught its Author with too Much Cerebration.)

Acceptance

However, most commentators accepted *Die koggelaar* as an excellent play. I highlight some phrases: 'Afrikaans drama cán captivate' (Elahi 1989:2); 'Koggelaar lean, but moving' (BM 1989:6); 'most outstanding ... in the corpus of recent Afrikaans dramas' (Mouton 1988:15); 'a richly nuanced text' (Hambidge 1988:11); 'Fourie's drama a masterpiece' (Hough 1988:44).

In 1986 and 1987 *Die koggelaar* was awarded two prestigious drama prizes: the SARUK and DALRO awards.

Ambivalence

The ambivalent reception of *Die koggelaar* came in two forms: expressed and by implication.

Expressed: Here Ia van Zyl (1989:9) is representative. She finds the play one-sided in its 'lack of true Christian compassion' in the 'unmasking of the Afrikaner'. She shows her ideological hand when she quotes the Afrikaans poet N.P. van Wyk Louw: 'But within a small, endangered people the true nationalist must keep criticism and encouragement in a fine balance ...'.

By implication: Here we find those commentators who do not mention, or only indirectly indicate, the import of this play for the Afrikaner. Have we a form of denial here? S.A. Strauss (1989), Nushin Elahi (1989), B.M. (1985) and Koggelstok (1987) are representative of this group.

All of these reviews, with the exception of those ambivalent only by implication, reveal a noticeable pattern: they perceive *Die koggelaar* as a mirror of its time, that is, as a reflection of the politico-cultural crisis of the Afrikaner. Here are some phrases to that effect: 'Fourie unmasks Afrikaner'

(Van Zyl 1989:9); '*Die koggelaar* is an allegory of the historical position of the Afrikaner to-day; it provides an important entrance to the ideological transformation that is playing itself out around the Afrikaner ...' (Van Wyk 1989:17); 'This *boer*'s soul, and by implication that of the Afrikaner, is opened up and the whole anatomy of his guilt is revealed' (Du Plessis 1987:20); 'the Afrikaner placed under a magnifying glass' (Mouton 1988:15); 'Boet Cronjé is like many Afrikaners ...' (Boekkooi 1989:31); 'an indictment against chauvinism and racism' (Hough 1988:44). Only Johan van Wyk (1989:17) in his '*Koggelaar* shows fatherless Afrikaner' points to a possible psychoanalytic reading of this play. I will take up where he left off.

Setting the stage

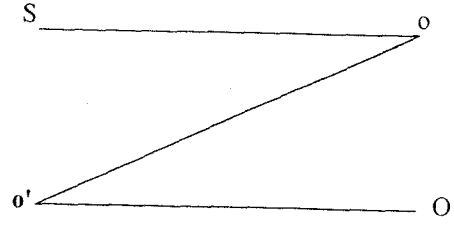
Why Lacan?

Probably like no other psychoanalytic theoretician, Lacan's thought explores the relation between the psychical and the cultural. This fact is attested to by the writings of authors of the calibre of Kaja Silverman (1992), Judith Butler (1992), Elizabeth Grosz (1990), Linda Kintz (1992), Juliet MacCannell (1986), Shoshana Felman (1987) to name but a few. Indeed:

> For Lacan the hour has come for 'discourse' to take hold of his work and retransmit it. His thought has become prey to partiality, something to be threshed, to be turned this way and that, to be distilled in the general consciousness; a thought refracted by multi-faceted intelligences motivated by many divergent currents of thought (Lemaire 1977:251).

Against the background already given, Lacanian concepts like the imaginary, the symbolic, the real and the Name-of-the-Father resonate meaning. From a Lacanian perspective the eighties can be seen as a time of crisis within the symbolic and imaginary worlds of Afrikaner politics and culture. *Die koggelaar* reflects this predicament in the psyche of the protagonist Boet Cronjé.

My point of departure is Lacan's (1980:193) 'Schema L'. Here it is:



Muller and Richardson (1988:71) are of the opinion that this diagram is 'the most fundamental of all Lacan's schemata'. According to Boothby (1991:

114) this 'diagram maps the dynamic field in which the human subject is constituted'. Lacan (1980:194) himself states that the subject is

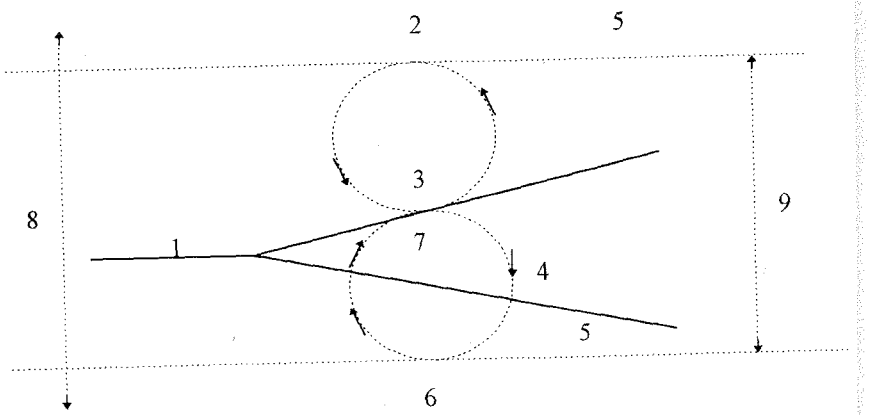
> stretched over the four corners of the schema, namely, **S**, his ineffable, stupid existence, **o**, his objects, **o'**, his ego, that is, that which is reflected of his form in his objects, and **O**, the locus from which the question of his existence may be presented to him.

Following Lacan's lead in his periodic transformation of his own schemata, algorithms and concepts, I have taken the liberty to do so with his Schema L in order to—

- accommodate more of his (and Freud's) major concepts applicable to this discussion;
- bring out the underlying dynamics of the psychic field it suggests, a dynamics which will prove to be important for our analysis;
- reflect my reading of Lacan and some of his commentators;
- correlate some of his concepts and insights dispersed throughout his translated writings and seminars.

Schema L transformed

> 'thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal'—King Lear.



As will be seen soon, all the positions represented by numbers on the diagram are 'overdetermined' (Freud 1958:306-308) because of the dynamic nature of the psyche.

1 The Level of the Neonate

Position 1 represents the first few months after birth. The prematurity of human birth brings with it a lack of co-ordination and unity (Lacan 1980:18f). The neonate is but a bundle of somatic impulses and energies, a *corps morcelé* (Lacan 1980:4,11). More abstractly 1 represents the level of unrepresented libido and drives. Part of it therefore corresponds to **S** on Lacan's Schema L.

2 External Reality

Position 2 designates the domain of the object: that is to say, people, things and places. External reality is the realm of the other, the mother usually being the first other. Recognition by the mother's gaze and the bodily mirror image of himself come to the infant from this dimension.

3 The Imaginary Register

Number three represents the field of internalisation. Here, some of that which is externally perceived becomes internalised. On this level the libido is represented by and invested in internalised objects. One could speak here of *objected libido* (cf. the *abject* under 5). This is the area of bound energies and co-ordination in contrast to the inco-ordination of stage 1. It is this boundness which makes the principles of *gestalt*—and therefore object perception and recognition—possible (Lacan 1988b:94).

Most importantly, from a Lacanian point of view, the imaginary register is also the level of narcissism (Lacan 1980:19-24). Between six and eighteen months the infant internalises and identifies with his image in the mirror: the self is captured by its specular reflection and by its own narcissistic gaze. In conjunction with the mother's confirming gaze, this mirror reflection constitutes the so-called 'ideal ego' (Lacan 1980:2). One could formalise this relation as follows:

ego = mirror image
ego = (m)other
Lacan's **o** = **o'** on Schema L.

Once this relation has been established, 'that which is reflected of his form in his objects' (Lacan 1980:194) will be imaginary.

But, as the word 'imaginary' suggests, an ego based on fantasies of ideal unity, identity, pure presence, full being, power and omnipotence is in reality fictive, a 'theatre of images' (Boothby 1991:64). Because this self is inauthentic, there lies at the heart of the mirror stage a basic misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) of the self by itself (Lacan 1980:15-20).

The imaginary is also the agent of primary repression. Here we find the death drive in service of the imaginary in its efforts to negate and occlude the unrepresented, the unrealised and the dangerously inchoate.

4 The Primordial Fissure

As a result of primary repression a part of the self is forked off from itself resulting in an alienation of the self from itself (Lacan 1980:2-4). Like Lear, Lacan finds at the heart of man the wound of a primeval castration which results in an enduring psychic tension between the imaginary and the real.

5 The Real

The real is indicated by **S** on Lacan's diagram. The real (Lacan 1980:180-187)—which should not be confused with 'reality'— refers to the level of the primordially repressed. It is the locus of Freud's Id (1961:2-66), Kristeva's *abject* (1982), the rejected, excluded, remaindered, the always outstanding. In some respects it could be imagined as a reservoir of psychic and somatic energies nót imaged in the imaginary or symbolised by the symbolic. This is the arena of inchoate libido in search of discharge and representation.

The real, as signifier, also indicates the absent place of the primordial lost object, Lacan's *objet petit a*, source of utter plenitude, presence, wholeness, being, the essential self (Lacan 1980:179-221). The absence of the essential self results in a want-of-being, a *manque à être* (Lacan 1988b:223). The real is therefore always only the potential for true being. It is from this only-in-potential that desire originates. This is a desire to be, a desire to overcome lack, absence and primary repression, a desire for *objet a* itself (Lacan 1980:292-325).

The source of existential guilt is also found in the realm of the real: that is to say, guilt about the primordial incompleteness—the fallenness—of the self.

However, the real is also that part of reality that cannot be symbolised or imagined, the always only potential reality.

The real is one of Lacan's least developed concepts, probably because he believes that it cannot be grasped by the symbolic (Lacan 1977:280).

6 The Symbolic Register

This position represents Lacan's **O**, that is the Other, on his schema. The symbolic register is the domain of *representation*, of the signifier, the signifying chain and the network of signifiers—in short: the field of language (Lacan 1980:30-113). As such this level is subject to the nature of language, that is, to the fact that language is always diacritic. This diacriticalness of

language makes it systematiseable, but also ever open-ended. Derrida's *différance*, Jacobson's metonymy and metaphor and Freud's displacement and condensation all signify in their own way the diacritic openness of language.

Even the unconscious is to Lacan part of the symbolic register as it 'is structured like a language' (Lacan 1977:149), which means that it also functions according to the diacritic processes of configuration, substitution, displacement, difference, deferment, supplementation, condensation, etc.

Most important for our discussion of *Die koggelaar* is the fact that this register is also the domain where the formation of culture takes place. It is here where the cultural conventions, norms and laws of a society, that is to say, its symbolic order, is constituted. Within a patriarchal society the linchpin of the symbolic order is the Name-of-the-Father and by extension, the Law-of-the-Father (Lacan 1980:179-225). This symbolic position functions among others as the moral, epistemological and ontological authority on which a society builds and defends its social order, its 'reality'.

The symbolic register is also the locus of the phallic signifier, that is to say, the signifier which amongst others represents *objet a* to desire. But this signifier of wholeness, being, plenitude and power is, like all signifiers within the symbolic, also subject to the law of language. Therefore nobody can *be* or *have* the phallus (Lacan 1980:281-291)—the penis being only an imaginary fixation of the phallus.

Because desire can only emerge sublimated in the signifier, it is diminished. The capture of desire by the signifier therefore means a second alienation, a splitting off of the self from itself (Lacan 1980:79-80), even an *aphanisis* of the subject (Lacan 1977:216-229). It is for this reason that the Oedipal crisis is to Lacan the crisis of the subject's entry into language (Boothby 1991:151-152). The symbolic system of the father/Father, as a third mediating term, demands the sublimation of desire by way of the symbolic *and* the transcendence of the imaginary relation of the ego to the (m)other. In this way the superego and social guilt are constituted, the latter being guilt feelings about not realising the ego ideal of the symbolic order (Dews 1990:238). In this sense the superego partakes of the death drive and as such it is part of the symbolic order's drive to power.

And finally, it is from this locus of the Other that the real may present 'the question of his existence' to the self (Lacan 1980:194).

7 The Death Drive

The death drive (Lacan 1988a:149; Freud 1955c:7-64) functions as the negation of the imaginary's negation. As such it is a force of aggression directed at the narcissistic self-image. It is energised by a desire for an energy discharge of the repressed, remaindered, unrepresented libido and the

unrealised potentialities of the self. The death drive may be sublimated in the signifier and in the command of the superego to transmute the imaginary self.

The death drive may lead to a deconstruction and transformation of existing imaginary formations. These changes are usually experienced by the ego on a fantasy level as bodily violation, fragmentation, castration—as a drive towards the death of the ego. In this conflict between the death drive and the imaginary self, something of the real emerges by way of sublimation in the signifier. Position seven therefore represents the place where the real, desire and the unconscious speak by means of discontinuity, condensation, reconfiguration, metonymy and metaphor, resulting in a new meaning that borders on sense and non-sense (*pas-de-sens*; cf. Lacan 1977:250-252). This meaning shatters the stereotypical and reified meanings of the imaginary.

The death drive is also instrumental in the repetition of trauma *symbolised*. Here images and signifiers of fragmentation are used by the death drive as vehicles of attack against the formations of the imaginary ego.

2[2] Reality as a Function of the Interactions of the Real, Symbolic and the Imaginary

Position 2 represents external reality *and* psychicalised reality. It is seen as reality psychicalised by the interactions between the Real, Symbolic and the Imaginary. This is the level of defensive externalisation and projection of the attack by the death drive on the imaginary. Forms of this defence are substitution, scapegoating and the enacted, or fantasised, dismemberment of the other. In some cases, these defences are unconscious equivalents of self-image violation, a defence *and* destruction of the ego by proxy (Lacan 1980:8-29). This is the level of sadism.

Within this psychicalised reality we also find the externalisation and objectification of *objet a*, usually in the form of a fetish: an object is found in reality—e.g. the penis or any other phallic object—and is substituted for the lost *objet a*.

The reification of the symbolic order is also found here, that is the fixation of the law of the signifier and Father by the imaginary. This is the domain where Fascistic ideologies like Apartheid imprisons the signifier within their fixed and unchanging signifieds and stereotypes.

Position two also indicates the scene where the death drive emerges in reality. Here it takes the form of the uncanny, Freud's *Unheimlich* (1955b:219-256), which may be interpreted as the death drive nót symbolised, the death drive emerging unmediated in objects as something present that is simultaneously absent. From here it is but a short step to fully

[2] The numbering in the diagram indicates *positions* and not numerical order.

hallucinated objects. The figure of the father as castrator is also one of the forms the death drive may take when externalised.

More positively we find here the symbolic register externalised in its creative diacriticalness and openness and also the symbolic sublimation of desire and the death drive in personal and social life.

3 The Internalisation of Psychicalised Reality

Position 3 is the domain of psychicalised reality internalised.

Among others, the following are introjected:

- the symbolic register positively externalised;
- the sublimation of desire and death by way of the signifier;
- the Law-of-the-Father nót reified;
- the superego's ego ideal contra the ideal ego of the imaginary, the former being subject to the symbolic register, that is, open to complexity and internal differentiation;
- the gaze of the Other negating the narcissistic look in the mirror;
- and, more negatively, the reified symbolic.

On this level we also find the introjection of the externalised death drive. Here the death drive is again directed against the narcissistic ego: sadism becomes masochism, murder, suicide. This attack is fantasised by the imaginary ego as the body in bits and pieces (*corps morcelé*). These fantasies generate castration anxiety. Traumatic events are likewise experienced on this level as a shattering of the imaginary ego.

As reaction formation against the anxiety generated by the above-mentioned attacks, the narcissistic self may use a series of defence mechanisms, e.g.

- *denial* of the Other, the different;
- *resistance* against becoming;
- *fetish formation* by way of the internalisation of an object standing in for *objet a*—e.g. the penis as imaginary phallus—in order to cover up primary and secondary castrations;
- *symptom formation* as an ambivalent compromise formation between the death drive and the imaginary which formation functions as both protection *and* destruction of the narcissistic ego;
- *repetition of trauma* by which the imaginary obsessively scans the traumatising event in an effort to contain and repair the fractured ego contra the attack by the death drive which uses signifiers representing the splintering of the ego by the traumatic event;
- *foreclosure* (Lacan 1980:217-221) on desire, sublimation and the Name-of-the-Father when the death drive is turned by the imaginary against semioses.

Should some of these defences fail, the specular imago of the self will become unhinged resulting in repression being lifted.

8 The Field of Subjectivity

The diagram as a whole represents Lacan's idea of the so-called 'decentered subject' (Lacan 1980:194). In contrast to the logocentric subject of traditional philosophy and ego-psychology, the Lacanian subject is spread dynamically across all four registers and levels.

9 The Dimension of Psychic Time

In my diagram I use the figure of the Möbius-strip as a metaphor for the movement of the psyche, individual and collective, in time. It is a time where the external becomes the internal and *vice versa* in a continuous circuit lasting the lifetime of an individual or collective. This movement and change is what the imaginary tries to stop in its effort to fixate time, space and meaning. (Cf. Lacan's use of the Möbius-strip, Marini 1992:186,197-198.)

Since language is to Lacan pre-eminently a psychic phenomenon, the Möbius-strip may also be used as a metaphor for the movement of language in time; especially as it is capable of representing the unending possibilities of semioses quite well. On this circuit the signifier finds its object, its signified, and conversely the signified finds its signifier, and inversely the signified becomes the signifier and the latter the signified, and so on and on ....

The Action

1 Limbo, or the Theatre of the Psyche (pp. 1-4)

The first scene of *Die koggelaar* positions the audience immediately as attending the dramatisation of an inner world, a theatre of the mind. This world of the psyche is indexed by signifiers like:

- Boet Cronjé, the protagonist, makes his first appearance as a corpse;
- Boet's 'resurrection' soon afterwards, although Knaplat, his stud-ram (of all things) tells him: 'You are dead, Boet' (p. 3);
- Boet's realisation that he is in fact dead;
- the a-chronological and associative recall of past events dramatised as mental pictures and figures on stage;
- a sheep-ram that is simultaneously a black farm-hand (Knaplat) and a plant which is at the same time a reptile (the Koggelmandervoet);
- the metonymic decor where for instance a piece of circular white cloth represents not only a farm dam, but also Apartheid's fixation with the colour white;

- mimetic actions;
- spotlights evoking images out of a nebulous past and background.

Within the first two spoken sentences of *Die koggelaar*, the problem at the heart of this play is indicated as being Boet's transgression of the law of the symbolic order, the law of the Koggelmandervoet which 'will trample you' should you disobey it (p. 1). The fatal Oedipal wound in Boet's head is the castrative mark of the price he paid for his violation of this order.

Narcissism and selfishness is suggested by Knaplat as being the root cause of Boet's transgressions against the symbolic order: 'You may be dead, but your selfishness is still there' (p. 3). The compass of his egotism is indicated moments later when he appropriates even God as 'my God' (p. 4). This statement is immediately questioned by Knaplat: 'Yóúr God?' Boet explains that as a farmer his God is different from the God of the townspeople: that He is like a business partner in relation to him and the farm. In this way God, the symbolic signifier of the Name-of-the-Father, is here reified and internalised by Boet in the form of his own imaginary image.

And yet the symbolic speaks when Boet tells Anker and Knaplat that he *owes* it to them to explain his end and that which led up to it (p. 4). Do we find traces of guilt and the desire to realise some of the repressed and denied aspects of the self here?

2 Boet's Marriage, or the Narcissistic Ego (pp. 5-6)

In this scene Boet brings his bride Anna to the family farm in the same way his father and grandfather did their brides. He therefore seems part of, and fully integrated in, the symbolic system of this patriarchal society.

Yet, there are signs of his egotism disturbing this system: he married Anna in spite of her parent's wishes by means of a court order against them, thereby using the symbolic order against itself. Ironically this narcissistic ego is admired by Anna: 'This is what I admire in you. Your strength. Your relentless pride' (p. 5). To this he adds hubristically: 'And my belief. Thát nobody breaks.' And again he puts himself on equal footing with God, that is to say, the Name-of-the-Father, by stating that hé took God in as a partner and that this is the reason, the source, of his farm's fertility. A fertility he impetuously assumes would be theirs also.

3 The Birth of Little Ben, or Singing the Praise of the Phallus (pp. 7-8)

In this scene Little Ben's penis becomes the reified phallic signifier, the object standing in for *objet a*. Everybody, with the exception of Anna, commends only on the nature of his male member. Other characteristics of this baby are completely ignored. All the words this family uses to

characterise his penis, connote potency, power and virility. He is in fact reduced to his male organ which is marked by the following expressions: *spogknaters* (swanky balls); *disselboompie en wiele* (thill and wheels); *ramkat* (a combination of *ram* and *tomcat*); and *knapsak* (potent scrotum). It is therefore clear that Little Ben represents the 'one who has the phallus'—remember: an imaginary construction according to Lacan (1980:281-291).

Little Ben's seeming possession of the phallus poses a danger to the imaginary *and* symbolic positions of both fathers (Boet and Ben) in the play. This danger is indicated by Betta when she jokingly likens them to two *bokkapaters*, that is, to two castrated goats. But at this stage of the drama her words do not even leave a ripple on the imaginary self-sameness of grandfather, father and son.

4 The Drought, or Castration in the Offing (pp. 9-15)

Significantly, a great drought now follows the birth of Little Ben. This external event is taken by Boet as an act of God, as an attack on his and the farm's very existence. 'God whipped us, tested us and left us', is how Boet puts it (p. 9). The imaginary identification of himself with God is here shifting towards a more symbolic experience of God, that is to say, God as the Other; and an aggressive Other at that, who is attacking him/them. But in spite of this attack, he remains 'strong' in his 'belief' in God.

This belief is tested by his neighbour who lost his faith and farm as a result of the drought. He tells Boet that the bank manager has taken away his 'tassel of keys' representing his 'whole life'—clearly here a form of symbolic castration (p. 10). He profanes God by stating that 'The Lord God is either not, or He wipes His arse on us' (p. 10). He also attacks Boet's faith in God: 'You will yet choke on your faith' (p. 11). This attack and the story of the bunch of keys are experienced by Boet as a castrative assault on his own integrity. He defends himself by physically attacking his neighbour. As his neighbour leaves, he thanks God for not having taken away his tassel of keys—that is for not castrating him.

In this scene we also see how the drought is progressively internalised by Boet, his father Ben and Anker. About them Boet's mother Betta says: 'They live closer to the drought. Almost within him' (p. 12). By way of this internalisation Boet's imaginary God (*my* God) becomes more and more the symbolic Other. Denial and repression of the Lord as the nót reified Other are here starting to crumble, as can be seen from Boet's growing uncertainty about God. This man who proclaimed that he would always stand steadfast *next* to his God, now asks whether God is taunting them (p. 13).

And for the first time in this play God as symbolic Other displaces the reified God of the imaginary when Anker, Boet and Ben pray sincerely for

rain. The psychic positivity of this movement away from the imaginary is externalised by the windmill which, as if in answer to their prayer, miraculously churns out a stream of water (p. 15).

5 Around the Bore-hole, or the Moment of Castration (pp. 15-23)

In this scene the Cronjé family and Anker gather festively around a bore-hole in expectation of the final breakthrough to the underground water they discovered and need so desperately.

This potential water is internalised by Ben as symbolic of God's mercy (p. 16). Also symbolic is the initiation of Little Ben—now on the verge of puberty—as 'a man' by allowing him to drink brandy 'with the men'. This rite is described by his grandfather as 'a type of communion' (p. 20) and the drinking of the brandy itself as a traditional ritual to ward off evil.

But there are signs of the imaginary resisting the symbolic. According to Ben they are acting against tradition by drinking their brandy before the bore-hole is opened up (p. 19). And during Little Ben's initiation we again find the reification of him as phallic object. As on his birth, his penis is again made into a reified *objet a* (pp. 20,22). As the one who is supposed to possess the phallus, he is chosen to start the bore-machine in order to 'baptise' the water when it breaks through.

The tension between the symbolic and the imaginary is likewise manifested in the signifiers of castration and death that crop up during this scene. Right at the beginning of the action, grandfather Ben throws away his walking stick thereby divesting himself of one of his phallic signifiers. It is also he who tells Little Ben that should the others forget to bring the brandy, there would be a funeral that day (p. 16). This statement he repeats later on. About the small Karoo shrub called *koolganna* he says to Little Ben: 'In reality he is not a shrub, but a tree .... But the dry heaven, the arid earth caused his inability to hold his own as a manly tree' (p. 17). The paradoxical nature of the symbolic order conjugated to the death drive as Law-of-the-Father—Ben being the 'grand' father in this play—is metaphorised beautifully when he shows Little Ben the *koolganna* and says: 'You could say that this is, as it were, death with life in it' (p. 17).

At the end of this scene there is a moment when the real shatters the imaginary with all the violence characteristic of the death drive: Little Ben—the phallic object of his father, his grandfather and grandmother, the phallus who would have guaranteed the continuation of their pure 'bloodline'—is killed. His scarf is caught in the slipping drive-belt of the bore-machine and his neck is violently broken (pp. 22-23). Boet, the father who imagined himself as possessing the phallus by virtue of his son as *objet a*—the object

representing wholeness, fullness, plenitude and power—is here castrated psychically by this traumatic event. It is this castration that Boet denies and fights against for the duration of the rest of the play.

6 The Five Years after Little Ben's Death, or the Exorcism of Lack (pp. 23-24)

This period of Boet's life plays itself out under the sign of Little Ben's death. This traumatic event leaves a wound in the imaginary surety of his world. He who thought he had the phallus, lost it. In an effort to procreate a substitute for Little Ben, he tries to make his wife pregnant again. But all his efforts come to nought: he fails to suture his castrative wound. In denial of this, he blames his wife: shé is sterile—an *uitskot-ooi* (a barren ewe). He also refuses the suggestions by Anna to have his sperm-count tested. But the symbolic keeps on addressing him by way of reality: the drought continues and becomes a metaphor of his own procreative and spiritual sterility.

As a reaction formation against his inadequacy he subjects Knaplat, the stud-ram of the farm, to obsessive sperm extraction—to the point of making him impotent ('You have deprived me of everything I am', p. 3). By way of artificial insemination Boet now wants to become a *meesterteler* (a master breeder).

The extraction of Knaplat's sperm is done by means of an electric shock applied to his genitals. This action Nushin Elahi (1989:2) finds 'upsetting' in its 'graphic particularity'. Phil du Plessis (1987:20) also mentions the aggressive cruelty of this scene[3]. The obsessive and sadistic nature of this action signifies an attempt by Boet to exorcise, by means of Knaplat's virility, his own phallic lack, his own primordial castration.

The fact that Knaplat is presented as a condensation of Merino-ram and black farm labourer, suggests that as a black worker he also suffers the sadistic aggressiveness of Boet's compensatory drive against his own impotence. This suggestion points to the master-slave relation inherent in Apartheid. For the white master to *be* the master of the black slave and to be in a position to exploit him, the latter must recognise the master's phallic position. The word *baas* (master) is an enunciation of this recognition by the enslaved black and coloured other.

However, as Lacan shows by way of Hegel (1977:219-221), the master-slave relation is an imaginary construction: ironically the master *needs* the slave's recognition in order to possess mastery—he cannot háve it unmediated in itself. To be the master is therefore an imaginary formation

[3] The fact that Pieter Fourie expunged the extraction of Knaplat's seed in the published text of the play is discussed in another paper (see Vermeulen 1992:28).

against the primeval lack of mastery at the heart of all racists, but also at the heart of every human being.

7 In the Pub, or the Bar of Racism (pp. 24-32)

This scene stages an incident when Boet was still a young student during the regime of Verwoerd and his henchman Vorster. Boet bribes Anker, the so-called coloured farm-hand who is very light of skin, with a month's salary (five pounds!) to pose as a white man in front of his friend who declared that a *hotnot* will never be allowed to cross the threshold of his father's bar.

Enacted here we find how the principle of difference belonging to the symbolic register is reified by Apartheid by marking, on the basis of skin colour difference, the other as negative, inferior, bad, abject, dirty, stupid, in a word: as less human. (All these negative markers are condensed in the abusive term *hotnot*.)

The function of this negative marking of the other is to reinforce the imaginary ego of racists like Boet as superior, clean, good, intelligent, more complete: as more human. From a Lacanian perspective this reinforcement is a defence against Boet's own primary and secondary incompleteness as a human being; that is a defence against the lack, hole and abject in himself and his own subjection to the symbolic. It is against this primordial wound that Apartheid's fetishisation of skin colour must protect Boet and racists like him.

Two moments in this scene demonstrate the above statements. During the enactment in the bar a moment arises when Boet manipulates Anker into making a racist attack on himself thereby forcing him to negate his very personhood (p. 30):

> Boet: (*To Anker playing white, Anker being the 'new one' to whom Boet refers*) We have a new one—there on the farm. And would you believe me, Anker, old chap, the blackguard dares to call me 'mister'! (*Unobserved by Danny, he elbows Anker*) What would yóú have done?
> Anker: I would've kicked his arse!

The second moment, which is also the climax of this scene and the end of the first act of this two-act play, enacts the imaginary ideology of racism as animalising and castrative—ironically of both the victim and the persecutor (pp. 31-32). It is this irony which reflects Lacan's contention that the sadistic projection of one's own lack and castration onto a negativised other is an unconscious equivalent of self-image violation: a defence *and* destruction of the imaginary ego by proxy (Lacan 1980:8-29).

> Boet: You might as well cough up your twenty pounds.
> Danny: Says who?

Boet: Says me. (*To Anker*) Come on, *hotnot*, you've played a white gentleman long enough now. Go sit in the back of the truck.
Anker: (*A moment of hesitation*) Right, master. (*to Danny*) Good evening, master. (*Moves to go*)
Danny: Wait, wait! You must be joking? (*Boet holds Anker back*) Come, stand here. (*Anker stands stiffly against the bar-counter*) Blue eyes, curly hair?
Boet: Sleeker than yours.
Danny: Yóú, a *hotnot*?
Anker: Yes, master.
Boet: You can see it only in one thing.
Danny: In what?
Boet: His gums.
Danny: Are you two taking me for a ride?
Boet: See for yourself. (*to Anker*) Open your jaws and show teeth to the master. (*Anker complies*)
Danny: (Looks at his gums the way one would inspect the maw of an animal) Hell! You've got me. (Anker's mouth stays open) Come on, shut your maw. (It is as if Anker tries to shut his mouth, but is unable to. His head starts to jerk and he vomits soundlessly all over the bar-counter. The stage darkens. The curtain comes down.)

(Cf. Freud 1955a:3-152, for the connection between teeth and castration.)

8 The Sun-ritual, or the Magic Supplement (pp. 33-40)

In this scene we find a displacement from Knaplat to Anna of Boet's defensive exorcism of his loss of the phallic object. In an effort to contain and repair his fractured ego, he reverts to magical action. He persuades Anna to put on her wedding dress. (She is 40 years old now). According to Boet the wedding dress will bring them luck again, as it did on their wedding night when Little Ben was conceived. He takes her out into the scorching heat of the Karoo veld where he forces her to undress so as to enable the sun to 'heighten her fertility' (p. 37). This fertility enhancement by the sun is a 'primordial secret' (p. 37) he is revealing to her. He leaves her in the 40 degrees Celsius of the veld with the instruction to call him when she is ready for 'fertilisation'.

The fact that Boet here uses the sun as a phallic supplement to himself, indicates an unconscious acknowledgement that by himself he has not the potency to impregnate her. Anna gives voice to this unconscious notion by proposing that he should have his sperm strengthened. He reacts defensively by stating: 'I don't masturbate like a child. And that on top of it in a test tube' (p. 37). Her ironic 'Says yóú: master breeder' points to the contradiction in his psyche, to the split between his narcissism and the symbolic. As representative of the symbolic in this scene Anna urges him to accept Little Ben's death, that is, his symbolic castration, by opening up the

bore-hole where his son died. This bore-hole is the only one with water on the farm, hardly a metre away. This 'water is life' (p. 37), she states. Indeed: literally it means life to the soil, plants and animals on the farm and symbolically a broader psychic life to Boet. Alas, he keeps on blocking and repressing the claims of the symbolic by refusing to open the bore-hole, even should all his sheep die of thirst. The reason for his refusal is that there is 'a curse on that water' (p. 37). In this way the unopened bore-hole functions ironically as bóth signifier of his castration and his denial of it. Like in the case of the repetition of trauma (Freud 1955c:32-33), the bore-hole represents an attack by the death drive whilst simultaneously forming a defensive fetish against it. This means that as a signifier it is reinforced by both the symbolic and the imaginary. No wonder he is unable to open it up, not even when everything is dying around him.

Boet's defence against his own lack also takes the form of projection, ironically just after he admits it within his own denial. He says to Anna: 'Yóúr shame? It's míne. People are laughing ... the world laughs at me. But it is you! You can't give me a child!' (p. 38). His narcissistic image as a virile master breeder must at all cost be maintained. (Cf. Freud 1961:235-239, for the acknowledgement within the denial of, 'It's not my mother'.)

The final attack on his already brittle self-image comes in the conclusion of this scene. Anker finds Anna naked in the burning sun. He helps her to rub goat fat on her blistered skin and covers her with a corn sack. For a moment she lays her head against his chest. This action upsets Boet who exclaims emotionally: 'No! No! That she never would have done! Not Anna. Not *my* Anna' (p. 40). Knaplat interprets his reaction as shock caused by Anker's 'bloodline'—him being a coloured, a person of 'mixed blood', that is to say of 'impure blood', this being a signifier of pollution, of the death drive, against which the image of the white racist as 'pure of blood' must be protected at all cost. Here Anker becomes the dangerous Other addressing Boet's imaginary conception of himself and his 'race' under Apartheid.

9 In the Church, or Attacking the Name-of-the-Father (pp. 41-44)

In the previous scene Boet says to Anna: 'The Lord is cruel towards us' (p. 36). He also declares that God is mocking them. In other words: the Lord God whom he has put on equal footing with himself—this imaginary God of his—here falls back into the symbolic and from there becomes the aggressive Other who is attacking him. Seen in this light, God becomes a symbol of his own death drive directed against his imaginary ego.

In this scene Boet externalises the destructiveness of the death drive by shooting rather impotently at some clouds with his once-phallic .303 rifle.

This action is seen by his mother, speaking from the perspective of the symbolic order, as his mocking of God. From his egotistic point of view it is of course he who is mocked by God. He therefore confronts God in the church of his community, one of the most sanctified places of the symbolic order. In front of the congregation he addresses God—the most important signifier for the Name-of-the-Father in his culture—about the drought and His attitude towards him, Boet. The tone, manner and content of his 'prayer' show from the start that it is more of an aggressive negation of God than a prayer to God (p. 42). The way he addresses God puts Him again on an equal footing with him: he reproaches and reprimands God as if He were his 'bank manager' who has done him a wrong. He also tries to invert the symbolic and the imaginary in a breathtaking transgression of the Law-of-the-Father when he declares: 'I am here to give You a last chance' (p. 42). Here the son is usurping the place of the Father. This megalomaniac attempt must be seen in its duality: firstly as an indication of the pathological swollenness of Boet's ego, but also as his defence against the death drive in the guise of God and the drought.

But the symbolic answers Boet: Anna appears dressed in her wedding dress, now significantly dyed black. That Boet experiences this appearance of Anna as a renewed attack by the symbolic on his ego, is reflected in his reaction: she *and* God are mocking him now (p. 43). However, suddenly a moment of becoming breaks through his defences. In his words, 'Lord God, oh, Lord God ... help me! Help me!' (p. 43) we find an acknowledgement of his weakness, his lack, and an acceptance of his subordination and dependence on the symbolic order, the Name-of-the-Father.

The scene concludes with Anna's prayer which is an answer to Boet's: his impious negation of the Name-of-the-Father is answered by her pious acceptance of the symbolic name of the Other.

10 At the Bore-hole, or Hovering between the Imaginary and the Symbolic (pp. 44-46)

The action centres around the bore-hole where Little Ben died. (Note the resonances between this hole and the 'hole', or gap, opened up by the primordial and symbolic splitting of the psyche.)

Anker requests Boet twice to breach the bore-hole. Here Anker speaks from the position of reality *and* the symbolic: in reality the farm now needs the water from this hole desperately and on a psychic level Boet needs to access the 'life giving waters' (Boekkooi 1989:31) of the symbolic.

About the church scene that morning Boet acknowledges to Anker his transgression and intransigence: 'I am raw inside. Humiliated in myself. In pieces in my daily dealings with my wife and family' (p. 45). It is therefore

clear that his moment of becoming in the church is continuing here, the imaginary is giving way to the symbolic. (Cf. the traces of the *corps morcelé* in his words.)

Out of all this Boet comes to a sudden decision: 'I will bore through to the underground vein' (p. 45). Like Anker's, his words also signify on a literal and metaphoric level. Metaphorically, he is now ready to release the healing waters of the symbolic in himself. It therefore seems that Boet is on the verge of accepting his primordial and symbolic castration as signified by the death of Little Ben at the bore-hole. As Anker leaves him, he addresses Little Ben—speaking to the dead so to speak—and again acknowledges his shortcomings and wrong-headedness (p. 46). He also tells Little Ben that he is going to open the bore-hole and that he has decided to have his sperm strengthened as Anna requested him to do.

Up to this point of the action it seems as if Boet's moment of becoming is enduring. But, at this critical moment, at this moment of potential becoming, Little Ben appears and utters these words: 'Dad, you must remember: there is blood in the water' (p. 46)—this blood being a signifier of Boet's castration on that day the real took his phallic object away from him. By way of hallucination which conjures up the uncanny appearance of Little Ben, the imaginary captures the death drive and turns it against Boet's primeval and symbolic lack *and* his desire for becoming, his *manque à être*. Here Boet's sanity is on knife-edge.

11 At Home (almost), or the Negation of the Symbolic by the Imaginary (pp. 46-52)

Around the kitchen table a distraught Boet tells Anna, Ben, Betta and Anker about the appearance of Little Ben at the very moment he 'made peace' with God and himself (p. 47). He now feels that he dares not breach the bore-hole. Clearly Boet finds himself here at the point of intersection of the demand of the imaginary and his desire to overcome his alienation by way of the symbolic.

It is this desire which motivates Boet to ask Anker—remember: the negative racial other—to protect Anna against him, and himself against himself, should he become 'strange' again (pp. 49-50). This reconciliatory action heals the broken relationship between Anna and Boet to such an extend that they make love again, 'freely, unplanned, without calculation' (p. 51).

But again the death drive is defensively turned by the imaginary against semioses. The spectre of Little Ben appears a second time, significantly just after Boet and his wife made love. (There are shades of Freud's primal scene here; cf. Freud 1961:119f; 250f). Little Ben speaks to Boet 'not like a child, but like a man' (p. 51). This indicates that it is Boet's imaginary ego in the guise of his ghostly son which is addressing him.

Again Little Ben reminds Boet of his symbolic castration by mentioning the bloody waters of the bore-hole. He also subverts the position of the superego by *commanding* Boet never to breach the vein of underground water and by *ordering* him to challenge God: '... you must accost, challenge God' (p. 52). The negation of the symbolic order by the imaginary should be clear here. It is an inversion of the father-son-relation: here the son is placed in a commanding position from which he instructs a submissive father.

The upshot of this visitation by Little Ben is that Boet rushes into the veld where he again starts shooting at the clouds whilst screaming: 'It's here! Here where You must have the rain fall' (p. 52). At this moment Boet is sucked into the imaginary to the point of becoming psychotic.

12 At the Gate, or Forcing the Gaze of the Other (pp. 53-57)

In a prelude to this scene, Little Ben again speaks to Boet at the bore-hole. This time only his voice is heard. After complaining to Little Ben that God does not want to take notice of their suffering, Little Ben gives his father this instruction: 'Then you must máke him see' (p. 53). It is clear that the inversion of the father-son-relation is still in place here.

Boet executes Little Ben's demand in a rather singular manner. He forces Anker to tie a beggar's tin and a sheet of iron to the gate of his farm. On this sheet he paints: 'I am collecting to buy God glasses' (p. 55). To God he declares: 'If You don't want to listen, I will make You séé' (p. 54).

In these actions of Boet we find his megalomaniacal attempt to force the gaze of the Other (Lacan 1977:67-105) into recognition of his imaginary self. In this connection Anker states: 'Everything, everybody mocks you, seemingly. But you ... yóú are the great mocker! You want to play God' (p. 55). (Note: the word 'play' indicates Boet's entrapment in the imaginary.)

The symbolic continues to speak through Anker as he addresses the imaginary dimension of Boet's irreverent actions. He points out that Boet's problem is really his own narcissism: the drought is in Boet himself, not only outside in nature. Boet's psychic drought is a type of inner dying (p. 54). Boet should therefore 'open the gates' of his imaginary world to the signifiers of the Other. (The Other being manifested in the play as nature, God, his family, the symbolic order of his community and even farm-hands and animals like Anker and Knaplat.) Against this voice of the Other Boet defends himself by physically assaulting Anker.

Boet leaves the scene momentarily and Ben, the representative of the Name-of-the-Father, approaches. He is shocked by the inscription on the iron sheet and he takes it down. He also wants to call in the help of the *dominee* (clergyman) and the police, they being important representatives of the

symbolic order. But Boet returns. He orders his father to tie the iron sheet back on to the gate and forces him at gunpoint to place his donation for God's glasses in the beggar's tin. Here we again find an inversion of the father-son-relation where the narcissistic son usurps the position of the father. The imaginary nature of this usurpation is apparent in that Boet's relation to his father Ben is a *precise reflection* of Little Ben's relation to him as father (Boet:Ben = Little Ben:Boet). This equation and inversion of roles are symptomatic of the symbolic order in crisis.

13 Family Murder, or Foreclosing on the Name-of-the-Father (pp. 58-59)

Here we find Boet eavesdropping on Ben and Anker. He hears that Anker, this coloured farm labourer, is in fact the son of Ben—therefore his half-brother. He reacts by vomiting silently just like Anker did during the racial castration scene in the bar.

Boet's reaction shows that this revelation is experienced by him as the ultimate attack on his ideal identity, his 'pure substance' as a white Afrikaner. It comes as a negation of all his imaginary negations, as an aggressive attack on his narcissistic self-image, as a drive towards the death of his imaginary ego. On the level of fantasy his vomiting signifies that the true status of Anker is experienced by him as a bodily violation, as a pollution. On the level of Apartheid and the real, the remaindered, the excluded, the abjected other breaks through the resistances and repressions of the imaginary and shows itself as part of the self. Thus the reified Law-of-the-Father—in this case the reification of differences by the ideology of Apartheid—is here unhinged. The fact that he who has represented the Name-of-the-Father, he who should have guarded the reified symbolic order against the abject coloured other, dirtied himself with one of them, this fact makes him now a castrating father.

In the light of the foregoing it should be clear that this moment of revelation is also, in the classic tradition of Greek tragedy, a moment of recognition (*anagnorisis*)—even if only fleetingly. Here Boet is made to recognise that his world was an imaginary one—a theatre of inauthentic images—and that he was subject to a basic misrecognition (*méconnaissance*, Lacan 1980:15-20) of himself. With this realisation lack, absence, that is to say, the real in the guise of the Other, stares him in the face. And it is from the locus of the real that 'the question of his existence' (Lacan 1980:194) is now posed to Boet.

All of the above generates tremendous castration anxiety which leads to massive defence measures by Boet. He inverts the attack on his ideal ego by substituting the *image* of Little Ben in the position of the reified superego

vacated by his father, thus turning the attack back on the Other. He also forecloses on the Name-of-the-Father by externalising the death drive against his narcissistic ego: he murders his family, all of them now representing the bad and dangerous Other. Ironically this murder is, on the level of the unconscious, equivalent to self-image destruction by proxy. All these defences are dramatised thus (p. 59):

> (Little Ben appears for the last time)
> Little Ben: Dad, now you must finish it all. You were and are mocked. Our family our whole family tree .... Finish it, Dad. It's your duty. Our family tree ... our family tree is soiled.
> Boet: (*breathes heavily*) All of them should now be in the house; Mother, Anna and ... (*He battles to get the word over his lips*) Father.

Boet leaves the barn. Shots are fired. Knaplat accounts for everyone of them:

> Shot: 'His father'. Shot: 'His mother'. Shot: 'Anna'.

Ironically Anker escapes this killing.

14 Suicide, or the Shattering of the Imago (pp. 60-61)

The scene is an empty dam on Boet's farm. In attendance: Boet, Knaplat and Anker. As a last ditch stand against the death drives of the symbolic and the real, Boet paints the dry bottom of this dam white whilst addressing God, the ultimate representative of the Name-of-the-Father in his culture: 'White! White I will paint its bottom, so that You can see it's empty .... White! White like me! ... Do You hear me? White like me!' (p. 60). By means of his actions and words he attempts again to force the gaze of the Other to acknowledge his narcissistic racial imago. Ironically he is answered by his unconscious in the very words he uses: his racially based whiteness is as empty as the dam he paints.

> Picking up his revolver, Boet addresses God the Father again: 'Are You satisfied nów? Do You see what You have done? Do You see? (*Pause*) You ... Yóú, God ... You are as deaf as You are blind. You, You mocker! (*He listens for an answer*)' (p. 60).

Again his unconscious speaks from within the symbolic: every word he utters here really applies to him as the whole play up to this point makes clear. His accusations are but defensive projections of his own guilt—the more so, coming after his murderous destruction of his family.

When no answer is forthcoming, he asks: 'Why so silent? Why?' The silence becomes an ironic answer in itself and this brings Boet to the brink of his second moment of recognition: 'Is it me then? Am I the drought?' (p. 60).

As if answering himself, he puts his revolver to his head. Anker and Knaplat now repeatedly demand of him to pull the trigger. Eventually he does so.

In this scene we find the introjection of the externalised death drive of the previous scene: sadism becomes masochism—murder, suicide. This aggression towards the narcissistic self-image is energised by punitive libidinal drives. These drives are symbolised by Anker and Knaplat demanding his suicide. They represent desire for the discharge of the repressed and denied in conjunction with the command of Boet's superego to transmute his imaginary self.

As the suicide itself indicates, this transformation is always linked to a process of bodily violation—whether in reality or in fantasy. It is in the light of this process of destruction and transmutation that we are able to read Boet's desire: it is a desire which was all along subliminally at work in all his irrational decisions and actions to protect and enhance his narcissistic ego. What Boet *wanted*—an intact, unassailable God-like self-image and an unchangeable symbolic regime—was not what he desired. All along he desired the destruction of his imprisoning ego and the transformation of himself. This view accounts for all the self-defeating irrationalities of his decisions and actions. (Cf. Clément 1983:131, for desiring that which is not wanted.)

At the end of the play there is a moment where desire speaks by way of discontinuity, displacement and condensation: Knaplat transfers his ram-like mask from his head to Boet's and he and Anker carry Boet's corpse mockingly from the stage. Here we find Lacan's *pas-de-sens*, the emergence of a *new* meaning that borders on sense and non-sense: a meaning that shatters the stereotypical and reified meanings of the imaginary. This incident, together with the rain, the 'music of joy and liberation' (p. 61) and the joyful dancing of Knaplat and Anker, *just after Boet's suicide*, indicate that the specular imago of Boet is now shattered, that repression is lifted. Lacan's *jouissance* (1977:281) is experienced. *Jouissance*: a union and 'coming' of life beyond the structures and strictures of image and word. *Jouissance*: when after years of excruciating Karoo drought, it rains.

Denouement

Die koggelaar and most of the reviews of it—including this paper of mine—seems to me to be a castrative attack on the racist Afrikaner psyche. One wonders though if these attacks in the grip of the death drive directed at this image of the Afrikaner by way of the 'violence of the letter' (Derrida 1976:101) are not projections and exorcisms of the South African intellectual's guilt feelings about Apartheid. Do we not in this process create a new negative (racial!) other to stand in for our guilt and our own primordial lack and symbolic alienation?

The flip side of the coin is of course that these castrative writings—these pulsions of the death drive—are in themselves attempts within the symbolic register to transform and renew the race-bound psyche of the Afrikaner. The success of these attempts may be judged in the light of the democratisation of South Africa by the co-operation of Afrikaners and their once racial others during the early nineties.

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Medeas from Corinth and Cape-Town: Cross-Cultural Encounters, Theatre, and the Teaching Context

Miki Flockemann

Theatre is often viewed as an index of the processes of social and cultural transition, and not surprisingly, post-election South African theatre has come under scrutiny in the media recently. In a piece titled 'Looking Back in Nostalgia', Matthew Krouse rather bleakly refers to the 1994/5 FNB Vita National Theatre Awards as an opportunity to 'pay homage to founding fathers, and stroke their fledglings, encouraging them to follow traditional paths'. At the same time, he sees the trend towards revivals of works like the Junction Avenue Theatre Company's *Sophiatown* (1986) and Fugard/ Ntshona/Kani's collaborative work, *The Island* (1973), as performing a necessary function in preserving the memory of Apartheid struggles. Of *The Island* which was judged the Play of the Year, Derek Wilson says, 'It has become like fine wine which, having been laid down, has matured over the years', but Wilson (1995:8) wonders about the inclusion of the 'play within a play', a section of Sophocles' *Antigone*, suggesting that

> it could be argued that Fugard and Co [sic] had run out of original thoughts and ideas and had to borrow from outside to argue their point more successfully.

Just how far off the mark Wilson's observation is becomes evident in Nelson Mandela's account of what he took out of reading classic Greek plays while on Robben island, and his one memorable acting role on the island, 'that of Creon, the king of Thebes, in Sophocles' *Antigone*' (*Long Walk to Freedom,* 1994:540).

In the light of Krause and Wilson's comments it might appear incongruous that the award for the Production of a New South African Play went to another re-working of classical myth, *Medea,* directed by Mark Fleishman and Jenny Reznek, with the Jazzart dancers. However, speaking on the future of theatre in South Africa, Jay Pather of Jazzart claims that what is needed now is a radical redistribution of funding, that theatre venues should be accessible to all, and, tellingly, that critics should be gagged 'till they know what they are writing about'. According to Pather (1995:65):

> In times of transition we either make a courageous surge forward, shake off the ghosts, loosen up and make space for something to grow, or we take up all the safe options to protect ourselves from falling.

I will argue that far from being a 'safe option', the South African adaptation of the Medea myth serves as an example of a work that 'shake[s] off the ghosts' of the past even in the process of invoking them, and in so doing makes 'space for something to grow'. This production presents not just an innovative re-writing of the Medea myth, but gives physical shape to the performance of cross-cultural exchanges in post-election South Africa. More particularly, I hope to show how works like Fleishman/Jazzart's *Medea* can be useful for discussing issues associated with multilingualism and working in culturally heterogeneous teaching contexts. Here discussion draws on the experience of taking a group of postgraduate students to see the play during its original run in Cape Town. The focus will be on the way the performance unsettles familiar (mainly Western) notions about cultural and gender difference, family, motherhood, and romantic love. This, I suggest, provides the basis for enabling students to theorise their own responses to social transformation, which seems important, given the concern with the re-surgence of discourses of racial identity that have featured prominently both in the press and in academia. Also, seeing the performance shortly after the April 1994 election suggested that a work like Fleishman/Jazzart's *Medea* avoids some of the pitfalls associated with multiculturalism in the South African context.

Interestingly, Euripides' play has been receiving renewed attention in Europe and elsewhere recently and interpretations of *Medea* in which the 'barbaric' princess from Colchis kills her two young sons to punish her Greek husband Jason for wanting to send her back into exile have been used to explore the effects of personal betrayal and political exile in a variety of contemporary contexts. (Fleishman's idea for a South African *Medea* with Jazzart dancers as chorus was inspired by seeing an East European production at the Edinburgh Festival.) In her study of the dramatic versions of the Medea myth over the millennia, Betine Van Zyl-Smit points out that

the large number of divergent versions of Euripides' interpretation demonstrate that his *Medea* 'is not easily or unambiguously interpreted'. She mentions that Medea's position as a foreigner and a barbarian is the focus of a number of modern dramatists. In these modern versions, 'the heroine is no longer of a different and inferior culture, but of a different and despised race' (Van Zyl-Smith 1992:72). In her discussion of an earlier South African version of the play, Guy Butler's *Demea* (in which Medea is a Tembu princess and the Jason character a British officer during the nineteenth century Peninsula Wars), she quotes Butler's explanation that,

> In writing Demea, I have turned [Euripides'] *Medea* into a political allegory of the South African situation as I saw it, at the height of the idealistic Verwoerdian mania (Van Zyl-Smit 1992:75).

Butler's treatment of cultural and racial prejudice was however slated as a 'vastly dated and simplified view of the Great SA Race Problem' (De Kock in Van-Zyl Smit 1992:80)[1].

Far from being another political allegory of South African racial politics, Fleishman/Jazzart's production moves across space and time drawing on a variety of sources apart from Euripides, including Seneca and Appolonius of Rhodes. The gestural language of the chorus of dancers is used to give mainly non-verbal expression to the representation of Medea as 'other' (female and native), as well as to the emotional sub-text which leads to her horrific child-slaying. Significantly, Fleishman's script also draws on the cast's own linguistic and cultural contexts, and there is frequent code-switching between English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, Tamil, and creolised versions of some of these languages. This code-switching is incorporated into the body languages and hybrid dance styles that undercut conventional expectations in ways that are unsettling, but suggest possibilities for 'new' ways of reading such interactions. According to Fleishman (see Friedman 1996:30), the play is about

> two cultures that are incomprehensible to one another, about a woman who takes on the dressings of her lover's world and who, in the process, loses her own history and sense of self.

On the other hand, Jennie Rezneck, referring to the different languages and movement codes of the play says:

[1] Van Zyl-Smit describes the critically hostile reaction to Butler's play which was first performed in 1990, though written thirty years previously. For instance, Guy Willougby (1992:80) saw it as 'veritable proof of the deadness of a certain brand of starry-eyed liberalism in the "new South Africa"'.

> By articulating different languages the production attempts to come to terms with the issues of multi-culturalism and multilingualism .... Yet *Medea* remains an extremely personal story (quoted by Friedman 1996:30).

Relating Rezneck's comments to the teaching context, one notes that the shift from a political dispensation constructed in terms of binary categories has resulted in a concomitant shift from discourses of opposition to an emphasis on 'difference'. The debates around multiculturalism and the increasing interest in cultural studies in curriculum development in many English Departments, are of course also indicative of the challenges posed by the multilingual and culturally heterogeneous teaching context which is increasingly becoming the norm for South African universities. Visual and other media have been introduced as appropriate mediating texts because, as Jenny Williams (1992:25) points out, '"faulty English" may mirror the dynamics of the social context in which it has evolved'[2]. However, in promoting multiculturalism in curriculum development and teaching practice, care should be taken that this does not result in glossing over unequal power relations that might be masked by an emphasis on 'difference', reminiscent of the 'separate but (un)equal' apartheid paradigm.

While it is useful to note some of the critiques of multiculturalism from the radical left situated in metropolitan centres, it is also necessary to consider how we relate to these debates. For instance, in a forum discussion on multiculturalism and literary representation in the North American context, Henry Louis Gates comments on the concerns of cultural critics like E. San Juan and Hazel Carby about the way multiculturalism glosses over unequal power relations between racially inflected dominant and subordinate groups[3]. Gates (1993:6) takes issue with this, claiming that multiculturalism is 'concerned with the representation not of difference, but of cultural identities'. According to Gates (1993:12), there is more to be feared from the 'final solutions' of essentialist and fundamentalist culturalist arguments than from a multiculturalism which

> lets us remember that identities are always in dialogue, that they exist only in relation to one another, and they are, like everything else, sites of contest and negotiation, self-fashioning and refashioning.

[2] Williams (1992:25) argues that, because of its popular appeal, film 'might be the most effective form through which literary works could reach a wide public and at the same time act as subversive force against ruling hegemonies'.

[3] Gates (1993:7) quotes Carby's objection that: 'The paradigm of multiculturalism actually excludes the concept of dominant and subordinate cultures—either indigenous or migrant—and fails to recognize that the existence of racism relates to the possession and exercise of politico-economic control and authority and also to forms of resistance to the power of dominant social groups'.

On the other hand, Sara Suleri (1993:17) observes that:

> As the identity formation of the nation state becomes problematic, the question of diverse cultural locations self-evidently gains in critical significance.

In South Africa there have indeed been some rather unexpected cultural mutations and appropriations, such as the much publicised transformation of previously vilified Springbok rugby team with its apartheid sports associations, into the popularly embraced 'amabokoboko'. At the same time, however, there has been little change in 'identity formation' for people identified as 'white' and 'black' living in the rural heartlands[4].

This is demonstrated in an anecdote involving the Hearts and Eyes Theatre Collective who undertook a project called *Journey*, which involved using material based on their experience of a literal 5,000 kilometre journey to the 1995 Grahamstown Festival. According to director Peter Hayes, although the play was never intended as a polemic, 'an emerging theme is that our one-year-old democracy has barely reached the dry outer reaches of South Africa'. One of the actors, Jay Pather, mentions that

> in an all-white school in Namaqualand the only coloured pupil was living in a room at the back of the school while the other students were living in a hostel (quoted in Pearce 1995:3).

While mindful of these incongruities, my reading of the re-positionings of identity as performed in culturally syncretic works such as Fleishman/Jazzarts's *Medea*, is informed by the notion that:

> Instead of situating literature and other arts as both marginal to, and reifying of, cultural practices, aesthetic forms might be taken as central to the epistemological and ethical possibilities of culture's emergence (Stewart 1993:14).

It is at moments of transition which put pressure on existing political, social, cultural and gendered identities, that cross-cultural exchanges should be foregrounded in our readings of cultural production.

Theatre, as Temple Hauptfleisch (1989) observes, is an ideal medium for representing the polydialectical urban South African experience. The point has been made that as many of our students speak four to five languages, 'It's time to stop talking about students' "language problem" when we mean "problems with English"' (Cornell 1994:37). However, in view of some of the questions raised by multilingualism and multiculturalism,

[4] While the terms 'black' or 'white', as Paul Gready (1994:164) points out, have in the past signified 'ideological identities', the new democracy has not yet managed to obliterate racial coding.

it seems to me that what we need is not a multicultural, but a cross-cultural model, in which students are made aware of factors that cut across the familiar race/class/gender dichotomies, such as geographical location, rural and urban experience, age, and of course language and the cultural values and belief systems that are associated with the variety of languages spoken in the Western Cape.

The use of multilingual texts and performance contexts offers scope for a non-hierarchical learning situation where 'knowledge' is expanded to include oral and vernacular knowledges often not validated in academic discourses. This is achieved via information that students themselves present to the group or class, so undoing the 'top-down' relationship between lecturer and student. Such information is not limited to familiarity with other languages, but also applies to regional dialects, and to place. In other words, students act as 'cultural insiders' at different levels[5]. Another aspect that will be considered is the way the performance context serves to free students to consider alternatives to given or traditional assumptions about, for example, gendered and racial identities, through seeing the way 'roles' are subverted, literally, in performance. In using the multilingual performance text, ideas and concepts are dealt with not only at an intellectual level, but also given a human shape in performance, thereby including an 'affective' or emotional dimension in the response. In addition, the use of 'voices' in dramatic dialogue encourages a reading that takes cognisance of the way information is interpreted and presented discursively by voices that are engaged in conversation or debate. In other words, it encourages argument as a strategy for communicating and organising ideas.

The University of the Western Cape, like most of South Africa's historically black universities, does not have a drama department. Nevertheless, as suggested earlier, the move towards cultural studies in many English departments has resulted in attempts to engage with recent cultural production at a variety of levels. This 'case study' concerns the experience of a group of postgraduate students, for some of whom attending a performance at a venue like the Nico Arena theatre in Cape Town was itself a new experience. As Fleishman and Jenny Reznek use the theatrical effects associated with physical theatre in their production, students were encouraged to comment on the function of the 'affect' in their responses to the work. Physical theatre aims to confront and often shock spectators at a deeply emotional level, and this was achieved in this production by loud and sudden drum beats, abrupt scene changes, and, above all, the physicality of the performance. The close proximity of the actors to the spectators resulted

[5] The author wishes to convey her thanks to 1994 Honours and Masters students for their contributions in these seminars.

in expressions of discomfort like, 'It's all a bit much!' or alternatively, 'Absolutely stunning/exhilarating!'. Some might consider this out of keeping with the formality of the academic discourse of literary studies; such strategies of avant-garde theatre are after all designed to effect what Christopher Innes (1994) calls 'spiritual', not intellectual, transformation in their spectators. Nevertheless, it can be argued that, particularly at post-graduate level, such 'discomfort' can become a catalyst that enables students to engage in new ways with texts that are produced during a period of social and political transition.

Significantly, one of the features of the 'new' South African theatre has been an emphasis on dance drama which employs a syncretism of African and Western aesthetics, and by focusing on gestural codes, loosens the grip of the realist tradition that has dominated much of the cultural production of the last two decades. Moreover, also noticeable is an emphasis on the body itself as site of contending identities[6]. Commenting on the important educational function of groups like The First Physical Theatre Company, Gary Gordon argues that the focus on the body is politically significant because traditionally, particularly in Western society, the body has been ignored in education: 'it has been denied recognition alongside the intellectual and the scientific as worthwhile pursuit' (quoted in Handley 1995:55). This somewhat unorthodox, and to some no doubt dangerously 'unintellectual' approach, provides challenges for the lecturer who finds herself placed in the same situation as the students: she has read Euripides' *Medea*, but she is as unfamiliar with this particular interpretation and performance as the students are at the moment of reception. At a recent conference on African literature in South Africa, Mbulelo Mzamane (1995) argued that the post-election period calls not for an 'exclusive' new canon of African texts, but rather for a comparative (inclusive) study of differently situated texts; this becomes an important aspect in reading local South African and African literatures. On the other hand, Temple Hauptfleisch (1992) has suggested that African theatre has more in common with ancient Greek theatre than with European theatre, and this comment provides a useful point of departure for discussion of the *Medea* performance. Similarly, Michael Picardie (1991) describes South African theatre as predominantly Afro-Western theatre, with an inevitably hybrid tradition.

Getting students to identify the syncretism of languages and theatrical

[6] An important role in performing some of these cultural transformations has been played by, for instance, Jay Pather and Alfred Hinkel of Jazzart, Peter Hayes of Hearts and Eyes Theatre Collective and Prof Gary Gordon of The First Physical Theatre Company.

styles obviously works best within a culturally heterogeneous teaching context. In other words, the perceived language 'problem' is translated into the facilitating teaching context. As suggested earlier, the different knowledges available result in a shared exchange of information: someone will recognise that Medea's father is speaking Tamil, not gibberish as others might have thought, and someone else will note that a traditional Xhosa *isibongo* or praisesong is sung to Aetes, Medea's father, on Jason's arrival. In other words, the piece uses different language and cultural contexts in a way that refuses 'fixing' in a particular colonial context. Cellular phones and divorce settlements (for the scenes in Corinth) co-exist with the rituals of ancient cultures (suggestive of the Khoisan or Incas) in the scenes on the island of Colchis. Jason's spectacular arrival by parachute, wearing a suit, is made all the more startling by the actor, Kurt Wurtzman's amazingly tall physical presence, whereas Aetes is played and danced 'exotically' by Jay Pather, himself of Indian descent.

Traditionally, the opening of the play sets the scene for Medea's bitter emotional turmoil as she discovers Jason's betrayal of her love. Here one of the issues that engaged students was the use of 'Kaaps', a Cape version of Afrikaans, by the nurse who accompanies Medea into exile. Students who as cultural insiders felt closest to this language were initially concerned that Kaaps was once again being used as a language of ridicule, in keeping with the often comic caricature of 'the Cape coloured' in the popular imagination—even though the context here was a serious one. In fact, the nurse's first words to Medea who lies weeping on the sand are in Kaaps. Her words, 'Staan op, meisie, jy's a Colchian' caused a *frisson* in the audience, as Medea had just been speaking Standard English (the equivalent of Greek) to Jason and Creon, and this address in Kaaps suggests her identification with a dispossessed people, whose language is a South African creole. Concrete expression was given to this when the actress playing Medea (Bo Petersen) removed her (Westernised) straighthaired wig, to show her shorn (indigenous/Khoi/Colchian) head beneath. In keeping with Jazzart's concern with the 'play' of identity, Bo Petersen, in terms of previous racial classification laws, is 'white', while Dawn Landsberg who plays the nurse has the high cheekbones associated with the original Khoi inhabitants. In the crucial scene where the nurse announces the horrifying death (by Medea's magical poison) of her rival, the language switches between colloquial English and Afrikaans. This mixing of languages occasioned heated debate, with some students feeling that it undermined the seriousness of the incident described here. However, in the original Greek play, it was a convention that horrifying events were not presented on stage, but reported by an ordinary person, such as a messenger or shepherd, whose words would have an added poignancy by their colloquial vernacular quality. It could be argued that this 'mixture'

of languages was used not as a comic dialect, but to give Kaaps the status of a language in its own right; after all, Kaaps is widely in use on the Cape Flats where the University of the Western Cape (UWC) is located.

These debates around language highlighted the students' own preconceptions about dominant and standard languages in relation to vernacular usages. This lead to discussion of what languages are appropriate to particular contexts—but without falling back into the binary trap of standard and non-standard, dominant and subordinate languages. At the same time, one should not see this as a retreat into relativism or an 'anything goes' mode; on the contrary, such discussions emphasise the use of appropriate language registers. Interestingly, Medea's ambivalent status is suggested in her ability to speak Greek/English. Acting as go-between in a scene that suggests the unequal barter between the colonised (Aetes and the Colchians) and the coloniser (Jason), she betrays her father and brother by helping Jason to steal the golden fleece because of her passionate infatuation with him.

Students were asked to explore the way gender and race categories are destabilised in performance and how this is linked to the multilingual context. For instance, the non-gender-specific clothes worn by the dancers ranged from sinisterly uniform trenchcoats with fashionable Doc Martens boots for the scenes on Corinth, to loin cloths or exotic costumes for the scenes in Colchis. These stark contrasts were, however, subverted by the thick layer of sea sand covering the stage area throughout, and, as some students suggested, Medea's awkward gait over this surface in her contemporary highheeled shoes suggested her uncomfortable status in the Greek/Western setting. On Colchis, however, she moves with speed and grace in the 'natural' environment of the beach. Significantly, Jason's rejection of her is represented in terms of familiar racial stereotyping concerning her appearance, smell, and hair. A comic touch (and there are several) is the way she frequently checks her make-up in a little pocket mirror while in Corinth; yet at the end these 'dressings of her lover's world' are discarded as she reverts to her regal Colchian dress when she prepares for her revenge. At the same time, her ambivalent identity in Corinth is suggested by the fact that her one son is 'white' and the other is 'black'. A further incongruous touch is the way the boys are clad in the ubiquitous grey flannel shorts and white shirts of the typical South African schoolboy, until finally she dresses them in loincloths in preparation for what appears to be a sacrifice.

In the play different cultural identities are represented by means of the dancers' individual physiques, in contrast to the homogeneity of body shape associated with conventional dance companies. This lead to discussions around the concept of 'the body' which were not limited to a Foucauldian

analysis of power and the socially constructed body, but focused also on living, performing bodies. Referring to the body as receptor of cultural signs and symbols, Lliane Loots (1995:51) says that given the power dynamics operating in South African society,

> this concept of the body as receptor has important implications for how women (and men) construct the use of their bodies; not only within day to day living but in the art that they generate.

For instance, in this production bodies move interchangeably: women lift men and other women, men lift men and women—yet, when the performers' bodies are not hidden underneath trenchcoats, their physical differences are emphasised.

Jazzart has been described as a controversial company in search of a 'democratic dance' which uses dance as an educational and self-help tool in a variety of communities (Sichel 1994:50). The particular relevance of this to us at UWC is the emphasis on destabilising (en)gendered cultural identities during the current period of reconstruction. Here the interaction of bodies with different physical features become 'signifiers' in this process. Significantly, the theory behind Jazzart's performance techniques has parallels with the claims made by Gordon on the political significance of the body, namely, that social stresses and strains and tensions are manifested in the body of the individual. If, however, this body is freed through movement,

> that is, if this body is made to realize what it can do, this automatically goes to the mind. Once people are confident about moving their bodies, they will also be confident about other aspects of their lives and take control over their lives (Quoted by Schechner 1991:14)[7].

The small group situation where one can engage in intense debate following upon a joint excursion to a performance (which then becomes the cultural text under discussion) provides a useful forum for generating discussion around some of the issues raised by the cross-cultural encounters

[7] Richard Schechner is quoting a Community Arts Project document on Jazzart policy formulated by Jay Pather and Alfred Hinkel. At that time Jazzart received no government funding; however, in 1992 it joined forces with Capab. The company is again under threat in the light of the recent funding cuts which have resulted in Capab disbanding its drama department. Nevertheless, Jazzart has embarked on extensive tours of the townships and schools. *Unclenching the Fist*, an educational dance drama on sexual harassment and rape, was presented at UWC during 1994. Obviously, watching *Medea* at the Nico Arena theatre was a different experience from *Unclenching the Fist*, which was presented, appropriately, in a lecture venue during lunchtime, with interruptions by incoming students, technical hitches, etc. Also, in keeping with its educational thrust, this show was introduced by members of the Gender Equity Unit and Nicro.

both as performed in the play, and in the teaching context. Moreover, the affective response elicited by aspects of physical theatre functions as a vehicle for defamiliarisation, enabling students to discuss the controversial issue of racism not just at an academic, structural level, but also at a deeply personal level. This, suggests South African cultural theorist, Neville Alexander, is a vital aspect of working towards a non-racial society[8]. At the same time, as cultural insiders with access to different types of knowledge, students can contribute to the material that is being discussed in lectures. In the process students become active participants, rather than imbibing knowledge passively. The lecturing context becomes a space where 'other' voices are heard and noted, but also examined critically within an academic framework. Cross-cultural texts like Fleishman/Jazzart's *Medea* thus offer scope for reaching/teaching across a variety of cultural backgrounds in order to challenge given assumptions about knowledge, power, (en)gendered identity and culture. More importantly, this should enable students to theorise their own readings of texts, as informed by an integrated response to a variety of aesthetic forms, and not limited to 'prescribed works' to be studied in the classroom.

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[8] This was a comment made during a radio programme on racism (SAFM AM Live October 5, 1995). More recently, at a forum on racism and the debates around what has been termed perceived 'Colourdism' at the University of the Western Cape, Alexander suggested that one cannot deal with racism only at a structural or administrative level. Each individual needs to confront socially constructed racial prejudice at a psychic level as well. In a response titled, 'We are never only South Africans' (*The Cape Times* 4 April 1996), Zimitri Erasmus takes issue with Alexander's concern with ethnic identity, and that 'calling oneself coloured is inherently racist'. Says Erasmus, we should acknowledge 'that coloured identities are historically specific social constructions which have real effects in everyday life' (see also articles by Wilmot James in *The Cape Times* 26 March and 4 April 1996).

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Beneficial Parasite to Heroic Executioner: South Africa in the Literature of Mozambique

Richard Bartlett

This article sets out to examine the relationship between apartheid and representations of South Africa in the literature of Mozambique. The reason for choosing South Africa as a focus of interest in the literature of Mozambique is that images of South Africa arise with striking frequency. South Africa is used as a symbol, as an idea which is notable for its pervasiveness and the shape it takes. South Africa is seldom mentioned as the country with the name Africa do Sul. It is rather only ever referred to in terms of the mines of Johannesburg or as the land of death and riches. In the literature of southern Africa this is not unusual, but the object here is not to simply list the ways in which Mozambique has referred to South Africa. Through their constant references to South Africa, Mozambican writers have succeeded in creating an Other. Using the concepts of post-colonial literary theory it will be shown how Mozambique has attempted to make South Africa understandable and controllable through limiting the vocabulary with which to define the country. The title of this paper is an attempt to illustrate the contradictory nature of attitudes to South Africa and the changing nature of those attitudes over time.

Beyond simply using discourse to understand South Africa and its effect on Mozambique, the creation of a South African Other was tangent to the development of a nationalist discourse in Mozambican literature. Tangent because South Africa was not the central focus, it was merely a means by which the problems, aspirations and dynamics facing the people of southern

Mozambique could be illustrated. The South African mining economy controlled the lives of many people in Mozambique yet it remained distant, unknown and virtually invisible.

Before examining the creation of an Other in South Africa it is necessary to specify the theoretical parameters. The use of post-colonial theory to discuss relations between South Africa and Mozambique could be viewed as one of the ultimate forms of repossession. The theory of post-colonialism has been used to understand a literature not created in Europe, yet dominated by Europe. Europeans, entering the strange lands of what is understood today as the post-colonial world, found it necessary to use their language to define the new worlds they were inhabiting and dominating. In defining they created an Other of the people and lands being conquered. This pigeon-holing of the new worlds supposedly explained the Europeans' natural superiority and justified their conquering of the new worlds. An Us-Other dichotomy dominated colonial language. While South Africa is portrayed as Other the language used in this representation is not as reliant on the well-known binary oppositions as traditional colonial discourse has been. Opposites such as light/darkness, white/black, adult/childlike, rational/emotional, advanced/backward and intelligent/retarded are not found in contrasts of Mozambique with South Africa.

The use of post-colonial terminology without reference to a colonial centre must imply a substitute centre and the Rand could be seen as the economic centre of the southern African region, particularly in the period after the discovery of gold when people from throughout the region flocked to Johannesburg in search of work and money. The substitute centre of the Rand is particularly relevant to the case of southern Mozambique. The mines of Johannesburg provided work opportunities for men from southern Mozambique where the only other opportunities for employment within the colonial economy were as forced labour for the Portuguese colonial government or agriculture which was particularly badly affected by natural disasters and the drop in prices of produce in the first decades of this century. The Portuguese colonial government in Lourenço Marques also directly benefited from ensuring a steady supply of migrant labourers as the amount of rail traffic from South Africa passing through the port was directly proportional to the numbers of workers travelling in the opposite direction (Katzenellenbogen 1982:50). The Portuguese government came to benefit further in the 1920s when a percentage of Mozambican worker's wages was submitted directly to Lourenço Marques in gold (Newitt 1995:496).

South Africa has played a central role in the history of southern Mozambique since the second half of the nineteenth century. The power South Africa has exerted over Mozambique is reflected in the moving of the Mozambican capital from the northern island of Mozambique to Lourenço

Marques in 1898. The growth of the colonial backwater of Lourenço Marques was largely due to the increase in traffic and trade through this port to service the growth of the Witwatersrand. Work on the gold mines of the Rand came to be an accepted part of life for the people of southern Mozambique from the turn of the century.

These snippets of Mozambican history cannot do justice to the dynamics of migrant labour between Mozambique and South Africa, they merely sketch a necessary framework upon which the development of literature in Mozambique can be attached.

Returning to post-colonial literary theory and taking Johannesburg as the centre which dominates the Mozambican periphery it is difficult to continue further with the analogy unless it is completely subverted. South Africa had no need to limit and define Mozambique through language and ideology, that was being done by the Portuguese colonial government. The Mozambicans had no need to 'write back' to the economic centre (being the Rand) as they were more concerned with the centre in Lisbon which controlled the lives of more Mozambicans in a more immediate fashion through tools such as taxes and forced labour. The literature of Mozambique which begins the creation of an Other, of an easily definable South Africa, is a literature which began in the second decade of this century and was written by Mozambicans rather than by Portuguese colonials. Thus while the victims of Portuguese colonialism, albeit an educated elite, were creating a national identity through literature and 'writing back' to the metropole, fighting against their label of Other, they were also laying the seeds for the creation of another Other, which can be labelled *Jone*.

All the relationships between colonised other and colonial centre would seem to deny the ability of, or necessity for, Mozambicans to create an Other unrelated to their immediate political and social circumstances. Initially this was the case and the literature of Mozambique can be classified in traditional post-colonial temporal structures of assimilation and appropriation (Ashcroft et al. 1989:38). But from about the late 1940s and early 1950s references to South Africa in the literature of Mozambique written in Portuguese came to arise frequently and almost exclusively in relation to the mines of Johannesburg and the culture of migrant labour. The frequency with which the mines of South Africa came to be mentioned in Mozambican literature can be explained by the educated elite, the authors and poets, being concentrated in Lourenço Marques. Even educated Mozambicans from other parts of the country eventually gravitated to the capital because the educational institutions and employment opportunities were concentrated there.

But more than merely being in constant contact, or having grown up with the effects of migrant labour and South Africa's economic muscle on

Mozambique, writers were also expressing an aspect of life in southern Mozambique which had been in train since the second half of the nineteenth century. Fátima Mendonça (1988) divides Mozambican literature before independence into three periods: 1925 to the mid 1940s, mid 1940s to 1964 and 1964 to 1975. The first period was dominated by an *assimilado* elite. Assimilados, as the word implies, were those Africans who in effect became Portuguese in language, dress, religion and way of life (until the 1960s Africans had to carry a certificate to prove they had been assimilated). The literature until the mid 1940s was one of an affirmation of the beauty of Africa. It is only in the second stage mentioned by Mendonça that references of South Africa emerge with such clarity. This second stage is determined by the rise of a nationalist ideology within Mozambique and, significantly, the third stage corresponds to that of the armed struggle waged by Frelimo against the colonial government.

The link between the rise of nationalism in southern Mozambique and the depiction in literature of South Africa is not co-incidental. Mozambicans had been tramping to the cane fields of Natal, the diamond fields of Kimberley and the gold mines of the Rand since the 1850s. As the process of proletarianisation developed and Mozambicans came to spend longer periods in the closed compounds of the gold mines, many became literate and carried home not just consumer goods but the seeds of European education and religion (Harries 1994:217,229). Thus South Africa, or *Jone* was a part of the discourse, part of life, in southern Mozambique for about 50 years before it came to represented in a literature written in Portuguese. This gap can be explained, as has been mentioned, in terms of the educated elite in Lourenço Marques focusing on the more immediate colonial circumstances. Then there is also the relative dearth of literature from this early period (and the corresponding lack of research).

But how exactly was South Africa represented?

José Craveirinha, in the poem 'Mamana Saquina' from the 1960s tells the story of João Tavasse who went to the mines and never came home.

Mamana Saquina (José Craveirinha)

Night and day
the soul of Mamana Saquina swathed itself in nightmare
and buried itself in ten hectares of flowering cotton

(And João Tavasse
never came back to the depot)
Belching steam the miners' train pulled out
and in the pistons a voice sang

João-Tavasse-went-to-the-mines
João-Tavasse-went-to-the-mines
João-Tavasse-went-to-the-mines
João-Tavasse-went-to-the-mines

And Mamana Saquina mourned her son
scratched maize from the ground
and achieved the miracle of one hundred and fifty-
five bales of cotton (Chipasula 1985:105).

Another poem by Craveirinha in a similar vein is 'Mamparra M'gaiza'.

Mamparra M'gaiza (José Craveirinha)

The cattle is selected
counted, marked
and gets on the train, stupid cattle.

In the pen
the females stay behind
to breed new cattle.

The train is back from migoudini
and they come rotten with diseases, the old cattle of Africa
oh, and they've lost their heads, these cattle m'gaiza (Chipasula 1985:106).

The words *mamparra* and *magaiça* are from the mines, but are also particularly Mozambican. Mamparra, in contemporary usage (especially in South Africa) has come to mean 'fool', but initially meant a first-time migrant or new-comer to the mines. Magaiça is a returning migrant.

Noemia de Sousa who left Mozambique in 1951 and has not published any poetry since then, represents South Africa in the poem 'Magaiça' as follows:

Magaiça (Noemia de Sousa)

- Where has it left you,
that bundle of dreams, Magaiça
You're carrying cases full of the false glitter
of the remnants of the false culture
of the compound of the Rand.

And, stunned
Magaiça lit a lamp

to search for lost illusions,
for his youth and his health, which stay buried
deep in the mines of Johannesburg.
Youth and health,
the lost illusions
which will shine like stars
on some Lady's neck in some City's night (Chipasula 1985:120).

Then there is Fernando Ganhão, who later became a cabinet minister in the Frelimo government who, in 'Poem', tells of the plight of the migrant worker:

Poem (Fernando Ganhão)

I bought my passage for twopence
(cry of the Chope man
who pays his way
but cannot come back)

In the Rand the mines are dark
and dense with bitterness (Searle 1982:58).

These poets are examining the realities confronting Mozambique. South Africa remains a distant, almost unknown place represented in terms of darkness, deceit, loss and suffering. This might seem a particularly biased view of the effects of industrialisation on the people of Mozambique but it is not unrealistic. In the first decade of this century the death toll on the gold mines due to underground accidents, pthisis, TB and pneumonia was close to 50 for every 1000 workers (Harries 1994:190). Today the mines get quite distressed if the death toll exceeds 1 per 1000 workers.

These poems quoted above must not be seen in isolation but must be considered as part of the nationalist movement. Apart from migrant labour on the mines, other dismal options facing Mozambicans were forced labour, or *chibalo*, for the Portuguese government or plantation owners, forced growing of certain cash crops, and being sent into exile by the government as forced labour. All of these are among the subjects of the poetry from this period and were part of the process of creating a national or Mozambican identity from within the borders of Portuguese colonial discourse.

But this view of South Africa in the literature of Mozambique begs the question as to whether the Mozambicans are creating an Other of South Africa or merely confronting the problems of their own country? The contradictory nature of attitudes to South Africa and the frequency with which it is mentioned point to an attempt by Mozambicans to make the

power South Africa wields understandable and controllable. Thus creation of an Other is almost inevitable.

The extent of the contradictory nature with which *Jone* is understood is evident in a short story by Calane da Silva entitled 'Xicandarinha' (1987). In this story uncle Dinasse returns from the Transvaal. He is welcomed joyously by the children as they know he usually brings presents when returning from his work on the mines. This time, a large parcel wrapped in brown paper reveals a large, shining aluminium kettle, the *xicandarinha*. It will be the last present the family is to receive from uncle Dinasse because the sickness he has in his chest is getting worse and he will not be able to work on the mines again. The xicandarinha is used later to provide tea for all the people who have come to his funeral.

Thus while the mines have allowed uncle Dinasse to provide gifts they have also taken his life away. But the binary nature of *Jone* goes far beyond this. Firstly there is the identity attached to the kettle through the name xicandarinha. The gift from *Jone* is given a particularly Mozambican identity. In the glossary Da Silva explains that the word xicandarinha has as its root the Gujarati word *kandari*. The nasalised suffix *-inha* is from Portuguese and the prefix *Xi-* is from Tsonga. Thus while the gift might carry with it the lives of Mozambican miners it is given an identity which is wholly Mozambican.

Beyond the process of naming, the xicandarinha in the story by Da Silva comes to represent a symbol of the ability of the Mozambican people to survive, to resist and develop a nationalist identity. One of the episodes in the story describes a police raid on the illegal pub, a shebeen, in the township of Minkhokwene adjacent to Lourenço Marques. In the aftermath of the raid the xicandarinha is found to have two bullet holes through it and could only be half-filled with water. But it continued to provide boiling water for the shebeen; it had not been destroyed. It is eventually a natural disaster, a tropical storm which razes the township, which leads to the demise of the xicandarinha. It disappears and is never seen again. In disappearing, but not being physically destroyed the xicandarinha has become a symbol of resistance:

> The xicandarinha has neither arms nor a head to defend itself and fight. We do my children. Courage! Tomorrow we will begin a new life[1].

The South African import as a symbol of a growing nationalist resistance to Portuguese colonialism has a parallel in the education migrant workers managed to acquire in the mine hostels. They often brought home a basic

[1] A xicandarinha não tinha braços nem cabeça para se defender e lutar. Nos temos meus filhos. Coragem! Amanhã começaremos nova vida (Da Silva 1987:26).

literacy and a desire for education which mission schools in Mozambique were able to fulfil, at least for the younger generation if not for the returning migrants.

South Africa is usually reflected in much simpler terms. In the novel *Portagem* (Gateway) written by Orlando Mendes and published in 1964, the workers on a coal mine in Mozambique aspire to progress to the mines of Kaniamato across the border where it is possible to end a contract with many Pounds in one's pocket (Mendes 1981:32). But together with the riches comes a sacrifice in leaving one's home. This aspect is evident in a story by Aníbal Aleluia called 'E Jona Sitoi foi para o Rande' (And Jona Sitoi went to the Rand) (Aleluia 1987:35).

Jona Sitoi is a rich and successful peasant farmer on the banks of the Limpopo river. He has adopted Christianity and is the pride of the colonial authorities who show him off as an example of the success of the civilising mission of Portuguese. He is ostracised for rejecting his heritage and is warned that he will suffer for this. The rains come and don't stop. The Limpopo comes down in flood and everything Jona Sitoi owns is destroyed.

> The next day Jona left for the Rand. The prophecy of Samo Bila came true: the spirits of the ancestors had won ...[2].

In both of these instances, Jona Sitoi and the land of Kaniamato, the mines of that other land across the border are a last resort, almost when all hope is lost. But at the same time they are implicitly a saviour; when the land deserts one there is always the possibility of continuing with help from the Rand.

All the examples mentioned so far are taken from the period before independence which coincides with the rise of Apartheid and its healthiest years of the 1960s and early 1970s. Taking this into consideration it is significant that the racial policies of apartheid are not an issue in Mozambican representations of South Africa. This is partially explainable by the fact that Mozambicans were faced by an equally vicious racism, albeit with a slightly different means of application. That the racism of South Africa was slightly different to that of the Portuguese is mentioned in passing in the story 'Godido' by João Dias. This story was written in the 1940s and published posthumously in 1951. Describing a railway conductor, Dias (1988:28) says he came

> ... from a Brazil of humanity without having lived in the North American cities or known the disorder of India or of Mister Smuts' Africa ...[3].

[2] No dia seguinte, Jona partia para o Rande. A profecia de Samo Bila realizara-se: os manes tinham vencido (Aleluia 1987:43).

[3] ... la de um Brasil de humanidade sem ter vivido nas cidades norte-americanas nem conhecido os desconcertos da India ou da Africa do senhor Smuts ... (Dias 1988:28).

This general lack of emphasis on racism in South Africa illustrates how such portrayals fit into the rise of a specifically Mozambican literature during the era of rising nationalism in that country. The Mozambicans are not trying to point a finger at South Africa, they are rather trying to understand and define their own experiences. South Africa is not acknowledged specifically as a geographically definable space. It is rather an idea into which men, and only men, disappear. They often emerge again bearing gifts, riches and diseases and ultimately death. Thus just as South Africa cannot be known or comprehensively understood by the people who remained behind while males members of families went off to work on the mines so *Jone* is represented as a place which saps the strength of Mozambique, deprives the men of the usefulness of their lives and leaves them only with trinkets, the visible wealth of South Africa.

Thus an Other is created. Out of the nationalist definition of self against the Portuguese colonial denial of black humanity and intelligence comes the depiction of Mozambican males as often willing victims of the magnet of *Jone* which swallows the wealth of Mozambique and spits out shells of men carrying trinkets.

This discourse continues into the era of Mozambican independence. Southern Mozambique continued to rely on the mines of South Africa for a significant portion of its national income. The discourse, and representations of *Jone* in Mozambican literature, now come to take on a more specifically racial tone and the beneficial aspect of work on the mines is hidden.

This transition is ideally exemplified in Da Silva's book of short stories *Xicandarinha na Lenha do Mundo* (Kettle in the World's Firewood). The kettle from South Africa as symbol of resistance and hope has been discussed. In the second half of the book is a collection of stories written after independence. The second story from which the book takes its title, 'Lenha do Mundo', is set in the period eight years after independence. The story deals with the problems and trials of life in the socialist state. Work in South Africa is mentioned as a means of escaping the hardship:

> You, who are already called mister José Tiko, will agree to be called a boy once again? Realise that this story of wanting to go to South Africa like that, the end, with many others, recruited by them so you can come to kill us here? Think hard José ...[4].

The double-edged sword of South Africa is also mentioned in the title story

[4] Tu, que ate ja te chamam senhor José Tiko, vais aguentar ser chamado outro vez de rapaz? Olha que essa historia de quereres ir para a Africa do Sul assim, acabas, como muitos outros, recrutado por eles para nos vires matar aqui! Pensa bem José ... (Da Silva 1987:77).

of Suleiman Cassamo's collection of short stories *O Regresso do Morto* (The Return of the Dead One).

> While still young, Moises looked with admiration at the magaizas getting off the train at Manhiça, suitcases full, eyes shining with pride. And the 'Land of the Rand' began to attract him.
> - I am not going to school anymore—he decided—The teacher hits too much.
> - You will become a donkey carrying sacks—sentenced his mother.
> - Not a donkey, a miner. Why must I study[5]?

South Africa and the evil it embodies are emphasised to a far greater extent in the literature of independent Mozambique at the same time as acknowledging the pervasive necessity of South Africa and its wealth in the lives of Mozambicans. In the short novel *Malungate* by Albino Magaia, published in 1987, the protagonist of the novel describes as one of the laws of life in Mozambique that a man is born, grows up, goes to South Africa, marries, gives grandchildren to his parents, ... gets old and dies (Magaia 1987:22). This is reinforced by the men who go to *Jone* with the attitude that, 'A man who does not go to the mines is not a man' (Magaia 1987:24)[6]. But the contrary argument is also raised; as one of the characters puts it: 'I do not want to go to South Africa. To have a leg chopped off?' (Magaia 1987:25)[7].

Another example of the pervasiveness of *Jone* in independent Mozambique is Lilia Momplé's story 'O Caniço' in which a father returns from *Jone* with the expected presents but also with a well-advanced case of tuberculosis which he passes on to his daughter. Father returns to the mines and dies shortly afterwards of TB, but the daughter survives (Momplé 1988: 22). Although the story is set in colonial Mozambique it was written a decade after independence and the portrayal of South Africa fits into the mould of South Africa as invisible, destructive Other.

All these examples from post-1975 Mozambique are significant for the way in which delimitation of South Africa has become far more precise. The ambiguity of wealth versus death is presented as heavily weighted in favour of the latter. At the same time as becoming more precise the representations

[5] Ainda pequeno, Moises via com admiração os magaiça desembarcando no comboio da Manhiça, as malas cheias, os olhos biilhantes de orgulho. E o 'Pias do Rand' começou atrai-lo.
- Nao vou mais a escola—decidiu—O professor bate muito.
- Vais ser burro de carregar sacos—sentenciava a mae.
- Burro nao, mineiro. Estudar para que (Cassamo 1989:72)?

[6] —Um homem que não foi às minas não é homem (Magaia 1987:24).

[7] —Eu não quero ir para a África do Sul. Para ir cortar a perna? (Magaia 1987:24).

of South Africa also become more diverse. This is a function of historical circumstance as the South African apartheid state was ideologically opposed to the Marxist government of Mozambique. *Jone* came to be far more than merely a place of mines, it became a place of apartheid as well. But apartheid was depicted, not as might be expected, through portrayal of the dehumanising violence of the system, but rather through heroic struggle against that system.

In the poem 'Since my friend Nelson Mandela Went to Live on Robben Island' the poet José Craveirinha subverts the roles of oppressor and oppressed with Nelson Mandela sentencing John Vorster 'to everlasting prison ... /on a tranquil island' and then deciding whether to go to the movies in Pretoria or Soweto with his wife (Mendonça & Saute 1993:205)[8]. Mandela continues to feature prominently, as in the poem 'No sul nada de novo' (In the south nothing is new) where 'Mandela/continues to dream with a star' and 'On Robben/ there is a non-racist militant who is dying/and the survivors chant Nkosi Sikelele' (Mendonça & Saute 1993:9)[9]. And his '... name flies in the rock/between the hand and the police Casspir/forming an arc of freedom' in the poem 'Mandela' by Leite de Vasconcelos (Mendonça & Saute 1993:282)[10].

But the struggle against apartheid includes more than just Mandela. The poet Gulamo Khan, who died in the plane crash which killed Samora Machel in 1986, in the poem 'O Homem Riu ...' (The Man Laughed ...) tells of a black man who, on being spat on by a white man, simply '... laughed/in the heart of Pretoria (Mendonça & Saute 1993:145)[11]. Another frequently mentioned South African is Benjamin Moloise, an ANC guerrilla hanged by the South African government.

In prose Pedro Chissano has written an allegory entitled 'O Arco e a Bengala' (The Ark and the Walking Stick) (Chissano 1986:46) which tells

[8] ... prisão perpetua ...
numa ilha tranquila (Mendonça & Saute 1993:205).

[9] Mandela
continua a sonhar com uma estrela
....
Em Robben
há um militante não racista que morre
e os sobreviventes entoam Nkosi Sekelela (Mendonça & Saute 1993:9).

[10] ... nome voa numa pedra
Entre a mão eo o Casspir da polícia
desenha o arco da liberdade (Mendonça & Saute 1993:282).

[11] ... ria
No coração de Pretória (Mendonça & Saute 1993:145).

the story of the southern tip of Africa which detaches itself from the continent to preserve its whiteness. A storm sinks the breakaway country and the only two who survive are the king's daughter and his slave who become lovers. They are rescued by a lone warrior who lives in the Kalahari.

What all these mentions have in common is that South Africa is identifiable, if not by name, at least by the mention of people or circumstances known to be South African. When it comes to the deeds the apartheid government committed against Mozambique the attaching of the deeds to the country is not as simple; there are no easily identifiable handles with which to grasp the complexity of the actual relationship between the two countries. This is most evident in the numerous works relating to the civil war and Renamo. That Renamo committed atrocities is well known, as is the fact that Renamo was supported by the South African government. But this is seldom even alluded to. This can be easily explained by the fact that what was most important to the Mozambicans affected by the war in their country was the war itself, not the distant power fanning the flames. But such a facile evasion of South Africa would fail to explain the ways in which South Africa is seen to intrude on the lives of the people affected by the war.

Mia Couto, in the story 'The Whales of Quissico' (Couto 1990:55), tells of a man who hears of the whales which beach themselves and spew out riches. The man goes to find these whales and while with fever and during a storm wades out into the sea and is never seen again. He leaves behind a bundle of clothes and a satchel.

> There are those who claimed that those clothes and that satchel were proof of the presence of an enemy who was responsible for receiving arms. And that these arms were probably transported by submarines which, in the tales passed on by word of mouth, had been converted into the whales of Quissico (Couto 1990:62).

Where else could the arms and submarines have come from. Assuming of course that the submarines really existed. Couto in this tale is not just relating a story of people coping with war through creation of myth but he is subverting the perceived relationship between Mozambique and South Africa. The whales/submarines spew forth gifts which are not quite what they seem to be. But these gifts of death are never actually seen. And the desire to share in the wealth of the whale results in being swallowed by that whale. Thus Couto could be rehashing the familiar story of Jim, or rather João, goes to *Jone*. Only in this case the death which South Africa causes exists amongst the people and not across the border and the promise of riches fails to produce anything tangible.

This idea of South Africa as destructive and elusive, even invisible, is one that is found frequently in literature relating to the war against Renamo. The works of Lina Magaia describe in vivid detail the atrocities committed

by Renamo, yet the supportive role of South Africa is seldom explicitly acknowledged. In Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa's story 'Orgia dos Loucos' (Orgy of the Deranged) (Ba Ka Khosa 1990:53) the effects of the war on ordinary people are again described in terms of misery and carnage and madness but South Africa does not feature. Again, why should South Africa feature? In other works Pretoria is acknowledged as being behind the 'armed bandits' terrorising the people of the rural areas (Azedo 1988) and in the novel *Nyandayeyo* the leader of a group of Renamo bandits is referred to as Tino ga Djone or Teeth of South Africa.

South Africa's invisibility takes on a different dimension in the description of violence perpetrated by South Africa. In the story 'O Barigudo' (The Pot-bellied Boy) (Ramos 1990) Helder Muteia describes a raid by the South Africa air force. The boy of the title is a victim of the raid and gazes up at the planes and wonders why the exploding eggs have done this to him. This story is dedicated to the victims of the raid and so there can be no doubt as to where the destructive, unknown creatures in the sky come from but at the same time South Africa remains completely invisible.

This invisibility can be related to the depiction of South Africa as Other. Mozambique as periphery is creating an Other but it is not 'writing back'. Because there is no need to write back to the centre, or to *Jone*, there is no need to address the centre directly and thus South Africa remains invisible. This separation of Other and writing back also provides an explanation of why South Africa and its people are not invisible as heroes, as for example in the poems of Gulamo Khan. As Africans fighting the evil of apartheid, the South Africans are a kindred spirit, not an Other, thus they are visible. The struggle of the people of Mozambique and South Africa has the same goal and thus the literature of Mozambique embraces South Africans, identifies them, while at the same time attempting to manage or control the destructive element of South Africa. Mozambique, in only recognising the heroes of the struggle against apartheid, is not allowing itself to be overwhelmed by South Africa's dominance as Centre or Metropole. It has created an Other to control the imperialistic tendencies of the expansionist state.

Thus post-colonial theory has been turned on its head. The allegedly weak periphery is using literature not to justify subjugation, but rather to prevent it. This subversion has implications for an understanding of accepted notions of writing back to the centre. The centre-periphery relationship is not linear and may not even involve trans-border communication. The periphery is its own centre and, at least in the case of Mozambique, regional circumstance is as important in laying down the parameters of post-colonial discourse as is the relationship with any European country.

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African Philosophy Revisited

Mabogo P. More

It is more than thirty years since the debate about the existence or non-existence of African Philosophy began. According to Okolo (1995:106), the issue has finally been settled among African philosophers. A cursory glance at recent texts on African philosophy[1] reveals, pace Okolo, that it still remains a contested terrain. Why has African philosophy been subjected to the panopticon gaze? What is so special about it or the Africans to deserve such attention? After all, British, German, French, American, Latin American, Russian, Indian or Chinese philosophy have never been under such intense surveillance and interrogation.

In what follows, I shall attempt to show that Western valorisation of 'reason' is directly connected to the interrogation of the legitimacy of African philosophy; that rationality—the notion that undergirds Western philosophy's self-conception and self-image and its articulation of human nature—is primarily the source of this exclusionary attitude because it legitimises, encourages and leads to the (re)invention of beliefs, attitudes, and articulations of otherness. In the course of the discussion, I shall argue that not only did the dominant forces in Western philosophy express and articulate exclusionary expressions, statements and attitudes, but also that these articulations of otherness have had great impact on subsequent reception of African philosophy. I shall therefore begin by briefly examining Western philosophy's self-image and its consequent conception of human nature. Secondly, I shall articulate the European [Western] conception of African people. Lastly, I shall argue that this Western conception of Africans and the idealised logocentric self-image of Western philosophy together with its notion of human nature constitute the pillars around which the rejection of African philosophy is based. Two recent publications in South Africa will serve as examples of this denial.

[1] See for example, Serequeberhan (1991), Masolo (1994) and Shutte (1993).

Philosophy, Rationality and Human Nature

Western philosophical tradition from the pre-Socratic period to Plato and Aristotle, Descartes and Kant, Hegel and beyond, has defined itself and its activity in terms of the pursuit of 'Reason'. Because of the central position the concept of rationality occupied in the history of philosophy, notions of the universe, society, state, or human being hinged fundamentally upon it. The view of a rational world order, of an external world possessing a logical order, a universe with a rational *telos*, is an established metaphysical and epistemological principle held on to even today. Since philosophy is a human product this conception necessitated questions about the nature of human beings.

Basic to narratives about human nature is the attempt to deal with the perennial metaphysical question: 'What is Man?' Answers to this one question are usually purported to be descriptive but more often than not they become normative and determine moral, political and social arrangements and relations. The concept 'nature' in this context refers to that feature, characteristic or attribute of a thing that is permanently necessary to its being or continuance. If the necessary attribute is absent or lacking, then the thing cannot be; that is, the feature is one without which a thing cannot be. The nature of X, for example, is what makes X an X and not Y. X's nature prevents it from being Y. The notion of human nature, therefore, refers to the conception of an attribute that is distinctively or typically human and which makes human beings different from any other creature or being, and without which a being cannot be human. This concept functions as a given, a limit or constraint.

Heraclitus asserted that 'Reason belongs to all'; and by 'all' he meant all human beings. Plato affirmed the superiority of reason over the senses, reason through which the rulers or philosopher kings could gain true knowledge. A human being, declared Aristotle, 'is a rational being'. Those beings who do not meet the criterion of rationality, those who lack reason, are for Aristotle slaves. In Aristotle there is an equation of a natural relation between reason and power. Rationality provides the right to rule over those who lack reason. So, domination of those supposedly at the lower rung in 'the great chain of being' (Lovejoy 1960), by those regarded as occupying a higher up position is thought by Aristotle to be a natural condition.

Western philosophy held on fast to this belief with a theological and religious zest, vision and conviction. St. Anselm attempted to establish the existence of God through rational means. Aquinas, following the Hebrew-Christian tradition and obviously influenced by Aristotle, proposed the hierarchical conception of being. He conceived of being (*ontos*) as arranged hierarchically on a scale, with the zenith occupied by the uncreated God and descending in the order of rational to the irrational. Human beings occupy the

rational level, with the angels just above them and the sensitive but irrational animals, vegetative life and inorganic substances following in a descending order. For Aquinas, rationality determines moral agency. Since God is the most perfectly rational being, God is therefore the most perfectly moral. In this descending or ascending scale of rationality, the more rational, the more moral, the less rational, the less moral.

It was Descartes who gave rationality its modern respectability. Affirming Aristotle's conception of human nature, Descartes asserted that since humans are thinking beings (*res cogitans*), the distinctive and paramount feature of humanness is thought. Epistemological differences notwithstanding, Locke's empiricism actually preserved much of Cartesian rationalism[2]. For, according to Locke, human beings are free by virtue of equal possession of rationality. Hence, a person who behaves 'irrationally', is a brute or animal who deserves to be kept in servitude. Rationality, Locke averred, is a mark of human subjectivity and so a condition of the necessity to be extended full moral treatment. Human beings are free because they are equally endowed in rationality (Goldberg 1993:27). Hence liberty and rationality are the basic features constituting human nature.

The influence of Plato, Aristotle, Descartes and Locke on the Enlightenment became expressed in Kant who laid the philosophical foundations for a purely formalistic rationalism. Kant, Habermas notes, 'instilled reason in the supreme seat of judgement before which anything that made a claim to validity had to be justified' (Habermas 1987:18). In the moral sphere, reason or rationality occupies a central place in Kant's conception of the good or moral person. His moral philosophy therefore is perhaps the most explicit, and influential example of a philosophy which grounds morality on reason.

Despite his rejection of Kant's moral doctrine, as enshrined in the universalisability principle, Hegel, like Kant, maintains that what constitutes human nature, human society and human history, is rationality and freedom rather than feelings and inclinations. For him, 'Thought is, indeed, essential to humanity. It is this that distinguishes us from the brutes' (Hegel 1952:156). In terms of this conception, a human being is a thinking being (*homo rationalis*) distinguishable from everything else by the capacity to think. Hence Habermas's (1987:4) insistence that to gain access and insight into the project of modernity requires confronting Hegel head-on because he was probably the first philosopher to connect the Enlightenment project to rationality.

[2] For a sustained debate concerning empiricism's and rationalism's complicity in racism, see Bracken (1973; 1978), Chomsky (1975), Searle (1976), Squadrito (1979) and Goldberg (1993). According to Goldberg (1993:27f), both empiricism and rationalism 'facilitated the articulation of racism'.

Indeed it is through engagement with Hegel that rationality and modernity would reveal themselves as contaminated with exclusivist, ethnocentric, sexist and racist strains.

The centrality of 'reason' in Western philosophical discourse articulated since the Milesian period is, therefore, unquestionable. The essence of the universe, society and human beings is conceived as hanging fundamentally on the concept of reason. Philosophy as an activity, along with its practitioners, has also been defined in terms of the 'pursuit of Reason' uncircumscribed by the 'conditioning effects of historical circumstances' (Lloyd 1984:108). Rationality therefore, being the fundamental constitutive element of being, is supposedly the principle of unity among all humans.

Philosophers and Racism

It is upon such constructed self-images of philosophy as rational praxis expressed through the rational subject whose identity is '*male, rational male*, of Greek (and subsequently of European) descent' (Outlaw 1987:15) that denials of the existence of African philosophy are predicated. Since rationality is the *sine qua non* of philosophical activity its absence or lack entails lack or absence of philosophy. It was the intellectual heroes of the West who then set the stage for the denial of African philosophy by denying Africans the 'essential' element of humanhood, namely, rationality.

Montesquieu identified climate as the source of racial differences. He held that the real natural colour of human beings is white, that races with other colours (black, yellow, brown) degenerated from the original white and that a change in climate would restore the natural condition and thereby transform the barbarous into the civilised, the ugly into the beautiful. In his *Spirit of the Laws*, however, he goes on to make this biting remark about black people:

> It is impossible for us to suppose that these beings [blacks] should be men; because if we suppose them to be men, one would begin to believe we ourselves were not Christians (West 1982:61).

Montesquieu does not explicitly provide reasons why he thinks blacks are not 'men'. It is Voltaire, 'Europe's voice of equality' (Goldberg 1993:33), who provides the real reason, namely, rationality. He declared that whites are 'superior to these Negroes, as Negroes are to apes and the apes to oysters' (Poliakov 1974:175). In his *The People of America*, Voltaire (see West 1982:62) says:

> The Negro race is a species of men as different from ours as the breed of spaniels is from that of the greyhounds. The mucous membrane, or network, which nature has spread between the muscles and the skin, is white in us and black or copper-colored in them ....
>
> If their understanding is not of a different nature from ours, it is at least greatly inferior. They are not capable of any great application or association of ideas and seemed formed neither for the advantages nor the abuses of philosophy.

The inferiority and thus subhumanity of the Negro, for Voltaire, is a consequence of the Negro's intellectual capacity. The Scottish Enlightenment philosopher, Hume, is perhaps well known in some circles for his blatant racism. Rejecting monogenism, Hume in a well-known footnote to his '*Of National Character*' insists that negroes are congenitally inferior to whites. Proof of this is to be sought in their different cultural and mental capacities: whites are civilised whereas negroes are uncivilised, barbaric and primitive; whites are rational and scientific while negroes are irrational and magical. Only whites, he claimed, had produced science or artefacts of culture whereas negroes had no visible accomplishments to show. Thus he concludes:

> In JAMAICA indeed they talk of one negroe as a man of parts and learning; but 'tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly (Hume [1777]1985:208).

Exceptions are for Hume obviously unlikely to be true because intellectual inferiority constitutes the essence of 'negroness'. The obvious contention for both Voltaire and Hume in particular, is that negro inferiority is a product of negro lack of 'understanding', 'association of 'ideas', 'speculation', 'ingenuity', 'learning', in short, an essential lack of 'rationality'.

One may consider it unfair that Hume has been crucified merely on the basis of a footnote rather than a full blown theory (see Barker 1983). However, that this negative response to a footnote is justified, it seems to me, is shown by the tremendous influence it had on the collective consciousness of Western philosophers. It legitimised and lent authority to the prevailing racist beliefs. As Popkin (1977/1978:211) points out:

> Hume presented the theoretical basis for the most virulent form of racism of the period, and ... became the favorite authority for the extreme racists and the central figure to be combatted by the humanitarians.

Further, as Henry Louis Gates jr. (1987:18) appropriately noted, 'Hume's opinion on the subject, as we might expect, became prescriptive'. Hume's influence is evident in Kant's (1960) '*Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*' where he wrote:

> Mr Hume challenged anyone to cite a simple example in which a negro has shown

> talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have even been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality, even though among the whites some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through superior gifts earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between the two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color (Kant 1960:110f).

For Kant therefore, much more vehement than Hume, the differences between blacks and whites is 'as great in regard to *mental capacities* as in color'. Consequently, in response to a story in praise of a black man's progressive views concerning the treatment of wives, Kant's comment thereupon is unsurprisingly commensurate with the other Enlightenment philosophers' views on African rationality:

> And it might be that there was something in this which perhaps deserved to be considered; but in short, this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid (Kant 1960:113).

For Kant, Hume, Voltaire, Montesquieu and a host of other Enlightenment philosophers, therefore, a person's skin colour determines his/her rationality. By virtue of their blackness, black people are excluded from the realm of the rational and the civilised. In his '*Physische Geography*' Kant anticipates Hegel when he claims that blacks are lazy, passive (note that for Hegel they are not only passive but at the same time 'wild'), callous and thick skinned (Neugerbauer 1991:59). This is not surprising because the Enlightenment's construction of the racialised other almost always make a correlation between physical characteristics and moral qualities. Accordingly, a person is wild, lazy, callous etc. precisely because and to the extent that s/he is black. Conversely, a person is good, civilised, calm, considerate, etc. because white.

In his sexist mood, Kant differentiates males from females by ascribing the following attributes to men: noble; deep; sublime; deep meditation; sustained reflection; laborious learning; profundity; abstract speculation; fundamental understanding; reason; universal rules; capable of acting in terms of principles; etc. (Grimshaw 1986:43). From the above description of the black person as 'stupid', 'lacking in reason', 'lazy', 'thick skinned' and so forth, one needs no complicated Aristotelian deductive logic to figure out that by 'men' Kant is referring to a particular group of males (European) other than blacks. In short, Kant's universalism is a particularised universalism, one that excludes blacks from the category of human beings *qua* rational beings.

Hegel's racism has provoked stronger responses from within black

philosophical discourse[3] than in Western philosophical circles where it is mostly unacknowledged. Even the supposedly left marxist philosophers prefer to be silent about it[4]. In *The Philosophy of History* Hegel (1952:196-199) claims that the African proper is wild and untamed, beyond the pale of humanity proper, cannibalistic, undialectic, ungodly or without a religion, and intractable and without history because incapable of any historical development or culture. For Hegel, therefore, Africans are not human enough to deserve freedom and respect precisely because they lack what is fundamental about existence, namely rationality. Hence he is able to conclude with reference to Africa that 'we must give up the principle which naturally accompanies all *our* ideas—the category of universality' (Hegel 1952:196).

What actually becomes evident is that human nature, whether construed as 'reason', 'rationality', 'morality', 'civility' or in some other way, is fundamentally gendered or racialised since it is implicitly alleged to be a property exclusive to European males and not to blacks or sometimes females. Whatever their differences, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume, Kant, and Hegel, all accent the lack of reason 'logos' or 'nous' or 'rationality' in blacks thus positing 'with all of the authority of philosophy the fundamental identity of complexion [colour], character and intellectual capacity' (Gates 1987:18).

The dominant discourse on human nature, from Plato and Aristotle, to Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant, and the Enlightenment, is supposedly universalistic; it defines human beings in terms of reason such that characteristics such as being political, social, economic etc. presumably do not enter into the question of whether a given individual is to be considered human or not. It is precisely on the basis of such universalistic claims that rationalists like Bracken (1978) and Chomsky (1975) can claim that if human nature is conceptualised in rationalist terms, then rationalism provides conceptual barriers to racist articulations and conceptions. After all, they argue, is it not evident that people universally possess mind?

This claim or 'pretension' to universality has led many philosophers to discern inconsistencies and contradictions in discourse on racism and sexism. As noted above, philosophers defined their activity in terms of the pursuit of reason, objectivity, and universality, notions which when properly understood, are sexless, colourless or ahistorical. Yet despite this professed

[3] For critical discussions of Hegel's racism, see, for example Outlaw (1991), Asante (1990), Masolo (1991), Ramose (1991), Serequeberhan (1989). On Hegel's racist views against South Americans and other Third World peoples, see Larrain (1994).

[4] Marx, for example, in his critique of Hegel, elided specific critique of his views about Africans and other Third World people. In fact, Marx himself was guilty of the same kind of attitude to British colonialism in India (see Serequeberhan 1989).

transcendence of contingent, historical and social circumstances, philosophy has been affected by racial and gender distinctions, and

> [d]espite its aspiration to timeless truth the History of Philosophy reflects the characteristic preoccupations and self-perceptions of the kinds of people who have at any time had access to the activity (Lloyd 1984:108).

In other words, while rationality and universality are supposed to be raceless and sexless, they are however at the same time racialised and genderised within the very Western philosophical discourse itself. Popkin is much more specific when he says,

> However, the very same people [Western philosophers who claim the equality of all men], who could develop these [universalist] theories of human nature, could also provide the bases for theories claiming that some individuals, in fact millions of them, were less than men because they were dark (Pagliano 1973:246).

The racist views of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume, Kant and Hegel, seem sufficiently contradictory to their universalistic systematic doctrines which do not discriminate against races. There exists, therefore, an obvious tension or inconsistency between abstract universal principles and their concrete application, between theoretical inclusion and practical exclusion.

The racism of Hume, Locke and Hegel seems to contradict their more general views of human beings. For example, while Hegel's declaration that 'human beings are ... rational', that 'Descent provides no basis upon which to create a justification or invalidation of freedom or supremacy of a people' (quoted in Moellendorf 1992), would appear to be a rejection of racism, his immediate claim that the biological distinction which exists among races is part of a rational structure or scheme of things, that biological differences are necessary and therefore rational (Moellendorf 1992) or his racist statements about Africa and the Africans, seem to contradict the former assertion.

Contrary to this widely held conception, I want to suggest that there exists no contradiction between the theoretical views of the philosophers and their racism (or justification of racial slavery). We have seen that in the history of Western philosophy the centrality of rationality as constitutive of human nature and thus of humanity is indisputable. Aristotle's declaration that 'man is a rational animal' has been the guiding light of Western conceptions of personhood. Therefore, to be denied rationality is to be denied humanity since reason distinguishes humans from nature and other entities. Further, to posit *apriori*, that human nature entails the possession of a mind whose distinctive feature is rationality, does not in any way commit one to a position in which one is unable to deny that certain seemingly human groups (e.g. 'savages' or 'apes') lack this distinctive characteristic. It might just be

the case that certain 'human' groups—according to the criteria laid down as determinative of that feature—lack the required feature and thus cannot be treated as having or accorded the same rights, respect or whatever benefits those who fully possess the said feature deserve. The point is, human nature assumes a moral or evaluative role rather than a descriptive one; it is utilised as a moral and/or ideological weapon. Those who simply do not share the European logical apparatus, are accordingly not 'rational' and thus not human. What is called 'human' or 'humanity' thus becomes an exclusively moral concept. Viewed in this light, the alleged contradiction between the philosopher's racism and his general philosophical view seem to disappear because two categories are involved, namely, human beings and nonhuman beings. In accusing them of contradiction one runs the risk of—in fact it would be a case of—committing a category mistake. What might genuinely be questionable under these circumstances are the criteria laid as conditions or requirements for determining rationality. For example, this assumption of a single universal notion of rationality may be called into serious question by the idea that truth is relative to particular cultural, sexual, racial groups or orientation or still by certain historical moments.

It thus becomes evident that Hegel's racism, for example, is not contradictory to his more general theoretical views, but is, instead, compatible with them. Hegel, in a pointed and restrictive way, denies Africans the status of rational, historical beings. The often quoted introduction to his *Philosophy of History* (1952) excludes 'Africa proper' from rationality and world history. His assertion may be reduced to the following claims: Africa and the Africans are static, primitive, profligate, savage, non-historical, non-philosophical, childish, emotional, sensuous and physical (see Neugebauer 1991:54). It is easy to see that all these characteristics are subsumable under the thesis: Africans lack reason. The fact that Hegel makes value judgements based on questionable second hand missionaries' and travellers' information, the fact that the characteristics he equates or identifies with non-rationality are themselves questionable, and further, the fact that he uses specifically European male models of rationality which may be completely different from or probably antithetical to, for example, Chinese, Indian, African or female modes of rationality, is at this juncture secondary. What is primary for us is the fact that for Hegel, Africans have no reason. Because they lack reason, they also lack history, development, culture and civilisation. That they lack reason, this fact alone, disqualifies them from humanity precisely because the necessary condition of what it is to be human is rationality. By definition, therefore, Africans are non-human. This Hegelian argument may be guilty of begging the question or *argumentum ad ignorantium*, or naturalistic fallacy, or whatever logical error, but it certainly is not guilty of contradiction.

Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume and Kant, all articulated the view that Africans, in virtue of certain characteristics, especially colour, are precluded from the realm of reason and civilisation. Kant, for example, insists that blacks lack reason because of their colour, thus their difference from Europeans is 'as great in regard to mental capacities as in colour' (Kant 1960). If, as Kant says, blacks do not have rationality or reason, then it means they are excluded from the realm of humanity. If they are not humans, then universal moral principles applicable to humans cannot apply to them; nor can the imperative, 'never to treat humanity as means but always as an end', apply either. Blacks are simply not human. Because reason has excluded them from humanity, Kant's universalistic ethics cannot, in his mind, be self-contradictory or in contradiction to his racism as Neugerbauer (1991), for example insists it is.

A contradiction would clearly have been committed if the terms of Kant's definition of humans included blacks. At best he regarded blacks as slaves when he recommended that because of his or her thick skin the Negro be beaten up with 'a split cane in order to cause wounds large enough to prevent suppuration underneath the negro's thick skin' (Neugebauer 1991:58f). But as we know, a slave, in Aristotle's terms is not a human being. The slave is a tool, a physically functional object, 'an animal of burden' like an ox.

The valorisation of 'reason' produced the construction of characteristics or qualities supposedly antithetical to it, thus creating binary oppositions. We owe to Descartes an influential and pervasive dualistic theory which provides support for a powerful version of racial differentiation. Following the Cartesian mind-body dichotomy, Western thought constructed contrasting binary pairs: reason - emotion, rationality - animality, culture - nature, civilised - primitive, moral - immoral, self - other, European - Non-European the list goes on. In each of these the first member of each pair is designated as an embodiment of a valorised ideal. The ideals of the European masculine sphere are idealised as identical to or convergent with those of humanity. Thus reason is associated not only with European male but implies the corresponding' ideal, or 'superior' qualities of civilisation, culture, beauty and high morality. The second member of each pair, on the contrary, represents qualities traditionally excluded, marginalised and devalorised. Since blacks are by definition lacking in reason, they *ipso facto* assume the qualities associated with animality, primitive, immoral, and the ugly. The racialised character of the binary oppositions is explicitly articulated in Hume's, Kant's and Hegel's characterisation of Africans as 'natural', 'wild', 'undeveloped', 'bodily strength', 'sensuous' ruled by 'passions' lacking in 'self-control', 'culture', 'civilisation' and 'science'. The moral implications of these constructed binary oppositions are quite obvious: since they lack

reason, blacks *ipso facto* lack morality. As Hegel (1952:198) puts it, 'Among the Negroes moral sentiments are quite weak, or more strictly speaking, non-existent'.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the above considerations constitute claims to the effect that all philosophers and philosophical doctrines in the history of Western philosophy are logocentric. On the contrary, challenges against the dominant logocentric discourse and its conception of human nature have been perennial features of philosophical discourse.

Veiled Denials of 'African Philosophy'

'What is African philosophy?', 'Does African philosophy exist?', 'Is there such a thing as African philosophy?' These are some of the questions that emerged following the publication of Placide Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy*. Normally, questions of the type, 'What is...?', 'Is there such and such?' or 'Does such and such exist?' are standard philosophical questions sometimes assuming, for example, the form: 'What is truth?', 'Does God exist?' and so forth. Why then would questions of the same sort about Africa generate so much heat, rather than mere philosophical curiosity? Aren't they as much philosophical as other questions of a metaphysical or ontological nature? If such questions about Africa and the African are simply standard philosophical questions, why, as we enquired earlier, are similar questions not asked in relation to the British, Chinese, French, Indians, etc.? What is common in the philosophies of all other peoples but which Africans supposedly lack? Is it a question of the written text? If so, what about Socrates? Besides, Molefi Asante (1990), Cheikh Anta Diop (1974) and Martin Bernal (1987) among others, have demonstrated the presence of the written text in Africa. There is therefore, obviously more to the questions than simply philosophical innocence. This paper has thus far implicitly been suggesting that what is actually at issue in the questioning of the legitimacy of African philosophy is the attempt to call into question the humanity of Africans, a humanness 'defined by the reigning Greek-*cum*-European philosophical-anthropological paradigm centred around the notion of "rationality"' (Outlaw 1992/1993:65).

Part of the reason why there is so much noise about philosophy and Africa is that philosophy is not only considered to be the most rational of human activities but also, as Anthony Kwame Appiah notes, 'the highest-status label of Western humanism'. The claim to philosophy, therefore, is 'the claim to what is most important, most difficult, most fundamental in the Western tradition' (Appiah 1992:88). It is this self-image of Western philosophy and the constructed identity of African otherness by Western philosophical heroes that is responsible for the denials—veiled or explicit—of African philosophy as a legitimate discursive field.

The response of African philosophers to the question of 'African philosophy' is now too well known and documented to deserve discussion here. Suffice to point out that paradoxically, some African philosophers such as Hountondji (1983), Wiredu (1980), Bodunrin (1984) and Oruka (1990) also deny the existence of African philosophy mainly for ideological reasons other than those posited by Western philosophers. In South Africa, the situation has been pretty much predictable because of the ideological history of the country. The ethnic divisions in the dominant voices resulted in explicit and veiled denials. The English speaking analytic philosophers, on the one hand, explicitly denounced African philosophy both on grounds of rationality and methodology. The Afrikaans, mainly continentally influenced, philosophers were, on the other hand, prepared to grant it a lower status in justification of the apartheid ideology of separate ethnic development and cultural differences.

Differences among the dominant voices notwithstanding, the rejection of African philosophy has been unanimous. A collection of papers proceeding from a conference at the University of the Witwatersrand bearing the theme *Philosophy in the African Context* is an example of such explicit and veiled denials of African philosophy (see Goergiades & Delvare 1975). Again, in almost all departments of philosophy at South African universities, African philosophy has unsurprisingly not been considered worthy of inclusion in the philosophy syllabi. The current changing political and social conditions have, however, necessitated reluctant recognition of the possibility of the existence of African philosophy as a legitimate tradition[5]. Despite these gains, vestiges of the old Eurocentric conceptions still remain and manifest themselves in veiled or disguised denials of African philosophy. I shall briefly consider two such veiled denials.

In a book, whose title, *Philosophy for Africa*, reveals more about the author's conception of Africans than the contents, the opening statement is even more stunning in its revelation:

> This is a book about philosophy and Africa. That philosophy and Africa should appear together in the *same* book might seem strange (Shutte 1993:5).

Part of the reason Shutte advances for this 'strange' combination is his geographical location. He is not only in Africa but also *doing* philosophy! 'Philosophy' *and* 'Africa' are presumably strange bed-fellows precisely because they are mutually exclusive.

[5] Ironically, Historically Black Universities, with the exception of the University of Zululand have not included African philosophy in their syllabi either. Recently, Unisa has established a separate unit of African philosophy. Also, the number of South African philosophers who are publishing in *Quest* is rapidly growing.

According to Shutte, philosophy, in the Western sense of the word (as if there is unanimity about its Western meaning), is methodologically a rigorous, self-critical and analytic discipline. In this sense of rational activity, philosophy in Africa has been absent. What, however, has identified Africa is not philosophy *qua* philosophy but rather what he calls 'traditional African thought'[6]. Given this distinction, Shutte (1993:53) sets out to respond to two revealing

> questions regarding the relation between Africa and philosophy .... Can traditional African thought be of help to contemporary philosophy? Can philosophy be of help to contemporary African thought?.

These questions, supposedly the main questions Shutte addresses in the text, interestingly assume the separation or unconnectedness between 'Africa' and 'philosophy' because the two together would presumably constitute an oxymoron. This means, therefore, that philosophy, in essence, does not constitute part of Africa; that Africa does not have a philosophy and therefore that African philosophy does not exist. The immediate question is: Why? Because, in Shutte's view, traditional African thought is neither rigorous, analytic, self-critical nor reflective.

For Shutte, African philosophy is possible only through the mediation of philosophy *qua* Western philosophy. Without the methodological apparatus characteristic of Western philosophy, African philosophy, in and by itself, is impossible and therefore implicitly non-existent. For example, he maintains that there has, until recently, been no African philosophy because African traditional thought and conceptions about humanity or community, as expressed through myths, proverbs, wise-sayings, etc., have not undergone rigorous, self-critical and analytical scrutiny characteristic of philosophy *qua* Western philosophy. Philosophy, he says,

> as a rigorous, self-critical *intellectual* discipline is a comparative newcomer to modern Africa. But in the last thirty or forty years significant attempts have been

[6] See Momoh (1985:79) who prefers to talk of Ancient African Philosophy rather than the locution 'African Traditional Thought'. According to him, 'The attempt to establish African philosophy as a respectable discipline has been impaired by this thought that it is traditional thought. Scholars are becoming increasingly aware that African pneumatological beliefs, metaphysical and moral doctrines, political and social principles, epistemology, logic, law, science and the scholars'own theories and extractions from all of these should not be indiscriminately labelled "African Traditional Thought". This gamut of African knowledge is not traditional because the word "traditional", in the thinking of those who foist it, rips with images of naivete, *low intellect*, stagnation and crudity. It is also not thought, because comprising this gamut of knowledge is African science—physical, chemical and biological' (Momoh 1985:79).

> made by African *philosophers* [those trained in Western countries through Western methods] to subject such traditional conceptions to philosophical analysis and systematisation (Shutte 1993:8).

In his view, a classical example of a contemporary African philosopher who has subjected African traditional thought to Western philosophical scrutiny is Leopold Sedar Senghor with his concept of 'Negritude'.

Another veiled denial of African philosophy appeared in a recent piece by G.A. Rauche (1996). There are presumably two questions Rauche seeks to grapple with. Firstly, does African philosophy—in the strict Western meaning of the term 'philosophy'—exist? Like Shutte, Rauche's answer is an emphatic 'no'. Philosophy in its Western sense refers to thought that is conceptual, abstract, and *rational* whereas 'traditional African thought is mythological' (Rauche 1996:16). Thus, to the extent that philosophy is an activity requiring reason, it can not be African; rationality and Africanity are mutually exclusive.

If the answer to the first question is negative, the second question becomes: What conditions, then, should prevail for African 'traditional' thought to become philosophy? The following are for him the necessary conditions: Firstly, traditional African thought should be abstract rather than concrete, conceptual rather than symbolic, rational rather than intuitive. Secondly, it must have the capacity (which it does not possess) to differentiate 'between man (sic.) and nature, man and society'. Last, it must possess a concept of the self as a subject *vis-a-vis* an object or what is designated *natura naturans* (created mind) *vis-a-vis natura naturata* (created matter) (Rauche 1996:16).

Philosophy in general, according to Rauche (1996:15), is 'the search for knowledge of the truth'. Knowledge, according to him, should be understood as a 'methodological act' in terms of which theory is constituted through experience. Presumably, without methodology there can be no knowledge. More pointedly, Rauche (1996:16) defines philosophy as

> an open *critical* discipline; a continuing *critical* and *self-critical* argument on the basic questions about *knowledge*, truth and authentic existence on the grounds of man's contingent experience of life (reality) as a universal experience.

The main operative concepts in this definition are 'critical', 'self-critical', 'knowledge', 'truth' and 'contingent experience of life'. While philosophy 'proper' is 'critical' there is, according to Rauche (1996:17), in traditional African thought

> not yet the *critical* factor we find in Western thought, so that no philosophical argument on knowledge, truth and authentic existence has taken place.

Furthermore, since the presence of knowledge implies a methodology, African philosophy in its epistemological sense also does not exist because

> There is in traditional African thinking no *methodologically* constituted philosophy, in this sense scientific philosophy in the Western meaning of the word (Rauche 1996:16).

Given these inadequacies in African thought, there is, therefore, no traditional African philosophy, that is, philosophy in the Western sense characterised by a capital 'P'[7].

After denying Africa 'Philosophy' with a capital 'P', which is presumably the highest form of rationality, pure critical reason at its best, Rauche feels obliged to honour the African world-view, *Weltanschauung*, or collective wisdom by the term 'philosophy' with a small 'p', folk philosophy or what Hountondji came to call ethnophilosophy[8]. This assimilationist strategy is obviously designed to maintain power relations by giving acceptance and recognition to a threatening and radical upsurge in a non-dangerous sphere. Accept African philosophy as a marginally important enterprise, necessary for Africans, part anthropology, part ethnology and 'you do not have to give it full status as a philosophic investigation with universal significance' (Ruth 1981:50). A separate unit of African philosophy distinct from the department of philosophy at the University of South Africa, therefore, is less threatening and thus acceptable. Furthermore, since there is in every culture a folk philosophy, the aim, it seems to me, is an attempt to improve existing relations between Europeans and 'primitive peoples' by portraying the latter as more human than they actually are assumed to be, in fact, as cultural equals. Hence the force of the theory of 'truth-perspective'

[7] This is Richard Rorty's distinction between 'PHILOSOPHY' and 'philosophy'. While we do not strictly adhere to Rorty's definitions of the two philosophies, we do however use this characterization of '*Philosophy*' to refer to what Rauche calls philosophy in its Western scientific sense and '*philosophy*' to refer to what Rauche calls *Weltanschauung*, collective ideas, collective wisdom, or myths, etc.

[8] Rauche takes issue with Hountondji's definition of African philosophy. Ironically, both Rauche and Hountondji deny the existence of African philosophy. But, Rauche denies it at the level of what we have called 'Philosophy' with a capital 'P', that is, philosophy in the Western sense of the word and he then posits African philosophy at the level of 'philosophy' with a small 'p'.

Hountondji, by contrast, denies African philosophy as posited by people like Rauche and Tempels, that is, what he calls ethnophilosophy. He, together with Odera Oruka, Kwasi Wiredu, Peter Bodunrin—the African 'neo-positivists' as Campbell Momoh refers to them—accuse ethnophilosophers of settling for an inferior and idiosyncratic conception of philosophy which lacks the intellectual rigour of philosophy with a capital 'P' and thereby virtually marginalizing African philosophy.

which is nothing else but a disguised description of cultural experiences and ethnic differences, and in point of fact, a reproduction of Tempels' ethnophilosophical ontology[9]. The theory's social, political, cultural and ideological implications are easy to discern. It is a veiled support of the separatist and particularistic thesis of apartheid South Africa which has recently assumed the mantle of political correctness since the deconstructive postmodernist valorisation of the politics of differences and diversity (see More 1995 and Van der Merwe 1994).

Even this ethnophilosophical articulation of African philosophy is not without problems. In Rauche's view as it was with Shutte, the existence of African ethnophilosophy is contingent on the mediative force of Western methodology. He declares:

> The statement; There is no traditional African philosophy in the Western sense of the word [philosophy with a capital 'P'], is justifiable, whereas the statement, (sic.) There is no African philosophy, is not. This is especially the case in the light of modern developments, where the *Western methodological* approach has crept into contemporary views on African traditional thought (e.a.) (Rauche 1996:17).

The West (read Europe), according to this view, provides the main tools of pure reason, critical spirit, methodological know-how, while Africa can only offer the raw material in the form of proverbs, wise-sayings, or myths. Without Europe, there can be no African philosophy. The upshot is that in both meanings of 'philosophy' Africa does not feature at all.

Rauche then offers an interesting example to demonstrate, in a subtle way, the mediative role of Western philosophical methodology in the construction of African philosophy. He cites one of *his* African student's dissertation chapter entitled 'Hermeneutical Philosophy and African Thought: Objectivity and Subjectivity in African Philosophy'. We have here two pairs of decidedly different concepts in the chapter, one Western because it presumably contains a philosophical method and the other African because it is mere *thought*. A combination of the two thus produces 'African Philosophy'. Given the nature of relationships between students and some supervisors at South African universities, particularly if this relationship is between a black student and a white supervisor working on a topic and method that are Western at a Historically Black University, one wonders—without putting into question the intellectual capacity of the student—exactly how much of the work is an imposition or reflection of the supervisor. This is certainly not an *ad hominem* but flows directly from the argument presented

[9] African philosophy in terms of Rauche, E.A.Ruch, Alexis Kagame and Placide Tempels is ontology. According to them, Africans, by their very nature, think ontologically; they are essentially what D.A. Masolo refers to as '*Homo ontologicus*'.

by Rauche himself. According to him, we can talk of African philosophy only on the basis of a dialogue which will result in an 'inevitable cross-fertilization .... It is within this context that there may be talk of an African philosophy' (Rauche 1996:16). This is a striking correlation indeed with the student's formulation of the chapter.

To claim that African philosophy can only be woven from a synthesis between Western philosophical methodology and African 'traditional' thought is to privilege the Western model over and above the African model[10]. It is to give credence to the European 'civilizing mission' (Wamba-Dia-Wamba 1991:218); a forced attempt to say that the African must necessarily possess a philosophy in terms of Western standards, criteria and norms even though such a 'philosophy' cannot really deserve the name of being what it is (Van der Walt 1975:91).

The refusal to acknowledge the philosophical content and significance of African thought systems, including proverbs, wise-sayings, etc., has been a standard feature of arguments against the existence of African philosophy. Instead, such African systems have been referred to as 'African traditional thought', a locution highly contested by Campbell Momoh in his 'African philosophy ... Does it exist?'. According to him, locutions such as 'traditional' and 'thought' have greatly obstructed authentic attempts to construct African philosophy as a respectable discipline because they conjure 'images of naiveté, low intellect, stagnation and crudity' (Momoh 1985:79). Indeed, the locution 'traditional' stands in opposition to modernity with all that the latter stands for in the eyes of the West, or it is used to conjure up images of Africa that can be contrasted with the West, especially Europe. In other words, 'traditional' has a pejorative implication to those who impose it. Pace those like Shutte who deny the existence of African philosophy by referring to it as 'traditional thought', Momoh aptly classifies it as falling under 'Ancient African philosophy'.

Conclusion

I have indicated that in terms of Western conceptions, philosophy is the 'pursuit of Reason', that since philosophy is a rational activity, then rationality is the essential characteristic of those who have the capacity to produce philosophy. Only human beings possess rationality. Those beings lacking in rationality can not produce the most rational activity, i.e. philosophy.

The intellectual heroes of Europe set the stage for the denial of African philosophy not merely by equating philosophy with reason but more

[10] See MacIntyre (1988), Wilson (1970), Lukes & Hollis (1982) and Appiah's (1992) chapter 6: 'Old Gods, New Worlds'.

importantly by denying Africans the rational capacity and thus reducing them to brutes or subhumans. Africans, so the argument goes, lack rationality. therefore Africans are not human beings. Since they are not human beings, then they can not produce the most rational activity, philosophy. Therefore, there is no African philosophy.

The same considerations may apply to any discourse that may, for instance, be called 'Female Philosophy' or 'Feminist Philosophy' since, in terms of the 'rational male' of European descent, women share certain properties with Africans, including the absence or lack of rationality[11]. One can imagine such a philosophy being rejected on the following grounds:

1. '[Female philosophy] is a 'specialized' pursuit, not part of the mainstream of philosophy'.

2. 'Philosophy is universal in scope, dealing with all mankind (sic.), but [female philosophy] only applies to a segment of the population'.

3. '[Female philosophical] issues are trivial compared to the ultimate questions philosophers ought to address'.

4. '[Female philosophical] concerns are transient, bound to a particular time and place: philosophy transcends particular time and space'.

5. '[Female philosophy] is sociological, political, or anthropological; it asks no genuinely philosophic questions'.

6. '[Female philosophers] haven't learned to argue properly; they have not learned to give proper evidence for their claims, no general principles, just vignettes and metaphors'.

7. 'Philosophy is neutral in its analysis, [female philosophy] is a bias' (Ruth 1981:48).

As Sheila Ruth (1981:48) concludes,

> All in all, such statements mean to say either overtly or in veiled terms, that feminist philosophy is not 'real' Philosophy; feminist thought, its presuppositions, methodology and even its content, is somehow illegitimate in the enterprise.

Central to Rauche's and Shutte's arguments is their Eurocentric conception of philosophy in the Western sense as expressed by the dominant voices such as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, etc.; a conception that portrays philosophy as the expression of human essence constituted by rationality.

[11] On philosophy, women and rationality see, for example Gould (1976), Plumwood (1993), Harding (1984) and Lloyd (1983).

Within this framework, therefore, it is not altogether surprising that underlying their efforts to legitimate the existence of African philosophy are veiled denials of that very existence. These veiled denials are both predicated on the belief that Africans lack rationality.

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Trends and Critical Dialogue in African Philosophy of the 1980s

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Review Article

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Introduction

Since independence, each of the earlier African colonies has had to contend with various challenges. Amongst others, these include the eradication of residues of colonial exploitation in life and society, the struggle to construct models and systems which may serve the demands, needs and interests of the African peoples and modernisation. Many of the answers to these challenges have failed for various reasons. One of the major reasons for these failures has been the discursive vacuum in which repressed knowledges attempted to simultaneously construct and develop both relevant social, economic and political systems as well as relevant discourses. It is in the interest of filling this discursive vacuum that African philosophy arose. In this review article, a brief overview of Serequeberhan's collection of essays is provided followed by a few critical observations.

The African Philosophy Agenda

In our pan-African context, African philosophy addressed the discursive vacuum in primarily three distinct but overlapping discursive formations: Bodunrin's (1991:66) *historical explanatory approach*, Kwasi Wiredu's

(1991:86) distinction between *first and second order philosophy* and Henry Oruka's (1981; 1987; 1991) identification of four distinct African philosophical trends, namely *ethnophilosophy*, *philosophic sagacity*, *national-ideological philosophy* and *professional philosophy*. In his later work he added a fifth, namely *hermeneutical-historical philosophy*. I provide a brief overview of some arguments of the critical dialogue within each of these discursive formations and then move toward two issues which are important in the development of African philosophy as well as the development of other disciplines in our pan-African situation: modernisation and African resistance to the myth of the European Civilising mission.

1 The Historical Explanatory Approach

Bodunrin (1991:66) argues that since the challenges that the pre-colonial peoples in traditional Africa experienced were not sufficiently threatening, they did not seriously engage the philosophical enterprise. Moreover, the similarity of environment, worldviews, customs, social organisations and the problems that the universe posed for traditional Africans, did not provide a context of significant challenges conducive to philosophic reflection. This is also the reason why there is such a great similarity between the worldviews and cultures of traditional Africans. The situation changed dramatically with the advent of the colonial enterprise. It is true, he argues, that the colonists overpowered African traditional societies very easily. The reason for this, obviously, is that Africans had not experienced such a decisive challenge before and were totally unprepared for it. However, in time, the challenge of colonialism caused four basic responses from Africans (cf. Bodunrin 1991:66-69).

Firstly, the Western/Christian and Islamic descriptions of Africans as uncivilised, primitive, irrational and illogical, sparked off a response to show that this is not the case. *Secondly*, the interaction with the colonists caused Africans to start to compare themselves with other contemporary or past cultures and civilisations. In philosophical context, these comparisons caused Africans to study their own intellectual histories. *Thirdly*, the political and economic overpowering of Africans caused them to respond with national-ideologically grounded philosophies engendered in processes of political liberation and reconstruction. *Fourthly*, the experience of a severe scarcity of resources—especially in the post-colonial era of reconstruction—sparked off philosophic debates on the reconstruction of education, business, industry, agriculture, economics, etc.

2 First and Second Order Philosophy

To put the philosophies that existed in the pre-colonial era and those that

came into existence during the colonial era and in the postcolonial era into perspective, we may use Kwasi Wiredu's (1991:86) distinction between first and second order philosophy. Philosophy of the first order 'is that way of viewing man [humanity] and the world which results in a world outlook in the first place'. Philosophy of the second order is 'a technical discipline in which our (i.e. the human) world outlook is subjected to systematic scrutiny by rigorous ratiocinative methods (ideally, that is)'. Compared to philosophy of the first order, second order philosophy has 'a doubly second-order character, for that on which it reflects—namely, our world outlook—is itself a reflection on the more particularistic, more episodic, judgements of ordinary, day-to-day living'.

Within this scheme, Wiredu explains, the worldviews which came into existence in the pre-colonial era as well as those which are responses to colonialism and even post-colonialism are first order philosophies. The critical, logical and rational philosophies that came into existence as a reflection and a critical engagement with these trends and their underlying worldviews, however, are second order philosophies.

3 Common Features of African Philosophy

Henry Oruka's (1981; 1987; 1991) distinction between the five different trends, ethnophilosophy, philosophic sagacity, national-ideological philosophy, professional philosophy and hermeneutical-historical philosophy may provide a useful map for the development of discourses and practices in our own southern African context.

Even though each of these trends has its own history, objects of reflection and dialogue, methodologies and goals, they all share three common features.

3.1 A Conscious Effort to Engage with African Realities and the Doing of Philosophy From and For the African Context

Serequeberhan (1991a:xviii) points out that the major premise of African philosophy is that Africans must do African philosophy for themselves and 'minus foreign mediators/moderators or meddlers'. He further believes that 'African philosophy will find its own theoretical space from within African problems and concerns that are felt and lived', i.e. it must concretely engage 'the concrete and actual problems facing the peoples of Africa', e.g. 'the misery the continent is immersed in and the varied struggles', the 'armed political conflicts' which rages on 'in the midst of famine and ["natural"] calamities', the 'political insanity of the contemporary African situation', and in general, 'Africa in metamorphosis'—i.e. from its colonial past into a

modern era (cf. Serequeberhan 1991b:19,12,10). This engagement has only one aim, to set people free from all forms of slavery (cf. Fanon 1993:230f). As conscious enterprise, this approach has been in progress in the last forty years or more.

3.2 A Drawing on and Creative Integration of Methods, Theories and Practices Employed by both Past and Contemporary Philosophers from Africa and the Rest of the World

Virtually all trends in African philosophy follow this approach to various degrees. This approach is not unique. It is actually the way in which all other philosophies originated throughout history. The argument is that, given the focus of philosophy on Africa, African philosophers should also draw on philosophical systems and debates developed in other places and other times in the creative constructive of their own.

3.3 A Deconstructive and Reconstructive Interaction with Africa's Colonial Past

Lucius Outlaw (1987) and Serequeberhan (1991b:4-7) argue that since all Western philosophers including Hegel, Marx and Engels had a racist attitude towards Africans, and since all their theories and models were basically Eurocentric, their philosophies must be deconstructed before they are used by Africans.

4 Five Trends in African Philosophy

4.1 Ethnophilosophy

Ethnophilosophy is a term coined by Kwame Nkrumah (cf. Bodunrin 1991:85 fn 2) and popularised by Hountondji. It comprises the ethnological study of ethnic Africans. Anyanwu (1985) calls it cultural philosophy and emphasises its capacities for integration and tolerance. It follows a phenomenological method and has a documentary approach. Its aim is to collect or document, describe, interpret and disseminate African folk-lore, tales, proverbs, myths (or mythical conceptions), religious beliefs and practices, worldviews as well as the lived ritual and ceremonial practices of ethnic Africans (cf. Bodunrin 1991:74 & Wiredu 1991:90). Initially, this approach was used by colonial researchers. These researchers aimed at the description of the African 'mentality' for the benefit of the colonial politician, economist, educator or missionary who had the task of colonising, ruling, modernising, civilising or christianising the African. It is especially

Placide Tempels' book ([1945]1969) which acquired special significance (or notoriety) in this regard.

When Africans like John S. Mbiti (1988) started to participate in this approach, the use of the method as well as the knowledge which he produced, changed. Even though he still provided knowledge for the benefit of 'economics, politics, education and Christian or Muslim work' (Mbiti 1988:1), the fact that he wrote as African for the benefit of Africans made his work ideologically more acceptable. The most important function of this approach, however, is to provide an indigenous African base for tradition and practice. Its aim is to recover the African traditions which were lost or disappropriated by colonial rule.

With reference to Hegel and Herodotus, Onyewuenyi (1991:30-33) points out that the foundations of Greek philosophy on which Western civilisation is built, has its roots in Africa. Referring to archaeology, he states that 'Africa is ... today accepted by many scientists as the cradle of the human species'. Moreover, many significant African scholars like the theologians St. Augustine, Origen, Cyril, Tertulian, the ancient philosophers Herodotus, Socrates, Hypocrates, Anaxagoras, Plato and Aristotle and the fifteenth century historian Leo Africanus either were from African origin or acquired their training in Africa. The reason why these facts have been hidden in the last two hundred years 'from both black and white' is obviously because of Western philosophy's attempt to legitimise its own (colonial) thinking and practices at the expense of 'encounter'. His argument here, is that Western philosophy did not interact with Africa and give Africa the credit it deserves, because Western philosophy itself developed into 'an academic and dehumanised philosophy .... divorced from life' (Onyewuenyi 1991:35). Even though he does not say it explicitly, we may infer that one of the main tasks of African philosophy—and one in which he participates through his ethnophilosophical project—is to rehumanise philosophy.

In the post-colonial and post-Apartheid era, this approach serves to describe the mythical/religious conceptions, worldviews as well as the lived ritual and ceremonial practices of ethnic Africans for the purpose of restoring African tradition. Since much valuable information can be found in the work of colonial researchers, their works may be used productively. Onyewuenyi (1991:29) bases his whole endeavour on Possoz's (in Tempels 1969:14) introductory remark to Tempels' book in which he concedes that:

> Up to the present, ethnographers have denied all abstract thought to tribal peoples. The civilized Christian European was exalted, the savage and pagan man was denigrated. Out of this concept a theory of colonisation was born which now threatens to fail .... a true estimate of indigenous peoples can now take the place of the misunderstanding and fanaticism of the ethnology of the past and the former attitude of aversion entertained with regard to them.

Writing as an African for Africans from within Africa, Onyewuenyi's project is radically different from the colonial enterprise. However, since Tempels has uncovered important information with regard to ethnophilosophy, Onyewuenyi (1991:40f,43f,39) quotes with approval Tempels' views on African metaphysics, epistemology, ethical theory and the description of African ethnophilosophy as

> a concatenation of ideas, a logical system of thought, a complete positive philosophy of the universe, of man [humanity] and of the things which surround him [it], of existence, life, death and the life beyond.

These may just form part of historical knowledge. Alternatively, it may be used for the development of African metaphysics.

African metaphysics or ontology comprises a description of African ancestor worship, animism, totemism, magic and the notions of 'existence-in-relation' or 'being as dynamic' as determined by the hierarchised functions of 'force' or the 'Great Force'. 'Muntu', the 'force endowed with intelligence', a force which has control over irrational creatures known as 'bintu', constitutes the force which is responsible for the 'intimate ontological relationship' between Africans. There is no conception of the individual which can function as a 'unique individual'—as in Western society—divorced from this ontological relationship (cf. Onyewuenyi 1991:40f). 'True wisdom' or African epistemology 'lies in ontological knowledge; it is the intelligence of forces, of their hierarchy, their cohesion and their interaction' (cf. Tempels 1969:73 & Onyewuenyi 1991:41).

Further, African epistemology distinguishes between practical and habitual knowledge. Practical knowledge involves the 'cleverness or slyness' that one needs to deal with 'the contingent aspects of forces'. Habitual knowledge 'is active knowledge of the nature of forces, their relationship' and is reserved for those who are initiated into this body of knowledge as practitioners. In the hierarchy of knowledge, 'the ancestors have more wisdom, followed by the elders, dead or living' (Onyewuenyi 1991:42,41).

Grounded in the belief that the Great Force or 'God' has 'all-seeing eyes' which 'scan the total area of human behaviour and personal relationships', the distinction between 'good and evil are objective and of universal validity' (Onyewuenyi 1991:43). Since—epistemologically speaking—a human being exists only in terms of his/her intimate ontological relationship with the greater whole of life as it is determined by force, all human action must be synchronised with 'Muntu' and its agents, the ancestors, initiated practitioners and the elders. In the African context, these three fields of philosophic encounter find their legitimacy in their ontologically inseparable mutual influence of, dependence on and interaction

with one another (cf. Onyewuenyi 1991:44). In this scheme, a person 'attains growth and recognition' in accordance with his/her fulfilling of 'a function for the overall well-being of the community' (Onyewuenyi 1991:45).

Serequeberhan (1991b:18f) points out that the criticism of ethnophilosophy has been three-fold.

Firstly, since philosophy concerns 'logically argued thoughts of individuals' (Bodunrin 1991:62) or the 'critical self-reflection of a culture engaged in by specific individuals in that culture' (Serequeberhan 1991b:18), ethnophilosophy or African cultural philosophy makes a mistake when it equates philosophy and the worldviews and/or religious conceptions of ethnic peoples. In his criticism of ethnophilosophy, Oruka (1991:47f) says:

> Ethnophilosophy ... requires a communal consensus. It identifies with the totality of customs and common beliefs of a people. It is a folk philosophy. It forms a sharp contrast with philosophy developed by reason and logic. It is also, as thought, impersonal: it is not identified with any particular individual(s). It is the philosophy of everybody; it is understood and accepted by everyone. It is at best a form of religion. But it would in other cases function perfectly like a taboo and superstition.

Wiredu (1991:88), again, criticises Mbiti's (1988:2) definition of African philosophy as 'the understanding, attitude of mind, logic and perception behind the manner in which African peoples think, act or speak in different situations of life'. Just to make explicit what is implicit in life—i.e. religion, proverbs, oral traditions, ethics and morals of the society concerned — cannot qualify as philosophy. Such an approach remains 'a semi-anthropological paraphrase of African traditional beliefs' (Wiredu 1991:88).

Apart from his appreciation of ethnophilosophy's generation of 'a quite distinctive philosophical literature', Hountondji (1991:119,112f,119, 124) criticises Tempels and other ethnophilosophers for viewing 'Bantu philosophy' as something 'experienced but not thought', for being 'profoundly conservative [in] nature' and attempting to look 'for philosophy in a place where it could never be found—in the collective unconscious of African peoples'. For him, African philosophy is not something to be discovered, something which is already given, something which has to reproduce 'a pre-existing thought'. He calls such an approach an 'African pseudo-philosophy', a 'fiction' and 'vulgar' because it conceives of African philosophy as

> an unthinking, spontaneous, collective system of thought, common to all Africans or at least to all members severally, past, present and future (Hountondji 1991:111f,114,117).

Secondly, politically, ethnophilosophy remains part of 'the European colonialist discourse aimed at disarming and subjugating the African' (Serequeberhan 1991b:18f). In his evaluation of *African* ethnophilosophy, Hountondji (1991:121f) draws distinctions between Europeans writing about Africa for an European audience and whose writings belong to '*European* scientific literature' and Africans writing in the same field but whose audience is African. Nkrumah's *Consciencism*, for example, is 'written chiefly for the African public and aimed at making it aware of its new cultural identity' even though it 'partakes of the ethnological conception that there can be such a thing as a collective philosophy' (Hountondji 1991:121). More generally speaking, the works of Africans writing about Western philosophy but for an African audience, can also be viewed as African philosophy. The same view is expressed when addressing the question of Africans writing on universal philosophical topics. Hountondji's (1991:123) expanding of the understanding of African philosophy in terms of a geographical rather than a content definition, then, produces two results. On the one hand, it opens the way to see it as 'a methodical inquiry with the same universal aims as those of any other philosophy in the world'; on the other, it brings about a 'demythologizing' of the notion that Africa is a mythological entity, thereby freeing 'our faculty for theorizing from all the intellectual impediments and prejudices which have so far prevented it [African philosophy] from getting off the ground' (Hountondji 1991:123).

For Hountondji (1991:113), ethnophilosophy's prime mistake is, therefore, in still writing 'with the white world in mind' and writing for a foreign [Western] public. Where African ethnophilosophers do interact with Western scholars, they continuously reduce their own writing to that of a

> 'folklorism', a sort of collective cultural exhibitionism which compels the 'Third World' intellectual to 'defend and illustrate' the peculiarities of his tradition for the benefit of a Western public'

which merely 'encourages the worst kind of cultural particularism' (Hountondji 1991:124). Even though it challenges the colonialist perception that Africans are 'completely sterile in intellectual and moral-spiritual productions' by giving recognition to the humanity of the colonised, it remains a body of knowledge comprising 'a static African culture and civilisation predating the colonial conquest'. Oruka (1991:47) argues that this approach still leaves the door open to continue the Western anthropological description of Africans as primitive, pre-logical, pre-scientific, pre-literate and savage. Bodunrin (1991:75) argues that many of the generalisations about Africans are false—e.g. Mbiti's claim that Africans have no conception of time or more particularly, the future. Wiredu

(1991:89) states that these generalisations find 'little ... empirical warrant'. Even though the collectivity of a people's thought most probably does exist and can be studied, the generalisations made about Africans usually lead to misrepresentation and misinformation.

Thirdly, ethnophilosophy does not meet the basic requirement that African philosophers use as guideline for their work—critical (i.e. logical and rational) engagement with current African realities. Since ethnophilosophers never 'questioned the nature and theoretical status of their own analyses', their research cannot count as 'scientific' (Hountondji 1991:119). Ethnophilosophy 'shelters lazily behind the authority of a tradition and projects its own theses and beliefs on to that tradition', describes an 'implicit, unexpressed worldview, which never existed anywhere but in the anthropologist's imagination' and is therefore unable to present 'its own rational justification' (Hountondji 1991:120). For Bodunrin (1991:77), the problem is that

> ethnophilosophers usually fall in love so much with the thought system they seek to expound that they become dogmatic in the veneration of the culture to which the thought system belongs .... They do not raise philosophical issues about the system .... The African philosopher cannot deliberately ignore the study of the traditional belief system of his [/her] people. Philosophical problems arise out of real life situations .... however, the philosopher's approach to this study must be one of criticism ....

Bodunrin (1991:78) continues to say that 'criticism' here does not refer to 'negative appraisal'. On the contrary, it refers to

> rational, impartial and articulate appraisal whether positive or negative. To be ['critical'] of received ideas is accordingly not the same as rejecting them: it consists rather in seriously asking oneself whether the ideas in question should be reformed, modified or conserved, and in applying one's entire intellectual and imaginative intelligence to the search for an answer (Bodunrin 1991:78).

Cataloguing writings in the field of such African pseudophilosophy, Hountondji (1991:115) points out that all these ethnophilosophical writers were either 'churchmen' or 'lay writers' aiming to map a 'black metaphysic'.

The clergy's main concern was 'to find a psychological and cultural basis for rooting the Christian message in the African's mind without betraying either' (Hountondji 1991:115). Saying that such an approach may be 'an eminently legitimate concern, up to a point', he criticises these authors, because they

> conceive of philosophy on the model of religion, as a permanent, stable system of beliefs, unaffected by evolution, impervious to time and history, ever identical to itself (Hountondji 1991:115).

Other African philosophers are similarly criticised for attempting to uncover

> a solid bedrock which might provide a foundation of certitudes ... a system of beliefs .... the identity which was denied by the colonizer (Hountondji 1991:116).

Common to these approaches, is 'the myth of primitive unanimity', that in primitive societies, 'everybody always agrees with everybody else' and 'the idea that every culture rests on a specific, permanent, metaphysical substratum' (Hountondji 1991:117,116). Such suppositions do not allow for 'individual beliefs or philosophies but only collective systems of belief' (Hountondji 1991:117). Since ethnology or cultural anthropology is usually used (together with sociology) to perpetuate such erroneous beliefs about African societies, Hountondji (1991:117) criticises the whole ethnophilosophical paradigm because it treats the difference between 'so-called "primitive" societies and developed ones' in terms of

> a difference in *nature* (and not merely in the *evolutionary stage* attained, with regard to particular types of achievement) [and] of a difference in *quality* (not merely in quantity or *scale*).

It is further criticised as

> a science without an object ... accountable to nothing, a discourse that has no referent, so that its falsity can never be demonstrated (Hountondji 1991:118f).

Ethnophilosophers continue to 'make use of African traditions and oral literature and project on to them their own philosophical beliefs'. As such, it is an 'indeterminate discourse with no object' and therefore merely has an 'ideological function' (Hountondji 1991:111). In addition, since it functions as a hierarchised and 'inegalitarian metaphilosophy', ethnophilosophy, by definition, shuts out 'dialogue and confrontation'. Its impact, therefore, is nothing else than

> a reduction [of difference and 'individual analytic activity'] to silence, a denial, masquerading as the revival of an earlier philosophy' (Hountondji 1991:121; cf. also Owomoyela 1991:164f[1]).

[1] For a brief but comprehensive overview of Professional philosophers's critique of traditional approaches in African philosophy, see Owomoyela (1991:156-186). He successively treats Ethnophilosophy, African cultures, recidivism, African Studies, the notions of intuitiveness, unanimity and anonymity in Ethnophilosophy, traditional African cultures, illiteracy, science and the articulation of Africanist and African Studies.

It is clear from this overview of the criticism of ethnophilosophy that philosophers engaged in the other four approaches would find it difficult to regard ethnophilosophy as a second order (critical-rational) philosophy.

4.2 Philosophic Sagacity

Philosophic sagacity concerns itself with the oral or non-literate critical wisdom traditions and practices of Africa. This approach critically engages the critical activities of indigenous African wise men or sages. These sages inhabit a 'critical space within their cultural milieu' and are 'capable of critical and dialectical inquiry' (cf. Bodunrin 1991:64). Since these sages critically interact with established African traditions and the cultures of their respective ethnic groups and societies, their critical reflection on life constitutes a wealth of information which is useful for philosophical reflection. The main objective of this approach is to 'dialogically extract the philosophical wisdom embodied in these sages' (cf. Serequeberhan 1991b:19).

Henry Oruka attempts to do this in a culture-neutral universalistic way. He goes beyond ethnophilosophy in so far as he acknowledges that African wisdom comprises both 'philosophic, rational discourse as well as personalised philosophical activity' (Oruka 1991:49), and beyond cultural philosophy in so far as philosophic sagacity, for him, works with the oral traditions of individuals who are both sages *and* thinkers. He therefore does not work with sages who are merely functionaries or 'midwives' of a particular culture, i.e. the ones who ensure the continuation of the ideas and beliefs a people hold about itself and nature or the *mythos* of that culture. They merely reiterate and condone the cultural prejudices of a culture and therefore remain a 'first order system' (cf. Oruka 1991:52,54f). The sages he works with are individuals who are capable of 'reflective reevaluation of the culture philosophy' or 'rationally recommending ideas offering alternatives to the commonly accepted opinions and practices'—i.e. they function in terms of a 'second order system' (cf. Oruka 1991:52,51,55). Therefore, philosophic sagacity is 'a critical reflection' or 'critical rebellion' against culture philosophy. While culture philosophy 'glorifies the communal conformity, philosophic sagacity is sceptical of communal consensus, and it employs reason to assess it' (Oruka 1991:53).

Oruka also criticises Bodunrin and Hountondji who hold that professional philosophy must be a systematic and written philosophy (cf. Hountondji 1991:120) and states that his ultimate aim is to uncover an 'authentic African philosophy' which is 'uncontaminated' by Western colonialism (Oruka 1991:58,49).

However, this is not possible. The reason being that the questions that the philosopher asks when s/he dialogically interacts with the sage as well as

the ordering and systematising of the information that one acquires from the sage will always be determined by the philosopher's knowledge of or even education in a Western or colonial environment (Serequeberhan 1991b:20). Moreover, Oruka's aim to study African sagacity in a culture-neutral way, is basically paradoxical (cf. Serequeberhan 1991a:xx).

4.3 National-ideological Philosophy

National-ideological philosophy studies the whole corpus of writings— whether in the form of pamphlets, manifestos or political works—by participants in the African liberation struggles. It spans the spectrum from the diverse forms of national liberation literature to the writings of more prominent leaders like Nkrumah, Toure, Nyerere, Senghor, Diop, Césaire, and Cabral[2].

National-ideological philosophy 'evolve[s] a new' and 'unique political theory based on traditional African socialism and familyhood' (Bodunrin 1991:64). Its object of study is the 'differing politico-philosophical conceptions that articulate the emancipatory possibilities opened up by the African anticolonial struggle' (Serequeberhan 1991b:20). Since this literature did not only represent resistance, defiance, disengagement, opposition and protest but also provided basics for constructive and reconstructive activities aimed at the functioning of a liberated society, it is extremely useful in the project of the deconstruction and reconstruction of political theory and practice in Africa. Post-colonial freedom must be accompanied by 'a true mental liberation and a return, whenever possible and desirable, to genuine and authentic traditional humanism' (Bodunrin 1991:64). This is methodologically informed by the historicity of the African situation as well as the reflection on, identification of and putting into practice of liberatory strategies. Serequeberhan (1991:xxi) summarises the practices of these philosophers saying they

> critically engage the critique of ethnophilosophy and in so doing, emphasize, in differing ways, the importance of a serious and concrete engagement with the traditional, historical, and contemporary situation of the continent

Even though Serequeberhan does not provide a critique of this approach, I believe that one can at least state that one major pitfall is that one can become so caught up in the critical consciousness of this philosophy that one forgets to productively and responsibly engage the demands for a reconstructive thinking and practice for a liberated society. Bodunrin (1991:69) argues that the backward-looking approach present in some national-ideological philosophers is counter productive. He states that 'the

[2] See Nkrumah (1961; 1962; 1970; 1971, 1973; 1978; 1985), Toure (1973; 1979; 1980), Nyerere (1967; 1968; 1973; 1974a; 1974b; 1994), Senghor (1962; 1971), Diop (1962; 1974; 1986; 1989), Césaire (1972) and Cabral (1974; 1979).

past the political philosophers seek to recapture cannot be recaptured' (Bodunrin 1991:69). He also argues—against Nkrumah and Nyerere—that the traditional way of life in Africa cannot be the point of departure. Bodunrin's (1991:69-71) reasons being, firstly, that one will not be able to return to a pre-colonial traditional lifestyle in which there is no Christian nor Islamic influence; secondly, that traditional African societies were not as complex as modern African societies; thirdly, since there is 'no country whose traditional ideology could cope with the demands of the modern world', this principle also applies to the African situation. Traditional African society will therefore not be able to contend with modern problems posed by the breaking up of traditional communities, money-economies, urbanisation, industrialisation, etc. The upshot of this argument is that the contribution of African philosophy to reconstruction will never be 'entirely divorced from foreign influence'. This is then also an argument against Oruka's (1991:49) criticism that professional philosophy provides an avenue for the legitimisation of Western techniques in African philosophy.

4.4 Professional Philosophy

Professional philosophy is a school of thought which is represented by Peter O. Bodunrin, Paulin J. Hountondji, Odera H. Oruka and Kwasi Wiredu. Serequeberhan (1991b:21) summarises their position when he says that except for Oruka who also participates in philosophic sagacity, 'they share the view that a philosophical tradition in Africa is only presently—in their joint efforts—beginning to develop'. The professional philosophers emphasise that they are all trained philosophers (cf. Bodunrin 1991:84) and therefore reject both the African ethnophilosophical and traditional wisdom approaches which hold that the practice of philosophy is not only the prerogative of the trained philosopher. Their main criticism of ethnophilosophy and philosophic sagacity, however, is that these approaches are not philosophic approaches because 'mere descriptive accounts of African thought systems or the thought systems of any other society would not pass as philosophy' (Bodunrin 1991:65). Moreover, ethnophilosophy remains caught up in a mere description of what is 'spontaneous, implicit, and collective', whereas philosophy must be explicit, methodical, and rational (cf. Hountondji 1991:123; Wiredu 1991:61,91; Keita 1991:153,157; Towa 1991:194).

Pointing out that far from producing a unanimous agreement about African philosophy, ethnophilosophical research has instead produced 'a rich harvest of not only diverse but also sometimes frankly contradictory works'. Here, Hountondji (1991:118) pre-empts the use of such results for advancing the continued importance of ethnophilosophy as producing the same results as other sciences (e.g. physics, chemistry, mathematics, linguistics, psycho-

analysis, sociology). He points out that ethnophilosophy does not succeed in producing evidence of a 'supposed unanimity of a human community'. Moreover, the other sciences are not 'stagnant' but rather

> always progressive, never final or absolute but indicative of an *error*, of the *falsity* of a hypothesis or thesis, which is bound to emerge from a rational investigation of the object itself.

These sciences are also not embarrassed by contradiction. It rather prompts re-investigation, further experimentation and the seeking of other modes of verification (cf. Hountondji 1991:118). Professional philosophers pursue such a 'scientific' approach in their work. Consequently, they regard their philosophical approach as professional because it uses techniques commonly used by philosophy in the West and other parts of the world—i.e. universally—and it aims to make a contribution to universal philosophical discourse. Bodunrin (1991:76) legitimates the universal approach in African philosophy by stating that the quest to understand more about the universe is a universal quest.

Arguing that African philosophy, should—as all other philosophies of the world—as philosophy, be understood in terms of its universality, Hountondji (1991:112) states that

> this universality must be preserved—not because philosophy must necessarily develop the same themes or even ask the same questions from one country or continent to another, but because these differences of *content* are meaningful precisely and only as differences of *content*, which, as such, refer back to the essential unity of a single discipline, of a single style of inquiry.

His main argument is that the African philosopher must 'retrieve' and 'apply' African philosophical thought 'not to the fiction of a collective system of thought, but to a set of philosophical discourses and texts' (Hountondji 1991:112). The result of such an approach is that Africans will be liberated from the trap of merely attempting to 'exalt their own cultural particularities' or asserting their own 'uniqueness by conforming to the current stereotypes of one's own society and civilization' (Hountondji 1991:125). Hountondji (1991:125) comments on universality in African research:

> Universality becomes accessible only when interlocutors are set free from the need to assert themselves in the face of others; and the best way to achieve this in Africa today is to organize internal discussion and exchange among all the scientists in the continent, within each discipline and—why not?—between one discipline and another, so as to create in our societies a scientific tradition worthy of the name.

Moreover, many disciplines have certain assumptions which are discipline-specific, irrespective of the context in which the discipline is practised. Two such assumptions about research in general is that 'the kind of answers expected depends both on the kind of questions posed and on the method of enquiry' and that 'if a problem is philosophical it must have a universal relevance to all men' [and women] (Bodunrin 1991:76,78). Bodunrin (1991:64) summarises this position by saying that the professional philosophers require that

> Philosophy ... must have the same meaning in all cultures although the subjects that receive priority, and perhaps the method of dealing with them, may be dictated by cultural biases and the existential situation in society within which the philosophers operate.

In addition, the influence of writing on Africa provides an avenue to 'pin down ideas and to crystallise them in our minds. It makes the ideas of one day available for later use' (Bodunrin 1991:82). Relating the developing of science to literacy, Hountondji (1991:99; cf. also Wiredu 1984:151) says:

> The first precondition for a history of philosophy, the first precondition for philosophy as history, is ... the existence of science as an organized material practice reflected in discourse. But one must go even further: the chief requirement of science itself is writing. It is difficult to imagine a scientific civilization that is not based on writing, difficult to imagine a scientific tradition in a society in which knowledge can be transmitted orally.

As 'a literature produced by Africans' (Hountondji 1991:120), African philosophy intends to meet these criteria. It develops philosophy as it

> results from individual, intellectual engagement with the universe of experience, is pluralistic, and is subject to an "irreducible polysemy of discourse"' (cf. Owomoyela 1991:158; Hountondji 1983:179).

It is not authoritarian and does not aspire 'to confer a wisdom that is eternal, intangible, a closed system sprung from the depths of time and admitting of no discussion' as ethnophilosophy and traditional cultures do. It should rather be

> a debate, a 'pluralistic discourse, in which different interlocutors question one another within a generation or from one generation to another' (cf. Owomoyela 1991:159; Hountondji 1983:83f).

Professional philosophy is only African in so far as it has an African 'orientation' (Wiredu 1991), it serves as a 'geographic' designation (Hountondji 1991) or it contributes to the scientific development of education in Africa (Keita 1991). The relationship between the African orientation and its universal design is expressed by Bodunrin's (1991:64f) description of the professional philosophers' perception of African philosophy as

> the philosophy done by African philosophers whether it be in the area of logic, metaphysics, ethics or history of philosophy. It is desirable that the works be set in some African context, but it is not necessary that they be so.

Wiredu (1991:93) defends the possibility that a non-African may also participate in African philosophy. He says that there is a possibility that 'the work of an alien might come to have an organic relationship with the philosophical tradition of a given people and thus become an integral part of it'. Towards the end of his argument, Wiredu (1991:106) goes even further. He pleads for a modern or modernising African philosophy and expresses his hope that such a philosophy would become 'a living tradition'. As far as the development of a tradition of modern philosophy is concerned, he states,

> There are a number of ways in which this can be done .... We can adopt the option of simply collecting, interpreting, and retelling those of our traditional proverbs, maxims, conceptions, folktales, etc., that bear on the fundamental issues of human existence. I consider this to be a reactionary option in the straightforward sense that it is backward looking and will keep Africa behind; it will not enable us to achieve a fundamental understanding of the world in which we currently live in order to try to change it in desirable directions, and it will make us easy prey to those peoples who have mastered the arts and techniques of modern thinking. In other words, such an approach to African philosophy would be a hindrance to modernization in Africa. Nevertheless, were we to embrace this option universally, the result would be entitled to be called ['African philosophy'].

As far as the constructing of African philosophy as living tradition is concerned, he states,

> Philosophy is culture relative in many ways, particularly with regard to language. To ignore our own culture and betake ourselves exclusively to the promptings of that of the West in our philosophical thinking would be a manifestation of nothing but a deeply ingrained colonial mentality. Still, the result of such an uncritical Westernism, if it were to seize our continent long enough, would equally qualify to be called 'African philosophy'. For a body of thought to be legitimately associated with a given race, people, region, or nation, it is sufficient that it should be, or should become, a living tradition therein. It is indifferent whether it is home brewed or borrowed wholly or partially from other peoples. Since we are ... still trying to develop a tradition of modern philosophy, our most important task is not to describe, but to construct and reconstruct.

Even though it might seem as if Wiredu takes the argument too far, his main point underlying the argument is clear. The African philosophy which is to be developed should both empower the African people(s) in the process of modernization as well as form the living tradition in which the African people(s) live—in other words, it should not be an alienating philosophy, but contribute to the healing of the people and the continent.

A strong emphasis is that they regard philosophy in Africa as the '["hand-maid"] of science' and the main task of professional philosophy as the participation in the '(uncritical) modernization' of Africa.

The fact that Serequeberhan puts 'uncritical' (above) in brackets, probably implies Oruka's (1991:48) criticism that professional philosophy does not have an appropriate subject matter—it merely lives off the criticism of ethnophilosophy—that it lacks a history and that it is not self-critical. I believe that the modernism-modernization debate is an appropriate subject to be addressed. Modernism was a critical movement in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century which criticised the meaninglessness of the industrialised, technocratised and 'new world' philosophies of colonial politics. This debate and the methodologies it employed might be used to open up new subjects and methodologies for professional philosophy. Modernization implies the industrialisation, scientific development and economic advancement of African countries. Since the world has learnt dearly that uncontrolled industrialisation can have devastating effects on nature, animal and human biological life as well as culture, such a scientific project cannot be embarked upon without the necessary precautions. Professional philosophy can make an invaluable contribution to science and industry by studying modernization in history, the era of colonialism and other parts of the world and then providing the pool of knowledge in terms of which informed decisions can be made and practices developed in and for the modernization project in Africa. Wiredu (1991:105) argues that a critical African philosophy as a tradition is in a process of development, and that it must be 'nursed'. Oruka (1991:49) also criticises the approach because it provides an avenue for the legitimisation of Western techniques in African philosophy too—i.e. together with national-ideological philosophy.

Bodunrin (1991:83) objects to the latter criticism by referring to 'British philosophy'. His argument is that just as 'Greek philosophy' depended on 'Egyptian philosophy' for its development, 'British philosophy' on 'German philosophy', and 'American philosophy' on 'British philosophy' African philosophy must also be developed on the basis of other philosophic traditions. With regard to the 'intellectual history' of humanity, he quotes Wiredu (1978:7,11f) with approval and states that it,

> [is a series of mutual borrowings and adaptations among races, nations, tribes, and even smaller sub-groups]. And [the work of a philosopher is part of a given tradition if and only if it is either produced within the context of that tradition or taken up and used in it].

In other words, African philosophy as a 'national' philosophy will also borrow from other philosophies to generate its own. This may be done for the purpose of changing Africa (cf. Bodunrin 1991:84).

4.5 Hermeneutical-historical Philosophy

As an exploratory attempt, Okolo (1991:204-210) advances a few tentative thoughts on the importance of hermeneutics for African philosophy. Similar to Husserl's (1970) recognition that hermeneutics arises in situations of crisis, Okolo (1991:201) believes that the same is true for the development of an African hermeneutics. Examples from European history are the 'crisis of self-identity in German romanticism', the 'crisis of Europe confronted by a technicized world', the crisis of 'the forgetting of Being' (Heidegger) and the crisis of 'a loss of language' (Ricoeur). Similarly, the rise of hermeneutics in Africa can be located in the

> generalized identity crisis [in Africa which is] due to the presence of a culture—a foreign and dominating tradition—and the necessity for a self-affirmation in the construction of an authentic culture and tradition (Okolo 1991:201).

Focusing the argument on the notions of 'Tradition' and 'Destiny', 'the object, subject, the horizon, and the limits of interpretation' Okolo (1991:202) advances three propositions which may function as 'a general theory of hermeneutics':

> 1. Any theory of reading presupposes a theory of the text and vice versa.
> 2. Any reading (interpreting) presupposes some kind of 'retake'.
> 3. Any reading and any retaking involves a decision that starts from the reading and retaking subject's vision of the world.
>
> From all this, what seems to be revealed is that all interpretation presupposes a tradition, and that tradition as such is always interpreted. Even more, all interpretation appears to be supported by a certain idea of destiny .... Interpretation is the space where tradition and an idea of destiny are deployed or unfolded.

Answering the question, 'what is tradition?', one can say that it is fundamentally an 'action of delivery and of transmission' 'from generation to generation' (Okolo 1991:202).

Following the young Hegel, Okolo (1991:203) describes the notion of 'destiny' in terms of the related complexes of liberty, reason and fatality. It is

primarily from the idea that destiny emerges out of the interplay of the 'rational' and the 'irrational' that Hegel developed his 'dialectics of life and of history'. The irrational, finite and particular passions of people are in tension with the infinite and the necessary and it is the tensions thus created which 'are the means through which the universal spirit realizes itself'. Destiny then emerges as 'effective reality' in the continuous 'history and judgment of the world', i.e. on a more general level, in the productive tensions between the given and the future, tradition and the various interpretations of a people and an individual.

In the discussion of the three propositions of a general hermeneutics, Okolo demarcates three spheres where a new tradition can be developed through an African hermeneutics.

4.5.1 The Interaction between a Theory of Reading and a Theory of the Text

Stating that the text to be studied (or read) is that of 'African tradition' 'as a whole' or 'the text as a fact of tradition', Okolo (1991:204) says, following Gadamer, that the theory of the text should not be limited to that of a written text or to the text as work (Ricoeur).

> The written word, the work in itself, has nothing to say if it is not provoked, instigated, and recreated by tradition. It is the process of tradition-in-becoming [*devinir tradition*] that makes a text or a work autonomous from its author and from its initial destination; this same process of tradition-in-becoming extracts the text or work out of its quotidian ambient and offers it a propitious space from within which it can open up and create new worlds.

In the transmission of tradition, transmission takes place through the enchainment of interpretations and reinterpretations. The study of the enchained interpretations can take the form of a backward moving study illuminating both theory and practice as it impacted on each interpretation. Okolo (1991:205) identifies an important 'methodological consequence: A true hermeneutical practice must be one that can also be enunciated as theory'. Important in such an endeavour is to remain within the limits set by the resources provided by tradition and to devise a theory related to the resources. On this point, Okolo (1991:205) criticises ethnophilosophy for not limiting its study to its resources and states that a 'hermeneutical critique of ethnophilosophy remains to be undertaken'.

4.5.2 The Interaction between Reading and 'Retaking'

Stating that 'appropriation is that which results from any reading', Okolo (1991:205) defines such a 'retake' as the 'recreation, the actualization, of

what is being read' and states that it is therefore 'never innocent'. Generally speaking, appropriation can for example take place as 'juridical, religious, philosophical, ideological and scientific actualizations'. It is here important that African hermeneutists clearly describe in what sense they practice a 'retake' of tradition. With this prescription, Okolo (1991:205) criticises ethnophilosophy for its 'confusion and vagueness' and thereby its 'dubious epistemological status' by not delimiting the fields in which appropriation of tradition takes place.

Pointing out that appropriation is never innocent, Okolo (1991:206) argues that each reading always 'selects, at the moment of reading, susceptible aspects that enable it to be realized'. For Okolo (1991:206), it is the task of the hermeneutist to clearly 'define the problematic of the retake' and what such a retake 'projects and delimits [in] the role of creation in the reading'. In the field of philosophical hermeneutics, Heidegger's 'retake' of Being and Ricoeur's of *cogito* serve as examples of hermeneutics's 'retake' of elements in the ontological problematics of the Occidental philosophical tradition. Okolo (1991:206) consequently points out that the basic problematic with which African hermeneutics is faced is that the 'contours [of an African hermeneutical retake] are defined elsewhere than in the African tradition itself', e.g. in a Christianity which has always been rooted in Occidental philosophy. This has to be changed so that 'the African tradition itself' provides its own hermeneuticity.

In the process of having the African tradition positing its own hermeneutic, Okolo (1991:206) calls for 'the restoration of the past' in line with an authentic retake of tradition in African context but also with a delimiting of that which does not belong. Commenting on how it must be done, Okolo (1991:206f) states:

> We should not only restore the monuments of the tradition but also the philosophies and orientations that occurred in our traditional past. The history of ideas is one of the conditions for an African philosophical hermeneutics. African hermeneutics, left to itself, must die as a hermeneutics if it is not sustained by a science of history applied to ideas—a science that will supply African hermeneutics with a subject matter, a problematic, and its own proper course.

Since much of African tradition still belongs to the oral tradition, its transcription and study will have to form a central element in hermeneutic restoration.

Together with restoration, African hermeneutics has as task, the study of the enchained history of appropriations, i.e. the study of 'structure relations from "front to back" and [to] define internally the process of the tradition and of interpretation'. This will bring about the continuous

retroactive renewal of 'cultural memory' by new discoveries. Okolo (1991:207) states:

> Our past, by continually modifying itself through our discoveries, invites us to new appropriations; these appropriations lead us toward a better grasp of our identity.

4.5.3 The Determining of Appropriation by the Reading and Retaking Subject's Vision of the World

Focusing attention on the notion, 'vision of the world', Okolo (1991:207) identifies three of its 'essential aspects':

> a *descriptive aspect* by which the vision of the world presents an image of the world, an existential situation; a *justificatory aspect* by which it reflects on and renders an account of what it is and what it has been; and a *projective aspect* through which it sketches the future of an individual or of a people (e.a.).

Since these 'aspects' locate 'hermeneutical developments' within 'a vision of the world', Okolo (1991:207) argues that it is

> expressed and summarized in the idea of destiny, in which it deploys the spiritual economy of an individual or of a people between the past and the future.

A 'vision of the world' therefore *unleashes*, *guides* and *projects* the hermeneutical process. Okolo (1991:207f) uses Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur (and how they depend on Hegel) as examples to show how this worked within European hermeneutics. It was destiny with its ingrained 'vision of the world' as conceived in European hermeneutics which

> culminate[d] in a very precise mission ...: Europe is called on if not to dominate, at least in some way to civilize, to liberate, to save, and to spiritualize other peoples. To do this, it has to preserve all the spiritual weight that characterizes it. The retaking efforts that European hermeneutists deploy aim at preserving Europe from spiritual destruction and, with Europe, the entire world (Okolo 1991:208).

Turning to the challenge of practising hermeneutics in Africa, Okolo (1991:208) says:

> We will have to, no doubt, explode the idea of destiny and recharge it anew starting from our hermeneutical situation. This hermeneutical situation is that of the formerly colonized, the oppressed, that of the underdeveloped, struggling for more justice and equality. From this point of view, the validity of an interpretation is tied to the validity of a struggle—of its justice and of its justness. Here, we

> affirm the methodological preeminence of praxis on hermeneutics, praxis understood in the sense of an action tending toward the qualitative transformation of life. We do not share the opinion of those who think that praxis delivers a deadly blow to hermeneutics[2]. We affirm rather that, in a given situation, it is praxis that assigns to hermeneutics its place and its development. Praxis unleashes the hermeneutical process and gives it an orientation. Hermeneutics, in turn, offers praxis a cultural self-identity necessary for ideological combat.

Concluding the argument, Okolo (1991:209) says that reflection on destiny and tradition has the one task of allowing the object, methods as well as the results of hermeneutics to arise from tradition itself. Moreover, when one attempts to theorise interpretation and tradition, one finds that these are already

> interior to the ways and means that tradition itself secretes and utilizes [interpretation] for its own preservation, renewal, and perpetuation (Okolo 1991:209).

Hermeneutical-historical philosophy engages and reflects on the concrete politico-historical actuality of the present African situation and its future possibilities. This is done by a 'historically and hermeneutically sensitive dialogue' with African national liberation writings and African literature (cf. Serequeberhan 1991b:21), the 'tradition' and 'destiny' of Africa (Okolo 1991:202) as well as (modern) African philosophy as discipline (cf. Owomoyela 1991 & Towa 1991). As is evident from this overview of Okolo's arguments, the study of tradition and destiny do not only form the subject matter or the objects of critical enquiry, but also engage the development of methodologies which are employed in the hermeneutical engagement with African realities.

5 African Philosophy and Modernisation

The main problem concerning modernisation facing Africa today according to Lansana Keita (1991:151) is that of

> adapting modern techniques and modes of knowing to societies being transformed from those in which the most important factors of production were human beings themselves, to those in which the machine constitutes the major factor of production.

It is in providing a basis for processes of modernisation in Africa that Keita sees the prime importance of African philosophy's focus on the developing of 'a method'. Such 'method' is developed not for mere 'theoretical analysis,

[2] This statement is made against the import of Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach.

but also for practical application'. The importance of African philosophy in this context is to engage in 'the debate concerning solutions to the social and technological problems faced by societies undergoing social transformation' (Keita 1991:153).

Posing the pragmatic question about philosophy: 'what function can philosophy serve?', he argues that

> theoreticians of philosophy in an African context must attempt to construct a modern African philosophy with the notion that its formulation would be geared toward helping in the development of a modern African civilization. Any analysis of the contemporary world demonstrates that the more successful civilizations are those which are the most technologically advanced (Keita 1991:145,147).

Using Western philosophy as model and implicitly criticising ethnophilosophy, he argues that African philosophers must learn from Western philosophy that 'philosophy as a whole is in reality a construction, a device which served and serves practical social needs' (Keita 1991:145), that it functions as an instrument 'shaping the ideological and technological outlook of [a] particular civilization', and that it requires

> a self-conscious effort on the part of [African] thinkers to utilize the most complex products of human thought to fashion a self-interested civilization (Keita 1991:146).

As sources of inspiration, ... [Western philosophers] primarily drew on 'the sophisticated literate thought of ancient Greek thinkers whose ideas were borrowed, then analyzed for the needs of that civilization' and not on indigenous thought systems such as those of the Gauls, Vandals, Celts, Normans, Visigots, Vikings. In this process, Western philosophy developed the West's modern science on the basis of rationalism and empiricism on the one hand and the increasing application of 'the theory of modern scientific methodology ... to all modes of human experience' (Keita 1991:147).

Commenting on the complex processes of modernisation *in general*, Keita (1991:147) argues that it requires the articulation of nature itself, 'knowledge of the workings of nature', 'the applications of different forms of technology to this world' as well as 'the relevant value judgments and cultural assumptions necessary for the maintenance of the society in question'. Important in this process, is that societies draw their value judgments from 'knowledge of the natural world' and then apply such knowledge to the various forms of technology (Keita 1991:147).

Concerning modernisation *in Africa*, Keita (1991:147) sees the task of philosophers to similarly

> impart knowledge of the natural and social world and ... assist in the constant discussion of the optimal set of value judgments and cultural assumptions that social individuals must make to take the fullest advantage of the sum of scientific knowledge available.

Pointing out that current Western philosophy is mostly concerned with the history of ideas and that the social and political sciences have taken over the function of providing solutions to technological and social problems, Keita (1991:148) proposes that African philosophers not follow a similar route. They must rather fully engage in the facilitation of the articulation of values and scientific knowledge and not leave it to the various disciplines individually. On the contrary, disciplines must be questioned concerning the values informing their practices, e.g. values dating from the colonial period in the sciences must be analysed and changed.

Furthermore, Keita (1991:148) argues that since

> it is the methodology of research of a given discipline that determines the orientation of research in that discipline and the kinds of solutions to problems ultimately proposed,

African philosophers must focus their philosophical activity on 'theoretical analysis of issues and ideas of practical concern' which must include 'the analysis of the methodology and content of the social sciences (i.e. history, economics, anthropology, political science, etc.)'. Theoretical analysis must then encompass as many relations and disciplines as possible and not remain focused reductively on one particular discipline. As such, it can contribute to the development of scientific research in Africa on a broad front, which in turn simultaneously would stimulate economic and technological development. Similar to Western philosophy's development through attempting to meet 'material and psychological needs' of European society, African philosophy must direct its 'structure and orientation of knowledge' on African society. Scholars in the various disciplines should also be equipped with philosophical tools enabling them to theoretically analyse the function and impact of their disciplines in African societies and realities (Keita 1991:150).

Sensing that many of his proposals may be construed as containing an implicit critique of ethnophilosophy and philosophical sagacity, Keita (1991:151) argues that 'traditional African thought systems' have an important role to play in the modernisation of Africa. He states:

> I believe that intellectual effort in the African context should be strongly geared to the training of personnel in modern techniques of natural and social scientific inquiry, appropriate for application in the ongoing transformation [through

> processes of modernisation] of society. Clearly, those beliefs and theoretical ideas characterizing traditional African thought systems which are proven vital for contemporary development should be nurtured and incorporated into the social philosophies and technical orientation of modern Africa (Keita 1991:151).

This would provide a new focus for traditional African thought, moving it from attempts to prove that 'Africans knew how to think consistently before colonial times' or that 'African world-views were not inherently irrational' to constructive engagement with the modernisation of African society. It is only in this context that Keita (1991:153) sees the importance of traditional African thought. Keita (1991:152) recognises that central to the transformation of Africa into 'the age of modern technology' would be the engaging with 'important ideological debates and ... transformations of social orders and accompanying modes of thought' (Keita 1991:151f). And it is here where African philosophy can be of much 'practical importance'. This is in distinction to Western philosophy which has become 'essentially an intellectual ode to Western civilization' (Keita 1991:152). Summarising his views on the task of philosophy in the African context, Keita (1991:153) says that it should be

> a dynamic philosophy in the vanguard of each of the research disciplines, committed to the formulation of new or modified concepts and modes of knowing appropriate for social and technological development.

More radical than Keita, Hountondji and Wiredu gives an even more appreciative role to science in Africa. For Wiredu (1980:32), science is the 'crucial factor in the transition from the traditional to the modern world'. Concerning modernisation, he says:

> Modernisation is the application of the results of modern science for the improvement of the conditions of human life. It is only the more visible side of development; it is the side that is more associated with the use of advanced technology and novel techniques in various areas of life such as agriculture, health, education and recreation.

The underlying argument with which Towa (1991:187-200) and Hountondji (1983:176) attempt to persuade Africans in favour of modernisation in Africa, is that it is precisely the dearth of the development of science in Africa which led to the defeat of Africans by the colonists. Wiredu (1980:61) similarly argues that

> the African, who asks himself why it came about that everywhere on this continent other peoples were able so easily to put his people in bondage, is bound

> to realize that the trouble lies not in our biology but in certain aspects of our culture ...: the lack of a developed scientific method.

And criticising philosophers attempting a return to original roots in African society, Bodunrin (1991:70) says:

> A way of life which made it possible for our ancestors to be subjugated by a handful of Europeans cannot be described as totally glorious. Any reconstruction of our past must examine features of our thought system and our society that made this possible (see also Owomoyela 1991:162f).

It is in the context of these and many more arguments, that Towa (1991:194) points out that if African philosophy aspires to be counted as philosophy, it must meet the general and universal requirements of the discipline:

> Philosophy is the thought of the essential, the methodical and critical examination of that which, in the theoretical order or in the practical order, has or should have for humanity a supreme importance.

6 African Resistance and the Myth of the European Civilising Mission

Viewing imperialism as 'the highest stage of development of capitalist social formations', Wamba-Dia-Wamba (1991:211) indicates that the most important challenges facing Africa, are to be played out in the space of conflict between

> the imperialist forces of domination that aim at the repeated defeat of the African resistance at all levels; and, ... antiimperialist forces militating in favor of the strengthening, and the victory, of the African resistance up to complete national liberation.

This space, however, is not clearly defined. On some issues, Africans formed alliances against imperialism, e.g. where imperialism denies or negates 'African cultural identity, African personality, Africanity, African way of life, communalism, etc.'. Through movements like pan-Africanism, negritude, African philosophy, ideology, religious syncretic movements, the return to ancestral sources/values, African civilization, socialism, theology, etc., Africans have formed such alliances. However, on issues like imperialist stances against Communism, some support was generated from within Africa (Wamba-Dia-Wamba 1991:211).

Despite such instances, it is precisely African resistance which unmasked the 'mystifications of the European *civilising mission* which was based on a radical denial (negation and destruction) of African cultures'. The

importance of such resistance becomes clear when Father Placide Tempels' book is put in ideological perspective and when the works of resistance of the various prominent African authors are studied.

Wamba-Dia-Wamba (1991:212f) shows that despite many of his statements which reflect his respect for African culture, his main strategy was to uncover some elements of African culture in order to provide points of contact in terms of which the natives could be civilized for the benefit of the Belgians and in the interest of 'making colonization more effective'. For Tempels, the strategy was 'to find a way of breaking, from within the cultures of the natives, their cultural resistance to the *civilizing mission*' and to bring Africans to reject any hope of finding a future history arising from their own tradition (Wamba-Dia-Wamba 1991:212f).

Providing an overview of responses of some important African authors, Wamba-Dia-Wamba (1991:213f) shows that from Nkrumah to Cabral, from Eboussi Boulaga to Towa, from Cheikh Anta Diop to Theophile Obenga, it was precisely through activities of resistance and the anti-colonial struggle that progressive victories were won. The untangling of these resistances is, however a complex process. It brings with it the problematic relations between master and slave, the freeing of the slave, the recognition of the African peoples, and more (see Wamba-Dia-Wamba (1991:212-231). The problem of ideological co-option was always a possibility, even for those who attempted to confront colonialism from within the colonial enterprise. Many people and movements who followed this strategy, in the end had to resort to processes of re-Africanisation.

7 The Deconstructive and Reconstructive Challenge

The deconstructive and reconstructive project forms part of the historical process of 're-Africanization' (cf. Cabral 1969:76). Since the educational, political, juridical, economic (including the Marxist notion of the 'universal class struggle') and cultural institutions in Africa are still implicated by the European cultural codes, principles and attitudes inscribed in them, African philosophy has to unmask these Eurocentric residues and replace them with more efficient African ones. Serequeberhan (1991a:xix; 1991b:22) argues that if this is not done, Africa will remain part of the colonial enterprise, i.e. it will still be exploited for economic, educational, political, social, cultural, and other purposes. This will keep it subjected to Western political and intellectual domination. The current demise of Europe's colonial and neo-colonial hegemony provides the perfect opportunity to engage in this project.

Critical Observations

It stands to reason that a compilation of essays such as Serequeberhan's is

not extensive, nor aimed at providing an in-depth portrayal of philosophical debates during the 1980s. Rather, it comprises brief condensed, programmatic and introductory sketches focusing on African philosophical developments and dialogues in the 1980s—condensed, because the essays attempt to draw together some of the main arguments and debates; programmatic, because they wish to map certain co-ordinates which may be used for further debate; introductory, because a few essays attempt to break new ground in the field of African philosophy. The strength of this selection is its focus: Africa.

It is evident that Serequeberhan resisted the temptation to include essays which merely ride the wave of philosophising about Africa in the terms and jargon of postructuralist, postmodernist, or postcolonial protagonists aimed at an international readership. Even though much in these movements have great relevance for Africa, for being able to function as vehicles for the representation of African complexities, their virtual absence indicates the desire not to philosophise within the confines of many of these discourses which, despite their theories, are still contaminated by Western practices. *African Philosophy* is, therefore, interventionist and focused on Africa as part of a strategic essentialism, dearly needed in academia in Africa and especially in South Africa.

This said, however, does not mean that such strategic essentialism is unproblematic. Some scholars would define it in terms of *race*, meaning that only black Africans can truly qualify as philosophers from within Africa; others may expand this to include other *diaspora races* similarly exploited by colonial and apartheid domination in Africa; others may define it in terms of *culture*, meaning that only people brought up in, belonging to or thoroughly socialised into (an) African culture would qualify; others, still, may define it in terms of *class* and still others, in terms of *gender*.

While each of such essentialising choices and their resultant discourses would importantly and necessarily contribute to critical discourse within the field of African philosophy, I do find Hountondji's proposal to essentialise African philosophy in terms of *geography*, suggestive. Even though one may generalise and say that according to its principles and practices, all colonial powers are the same, and that all forms of oppression experienced by Africans have been or are similar, the option for an essentialising geographical approach will provide the possibility of focusing the developing of philosophical discourse not only on Africa. More particularly, it will also provide the opportunity to address the diversity of traditions, practices and discourses of resistance and/or reconstruction as well as the multiple complexities posed by the challenge of modernisation in the many African regions. Moreover, this option also brings with it the displacement of *time* as it was manifest in logocentric Western patriarchal

philosophy and focuses instead on *space*. Spatial articulation is not necessarily contaminated by the West's history. Rather, it paves the way to philosophise in terms of Africa's own multiple complexities, thereby displacing practices of articulation from the contested discourses of 'Enlightenment rationality', the myth of the 'civilising' of the 'savage' and the myth of developing the 'non- or underdeveloped' according to some form of Western 'standard'. Furthermore, spatial articulation facilitates articulation in terms of Africa's own complexities, not as a 'before' and 'after', but as advancement of the quality of life in different regions. Such articulation will move the tracing and construction of discourses, practices, structures and systems from the 'in between' to the 'in amongst'.

Six critical areas remain: these concern arguments focusing on rationality and methodology (for the purposes of both analysis and construction), the philosophical engaging with the use and abuse of power/politics/knowledge, the developing of rhetoric, the identification of the developing African philosophy as literature, the use of the notion of deconstruction by African philosophers as well as the absence in this compilation of essays of philosophising 'the African woman'. Among others, such themes form our current agenda in the 1990s.

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Book Reviews

The Voice of the People

Izwi labantu (The Voice of the People)
Edited by J. Opland and P.T. Mtuze
Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1994, 255 pp.
ISBN 0-19-570857-1

Reviewed by G.V. Mona
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Izwi labantu is an anthology of verse and prose. The book comprises a representative sample of texts written in Xhosa by a broad range of renowned writers. The editors have selected material that illustrates the depth and breath of not only the literature, but also the culture from which it emerges. The approach followed in the selection of the material makes the book indispensable to anyone who wishes to study the historical development of Xhosa literature from its humble beginnings to date.

The contents of the book is divided into three sections, namely: i) orature/oral discourse, (ii) newspapers and periodicals and (iii) books. The orature section comprises riddles, proverbs, songs, folktales, oral history and oral poetry by illustrious writers, performers, and collectors amongst whom count people like R. Godfrey, R.M. Sobukwe, Victor Poto Ndamase, D.D.T. Jabavu, W.B. Rubusana, S.E.K. Mqhayi and D.L.P. Yali-Manisi. The oral material was reduced into chirography and typography during the period 1829-1988.

The second section contains material that was published through the medium of newspapers and periodicals. The first text is Anders Sparrman's 'Amagama esiXhosa' (Xhosa Words) (1783), which is a transcript of Xhosa words and their English equivalents. This material is followed by John Bennie's text 'Inkomo zonke zezika-Thixo ...' (All the Cattle Belong to God) (1823) which is recognised as the first systematic and coherent orthography of the Xhosa language.

Anti-colonial discourse by the rising Black intelligentsia which emerged during the close of the nineteenth century and during the first half of the twentieth century is represented by a number of poems which were published in newspapers over this period. Amongst these poems are 'Inkosi zakwaXhosa' (Xhosa Chiefs) by I.W. Wauchope (1882) (or I.W.W. Citashe). This is an exhortation to his people to leave the breechloader and embrace the pen (the spear) and paper (the shield). Nontsizi Mgqwetho's 'Mayibuye i-Afrika! Awu' (Let Africa be Restored to its Rightful Owners) (1923) condemns the disunity that prevailed amongst black leaders during her time because it stultified the struggle for liberation of the oppressed masses. S.E.K. Mqhayi's 'Umhobe kaNtu' (The People's Anthem) (1927) adds seven stanzas to the national anthem, 'Nkosi sikelel' i-Afrika' (God Bless Africa) which was composed by Enock Sontonga. J.J.R. Jolobe's 'Imbumba yolutsha' (The Youth League) (1952) celebrates the founding of the Youth League of the African National Congress. The youthful and well-educated youth leaguers with their vibrant ideology of Africanism, aimed at revamping the ANC.

The third and last section contains extracts from material that is published through the medium of books. The section is sub-divided into three sub-sections: pioneers, stabilisation and towards freedom. The pioneers' works, amongst others, are H.M. Ndawo's *Uhambo lomhambi* (The Pilgrim's Progress) (1909), S.E.K. Mqhayi's *Ityala lamawele* (The Law-suit of the Twins) (1914), J.J.R. Jolobe's *Uzagula* (1923), V.N.M. Swaartbooi's *Umandisa*, Z.Z.T. Futshane's *Ujujuju* (1939) and A.C. Jordan's *Ingqumbo yeminyanya* (The Wrath of the Ancestors) (1940).

A representative sample of poems and books that mark the stabilisation stage has been selected. Anti-apartheid discourse is evident in D.L.P. Yali-Manisi's 'Unkosi Rholihlahla Nelson Mandela' in *Inguqu* (Change) (1954), M.E.M. Nyoka's 'Izwe liyashukuma' (The World is Shaking) in *Uhadi* (A bow-like stringed musical instrument) (1962), Rustum Siyongwana's *Ubulumko bezinja* (The Wisdom of the Dogs) (1962) and R.L. Peteni's *KwaZidenge* (Hill of Fools) (1962).

A miscellany of texts extracted from books written by highly distinguished writers comment on the social, economic and religious scenario in South Africa. Amongst these works are Witness K. Tamsanqa's *Buzani kuBawo* (Ask Father) (1958). St John Page Yako's 'Uyesu waseNazarete' (Jesus of Nazareth) (1959), D.M. Jongilanga's *Ukuqhawuka kwembeleko* (The Cutting of the Umbilical Cord) (1960), S.M. Burns Ncamashe's *Masibaliselane* (Let us Tell Stories) (1961), K.S. Bongela's *Umzi omtsha* (A New House) and D.T. Ntywaku's *uNcumisa noNqabayakhe* (1972).

The last subsection, titled 'Towards freedom', contains extracts from N. Saule's *Amaciko: imidlalo endimanye yeradio* (1988) (The Eloquent

Speakers: One Act Radio Plays). The theme of these radio plays focuses on pertinent social issues. An extract from P.T. Mtuze's *Ungakhe uxelele mntu* (Do Not Tell Anybody) (1990), a collection of short stories, exposes the pain and suffering that was experienced by South Africans who opposed the vicious Apartheid system.

Izwi labantu is reader-friendly. Brief explanatory annotations precede each text. The notes locate the text within its context in terms of time and space, thereby enhancing the reader's conceptualisation. An additional bonus for the reader is the concise and relevant bibliography at the end of the book. The bibliography introduces the reader to some primary and secondary source material that illuminates the topics addressed in the anthology.

Izwi labantu has been published at a significant historical conjuncture, when the previously marginalised African Culture is struggling for its renaissance. The book will, therefore, be a source of inspiration and for research to both the present generation of cultural workers and to posterity. It is an invaluable reference work for anyone who contemplates studying the history and development of Xhosa literature.

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You Can't Escape the Past

Rope of Sand: The Rise and Fall of the Zulu Kingdom in the Nineteenth Century
by John Laband
Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1995, 517pp.
ISBN 1 86842 023 X

Reviewed by Stephen Leech
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Rope of Sand, as the subtitle aptly describes it, is the story of the development of the Zulu kingdom in the early nineteenth century and its subsequent decline. These two events are linked by the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. This conflict, to all intents and purposes another British colonial campaign of the nineteenth century, remains, together with the Zulu themselves, a source of interest and debate more than a century later. In 1995 for example the Anglo-Zulu War battlefields were visited by David Bromhead, Colonel of the Royal Regiment of Wales. Part of this regiment was originally the 24th Regiment of

Foot, one of the main British units during the War and the Zulu opponents at the battles of Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift. Bromhead was in South Africa to *inter alia* participate in the annual commemoration parade at Rorke's Drift and commented that:

> These events (Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift) are immensely important to us. The army being what it is, we have to attract people. So we do harp on our successes, and failures, and our regimental history .... The tie between Zululand and the Royal Regiment of Wales is also an important one for us. There is great interest in the UK and an enormous interest in the United States. I cannot tell you how many people ask me to sign books on the subject[1].

Another significant comment came from the author of a recent publication about the War. After having seen only one chapter and a synopsis, the British publishers Greenhill Books, offered Ron Lock a contract for his *Blood on the Painted Mountain*[2]. Lock commented in an interview:

> I suppose I wrote it for myself, but there is still such an interest in the Anglo-Zulu War that the publishers obviously think they can make money out of it[3].

Thus there remains a significant market for books on this subject. While publications and comment about it, have appeared since the end of the war, the present interest in it really began in the 1960s. The publication of Donald Morris's *The Washing of the Spears*[4], together with the release of the 1964 film *Zulu*, created enormous interest and led to the release of a growing number of histories of the War and its battles[5]. The majority of these were 'popular' publications, concerned firstly with the activities of the British during the war and secondly the better known of the battles, namely Isandlwana, Rorke's Drift and Ulundi. These books were concerned with a plot, which while historically accurate, nevertheless involved the heroes (the British) being defeated initially (Isandlwana), redeeming themselves soon after (Rorke's Drift) and finally defeating the dangerous foe (Ulundi). The Zulu, as the enemy, were 'Frankenstein's monster' (Furneaux 1963:15)[6],

[1] 'Salute to Uncle Gunnie', interview in the *Sunday Tribune* 22 January 1995.

[2] *Blood on Painted Mountain* by R. Lock (1995).

[3] 'Fruits of a Childhood Dream', interview in the *Sunday Tribune* 16 July 1995.

[4] See D. Morris's, (1966) *The Washing of the Spears* and published by Jonathan Cape.

[5] Examples are *The Zulu War* by D Clammer (1973), *The Zulu War* by A. Lloyd (1973) and *Rorke's Drift: A Victorian Epic* by M. Glover (1975).

[6] See R Furneaux's (1963) *The Zulu War: Isandlwana & Rorke's Drift* and published by Weidenfield & Nicolson.

only mentioned when necessary. This was usually to provide the 'supporting cast' for the British role. One work for example devoted 57 lines to describe Zulu movements and activities between July 1878 and 20 January 1879. By contrast, 39 pages covered British movements and preparations in considerable detail. Zulu tactical movements were mentioned only as they influence British activities (see Clammer 1973:29-69)[7].

This sort of 'popular' history led to a reaction from academic historians. There was a call to go beyond militarism and examine the wider political, social and economic issues at stake. The battle of Ulundi it was argued, was not the end for the Zulu kingdom. Rather it was promoted as a decisive victory to *inter alia* serve as an example of British power over colonial peoples. The War emerged not as a glorious adventure of cinematic proportions but rather as the beginning of a process of social and economic manipulation. More recently, there have been calls to accept that the status of the Zulu kingdom needed to be 'scaled down'[8]. In other words its role in Southern African history needed to be reassessed and exaggeration of its power avoided.

Thus the title *Rope of Sand: The Rise and Fall of the Zulu Kingdom in the Nineteenth Century* seems to be at odds with these historiographical trends. Indeed it bears a close resemblance to the full title of Morris's book—*The Washing of the Spears: The Rise and Fall of the Great Zulu Nation*. The similarities extend beyond the titles. Both books are concerned with the same period, the nineteenth century, both discuss military history and both deal with the political and social aspects of the Zulu kingdom.

Rope of Sand is however the work of an academic historian who has given respectability to the military history of the Zulu people. Laband has written widely on the war[9] and this latest work is a synthesis of his research to date. It represents a reappraisal of the Zulu kingdom from a military perspective, or rather a 'war and societies' paradigm. This political and military history approaches nineteenth century Zulu society in terms of the internal and external tensions it faced during the nineteenth century and ultimately how it coped or failed to cope with these.

From the 1830s, the Zulu began to face increasing pressure from the English settlers at Port Natal, from missionaries and the Trekker parties

[7] See D. Clammer's (1973) *The Zulu War* and published by Purnell & Sons.

[8] See the articles in *Reality* January 1979, M. de Haas in the *Daily News* 12 May 1992 and J. Wright in the *Natal Witness* 6 April 1992.

[9] See for example *Field Guide to the War in Zululand and the Defence of Natal* by J. Laband & P. Thompson (1979, 1983, 1987), *The Battle of Ulundi* (1988) and *Kingdom in Crisis: The Zulu Response to the British Invasion of 1879* (1992) by J. Laband and *Isandlwana* by J. Laband and J. Matthews (1992).

moving into Natal (these issues are dealt with in Part II of the book). Militarily, the Zulu were at a distinct disadvantage in terms of firepower. Firearms were utilised by them, although only as ancillary weapons and more usually as an expression of the king's power (p. 182). Consequently the Zulu kings, particularly after the Battle of Ncome/Blood River (pp. 100-105), tended to pursue a diplomatic policy towards the British and Trekkers. Cetshwayo attempted to do this before 1879 but by then certain British officials were determined to provoke war (pp. 193-194).

Laband also discusses the often-ignored internal turmoil within the political structure of the kingdom. Much of this was related to the problems Cetshwayo faced with overly ambitious chiefs. A number desired autonomy, while still others attempted to safeguard their positions by co-operating with the British before and during the war (see for example p. 339). The author deals with these issues, explaining their motivations for committing these apparent acts of treachery.

Another aspect of this internal tension was the difficulties Cetshwayo had in controlling the younger members of his kingdom (see for example pp. 178-179). The eagerness of the latter to confront the British led to a tendency to disregard orders, thereby imperilling Zulu strategy (see for example p. 271).

Included in *Rope of Sand* is an examination of various Zulu rituals. One is the greatly misunderstood ritual purification that followed a battle. Believing that killing someone resulted in 'pollution' by *umnyama*—an evil force—Zulus returning from battle were required to be purified before being admitted back into society. Laband details this ritual in a manner devoid of ethnographic sensationalism (see p. 34).

In addition, the author also does not shy away from including Zulu atrocities during the Anglo-Zulu War (pp. 227-228) but balances these with a description of those committed by troops on the British side (pp. 320-321).

It is this point that is the essence of the book. An attempt to create a balance of perspectives separates it from the 'popular' histories mentioned above. By utilising sources such as the *James Stuart Archive*, *A Zulu King Speaks*[10] and eye-witness accounts of the war (see Laband's 'Notes' and 'Select Bibliography' for details of these), Laband attempts to provide a dual perspective missing in so many previous accounts. Various issues, which previously were sources of sensational interest, are discussed at length, alongside the political and military machinations of the British. Significantly

[10] *A Zulu King Speaks: Statements made by Cetshwayo kaMpande on the History and Customs of his People* edited by C. de B. Webb & J. Wright (1978) and *The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring People* I -IV edited and translated by C. de B. Webb & J. Wright (1976, 1979, 1982, 1986).

the author also uses the Zulu kings' *izibongi* or praises to describe them and their activities (see for example pp. 57-58). These are very useful and enlightening, offering a Zulu view of these individuals.

There is very obviously an attempt to create an integrated history. It does not represent a departure from his previous work but it is an attempt to make history 'accessible' to a wider audience—a factor which Laband feels is one of the tasks of a historian[11].

This desire to make scholarly history 'accessible' to a more 'popular' market has gained much attention. In KwaZulu-Natal the dynamic political situation and the need to explain and contextualise it, have meant a steady publication and re-publication of historical texts[12]. Laband firmly situates *Rope of Sand* within this particular discourse, considering that it is essential to understand nineteenth century Zulu history to comprehend contemporary events in KwaZulu-Natal (p. ix). In Laband's opinion, the battle of Ulundi was a decisive engagement (p. 303). It is such nineteenth century conflict and tension that have led to a heightened sense of Zulu national consciousness and pride in the twentieth century. The Zulu Royal House provides the link between these two periods (pp. 439-440). This is at least one argument for comprehending events in the region today, as the heightened consciousness and the Royal House have played and are playing a central role in KwaZulu-Natal politics.

Making history 'accessible' does however have its problems. It often requires a simplification of complex issues and thus a number of historiographical issues are avoided. This is perhaps unfortunate, since general readers may never come into full contact with the complexities of South African history and the writing thereof. An illustration of this is the use of Zulu oral testimony as available in the *James Stuart Archive*, *A Zulu King Speaks*. The problems of colonial influence on such testimony are, of course, paramount issues and have raised enormous historiographical problems. Debate over whether it is a reliable source of information or whether it has been sullied by the colonial authorities who collected it, has resulted in much controversy among historians[13]. In addition, the kings' praises are of course

[11] 'You can't Escape the Past', interview in the *Sunday Tribune* 5 November 1995.

[12] Examples include *To Bind the Nation* by N. Cope (1993), *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom* by J. Guy (1994) & *Shaka's Children: A History of the Zulu People* by S. Taylor (1994).

[13] For differing views see *inter alia* C. Hamilton's (1993) *Authoring Shaka: Models, Metaphors and Historiography*, Unpublished Ph.D., The Johns Hopkins University (pp. 63-78) and 'A Tainted Well. The Objectives, Historical Fantasies, and Working-Methods of James Stuart, with Counter-Argument' by J. Cobbing in the *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* XI (1988).

also oral in origin and thus may not have been recorded accurately or may express imagery far beyond their superficial nature. These matters are not addressed by Laband in the book and indeed he has unquestioningly made use of such sources. Thus the reader not familiar with the debates may come to regard them as unconditionally reliable.

The inclusion of such issues need not be problematic, however. Laband does manage to include perspectives of the *Mfecane*—the early nineteenth century changes or upheavals in Southern Africa—for example. Assessments of this issue have differed greatly and Laband considers all of these (pp. 13-16).

Rope of Sand also tends to focus on 'great men' and 'great events' and thus the Zulu kingdom appears remarkable, never ordinary. There is very little about the life of the 'ordinary' nineteenth century Zulu.

Nevertheless, it can only be said that these sorts of problems are outweighed by the attempt Laband has made to create a coherent narrative, faithful to reality (p. xi). *Rope of Sand* is well written and well researched and accordingly the contribution it makes to KwaZulu Natal's history in the nineteenth century is considerable.

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The Construction of Afrikaner Nationalist Identity

Constructs of Identity and Difference in South African Literature
by Johan van Wyk
Durban-Westville: CSSALL, 1995, 122 pp.
ISBN 0 947445 26 9

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In this first number of the CSSALL's 'Re-thinking South African Literature Series' the focus of Johan van Wyk is mainly on the construction of Afrikaner nationalist identity by means of some early Afrikaans texts. His 're-thinking' of these texts is done in terms of some constructs borrowed

from Marx, Freud, Saussure, Vološinov, Lacan, Derrida and others. His plying of these constructs and their application to his target texts generate some stimulating insights pertaining to the discursive constitution of Afrikaner Nationalism.

The book opens with a theoretical chapter in which Psychoanalysis, Marxism and Semiology are brought into an overlapping relation in terms of the constructs of identity (Lacan), sign (Saussure) and value (Vološinov & Marx). The splicing of these concepts results in three valuable insights which need to be further developed: 1) nationalism is seen as a symbolic structure which is based on an imaginary (iconic) form of identification; 2) class consciousness is perceived as indexical because it is motivated by a cause-and-effect continuum[14]; and 3) the insight that the *material* basis of all signification, value and identification is the productive human body.

In the second chapter Van Wyk links up class struggle and class identity with Freud's Oedipal complex as the unconscious layer of H A Fagan's petit-bourgeois drama *Die nuwe wêreld* (1947). He convincingly shows how the ideological *and* the psychological undercurrents of this play find expression in the portrayal of character and events, in the decor, the tensions and conflicts, the forms of address and even in the list of characters. This chapter is proof of the insight enhancing fruitfulness of bringing together aspects of Marxism and Psychoanalysis.

The section 'Slave and Worker' in the third chapter is probably the least satisfactory one in the book. In it Van Wyk attempts to articulate a relation between 'slave' and 'worker' in terms of self-consciousness. The reductive binary opposition he sets up between the worker as being conscious of an inner self in contrast to the absence of such a consciousness in the slave is, to say the least, highly debatable. This section should be rethought. Hegel's discourse on the master-slave relation and Lacan's version of it could contribute to such a rethinking. The supposed link between the above-named section and the main section of this chapter, 'The Worker', is also all but clear. Here Van Wyk indicates the historic relation between emergent capitalism and the production of a nationalist versus a worker poetics in Afrikaans from approximately 1860 to 1948.

In the next chapter Van Wyk explores from a Freudian point of view the psyche of the Afrikaner nationalist as it manifests itself in two plays of J. F.W. Grosskopf, *Legende* (1942) and *Padbrekers* (1947). He grounds his excellent analysis on Freud's explanatory myth of the murder of the primal father by his sons and their subsequent guilt feelings as the psychic structure

[14] One would have liked a discussion of Charles Sanders Peirce's typology of signs (symbol, index, icon) here. A more thorough application of this typology could have deepened these insights.

underlying Afrikaner and other nationalisms. It is identification with the image of this father which lays the 'Foundation of the Nationalist Conscience' and its sublatory ideological and metaphysical discourses. This chapter, arguably the most outstanding in the book, demonstrates the value of a psychoanalytic approach to the rethinking of literature and ideology.

In the rather loosely constructed fifth chapter, 'Social Concerns in Afrikaans Drama in the Period 1930-1940', racism, family conflict and the problem of 'the poor whites' for Afrikaner nationalism are addressed. Probably the most important insight gained by this chapter is that most of the plays of this period were written from outside the reality of the poor whites themselves, that is, they were written from the perspective of the nationalist petit-bourgeoisie. To them the poor whites, as an upcoming class open to racial hybridisation, seemed a threat to Afrikaner unity and purity. They were therefore experienced as the potentially dangerous Other, the difference that had to be 'returned to the same of the nation'. Consequently the sympathy towards the poor white characters present in most of these plays was motivated not so much by altruism as by nationalism.

Using the constructs of identity and difference, chapter eight explores the role printed language played in the discursive formation of Afrikaner and African nationalisms. Van Wyk substantiates his stimulating argument rather well by drawing on the history of printing presses at missions, the publishing activities of the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners*, ethnographic texts, Olive Schreiner's *Thoughts on South Africa*, Erasmus Smit's *Diary*, N.P. Van Wyk Louw's *Die Dieper Reg* and H.I.E. Dhlomo's *Dingane*. The discursive strategies of these texts—stereotyping, essentialising and the construction of sovereignty and subjectivity—reveal the correspondence and difference between these two nationalisms.

Structurally the last chapter of the book links up with some of the themes of the first chapter thereby establishing a frame within which the other chapters could be read. Here we find a return to some of the theoretical aspects of Saussure and Lacan explicated in chapter one, but now more practically applied. Some of the ideas of Derrida are also used here. The main theme of this chapter is the relation between the construction of Afrikaner nationalist identity and the printed Afrikaans word. The historical development of this relation is traced broadly from approximately 1875 to 1940. The application to this history of Saussure's distinction between the material and value aspects of the sign and Lacan's diachronic perspective on the unconscious make for fascinating reading, so much so that one would have liked more of it. It is therefore a pity that the last section dealing with the printed word as frame of reference derails somewhat on a rather eschewed interpretation of Derrida's conception of logocentrism: Derrida does not see the written/printed word as logocentric. On the contrary, to him

it is the metaphysication of the *spoken* word in Western philosophic discourse that constitutes logocentrism: in this discourse the spoken word is privileged as more essential, more true, more original, more logos, more real and present than the printed/written word which is relegated to the rank of mere supplement to it. Because this supplement is divorced from its supposed origin (the *presence* of the spoken word being uttered by a speaking subject present to his/her own meaning within a concrete immediate context) it is open to an endless process of deferment, displacement and misplacement. As such it becomes the dangerous supplement representing the *absence* of logocentric meaning. Within this context Derrida's phrase 'metaphysics of phonetic writing' refers to the privileging of this type of writing by logocentric thinking *because of it supposedly being nearer to speech* than other types of writing. Nonetheless, it remains a suspect supplement. A re-reading of Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, especially the second part on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and his *Positions* should be clarifying in this respect. That nationalism uses *both* the spoken and written word to establish logocentric notions such as unity, centre, essence, essential nature, origin, race, purity of blood, the same, the own, the God-inspired leader, the equivalence of language, culture and nation, the uniqueness of nationality, etc. is of course true.

Some final remarks: One feels that Van Wyk—given his use of Marxist ideas in this book—should have given much more space to one of the prime historical forces behind the formation of Afrikaner nationalism up to 1948, namely British imperialism. However, to a certain extend Jean-Philippe Wade's excellent introduction does compensate for the backstaging (repression?) of the role of British colonialism in the constitution of early Afrikaner nationalism.

The most striking aspect of Van Wyk's book is his flair for linking up constructs from a variety of discourses and then putting them to work on specific texts generating stimulating insights which just beg to be further researched. In this way he makes a valuable contribution to the deconstruction of Afrikaner nationalist discourse. This is a book worth reading.

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Identities within the Rainbow

Arise ye Coolies:
Apartheid and the Indian 1960-1995.
by Ashwin Desai
Johannesburg: Impact Africa Publishing CC, 1996, 148 pp.
ISBN 0 620 198447 8

Reviewed by David Hemson
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Every book carries the marks of its antecedents, its particular history and location, and nowhere is this truer than in the contested ground of South African history and politics. Ashwin Desai's book revolves around the theme of identity and, in particular, the curious fact that in many peculiar ways ethnic identities have been reinforced and recast in the politics of the New South Africa. The Rainbow South Africanism which is widely acclaimed as the subordination and submergence of race is shown to stand on ethnic feet. The book carries this explanation through by way of illustration from the politics of identity of Indian people in South Africa. These broad and compelling interests are tightly linked to the very concrete experiences of life and struggle at the University of Durban-Westville in the introduction where present concerns and distant history are interwoven in the broad sweep drawing us into the theme of the book. *Arise* is among the early texts to attempt to bring to the surface the subterranean textures and feelings of the transition. The obsession with identity during this period is explained:

> We over-indulge in the symbols of the new for we are tired now from incessant struggle. We long for a secure identity to house us and make us safe (p. iii).

Two approaches develop within the book, *firstly,* the history of the appalling conditions of indentured labour of Indian workers, the merchant-dominated politics that emerged before the turn of the century, the politics of collaboration and resistance; and *secondly,* an examination of the current political milieu from the perspective of those critical of the communal basis of political mobilisation. Desai reveals incisively the contradiction between the Rainbowism of the elite which draws on the symbolic discourse of sports and national ritual such as the Presidential inauguration (which is imaginatively dissected) and the ethnic politics being constructed for the majority as an alternative to the class politics of opposition.

This is not a book in which conclusions are hidden in ambiguous phrases. The author writes in an uncomplicated, polemical and accessible style; from an intimate introduction in which the author bursts through the pages to a conclusion in which the symbolic roots of Rainbowism are uncovered and its political effects savaged. Between these two ends, vignettes are presented of the desperate lives of the indentured labourers, a critique is made of the encapsulation of resistance within ethnic bounds, we are appalled by the buffoonery and farcical exchanges of the collaborators in the Indian 'House of Delegates', and there is a lively analysis of the sociology, psychology and history of Indian support for the National Party in the general election. All of this is entertainingly presented and carries the reader briskly to the political conclusion.

Briefly the argument is that while Rainbowism is intoxicating it is distilled by the need to accommodate the interests of established power and wealth in South Africa. This discourse rewards those who are 'more inward-looking, traditional and exclusive', and despite the appeals to a common nationality, ethnicity is being reinforced. For all its apparent universality, racial stereotypes are being allowed to fester, and (in a disturbing metaphor) 'different racial flowers' blossom. But this process is marked by contradiction, as leaders become estranged from the communities they are imagined to represent. For instance, a spin-off of this process is that Indian politicians are alienated from their 'constituency', and for many the old collaborators such as Rajbansi are seen as the defender of the interests of Indian people. The New reinforces the Old. Desai argues that it is precisely these ideologies and processes which are causing a breakdown in the idea of non-racial unity and class politics and that this is a deliberate demobilisation in the face of a capitalist programme of austerity and privatisation.

One of the contradictions of our time is that institutions and movements initiated to bring change can become the most effective barrier to the realisation of their dreams. Trade union leaders decline support for decisive strikes (such as the colossal battle of British miners against Thatcher's attacks) and 'Communist' Parties defend capitalist policies (as in various countries of Eastern Europe). The analogy can be extended to the politics of liberation. Indians form what Benedict Anderson terms an imagined community, one constructed from the collusion between 'history and the modernising narratives of citizenship, bourgeois public and private, and the nation state' (p. 104). From the foundation of Anderson's approach, Desai argues that the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) which led the opposition of Indian people to segregation and apartheid 'fell victim to its own success in privileging an Indian identity'.

He states that when they arrived in South Africa, Indian people did not have a cohesive identity and now they do; a fact which has reactionary

consequences for our politics. This has been derived not only form the external interference of the apartheid state in structuring 'community', but also from the impulses within the community to organise around common communal grievances rather than to adopt a broader class approach. The resistance itself becomes involved in appeals to traditions of resistance, communitarian and family values, ethnicity, language, religion and experiences of persecution, around which Rinder argues a subjectivity congeals, which constitutes the experience of being in the 'middle'.

The matter is complex, as the NIC was originally and self-consciously the mouthpiece of the merchant class and an active opposition emerged from the educated elite to its conservatism. Yet the radicals set out to build a more effective unity of the Indian community and 'reaching out to the Indian underclass, they eschewed a class politics for a politics of "the Indian"' (p. 110). Within alliances a 'more defined, dynamic and self-conscious minority identity arises' (p. 93). Resistance reinforces broad divisions. There was not an altogether exclusive approach to resistance, however, and in the 1950s a 'peculiar brand of racial separateness and togetherness' characterised the Congress Alliance. Yet in this way even resistance to racial exploitation took on a culture in step with racial identity rather a common identity of the oppressed. The book contains fascinating material on the critical debates about the membership and orientation of the NIC from its relaunch in the early 1970s, when a decision was taken by a narrow majority against the opposition of black consciousness groupings, to limit its membership to Indian people. In itself this might not have solved the problem of Indian-African unity, but it would at least have laid a marker against ethnic politics and possibly explored, decades ago, the problem of unity among black people which has still to be achieved in the Natal region.

A review of the politics of identity and liberation has to confront the very specific questions which are raised to throw a class perspective into doubt, and in this book the question is why a large majority of Indian people voted for a party

> that had forced them from their traditional residential areas, denied them trading rights, jailed and banned their leaders and generally treated them as second class citizens? (p. 95).

This fact posed a major difficulty for the African National Congress. After the elections Mandela is quoted saying that 'Indian and Coloured communities identified themselves with the oppressors' and that this 'has created problems for me in promoting a spirit of reconciliation' (p 88).

Desai argues that the 'still-intact structure of cultural and racial identity' (p. 118) is real and pervasive, and that racial exclusivity and taboo

continue. Far from race and ethnicity being related to the past, these features 'are increasingly being reassigned political value' (p. 115). All these effects are related to the cause: the over-riding priority of stabilisation around the old inequalities and identities. He goes so far as to state that the

> the Apartheid attribute of race with all its artificiality and eugenic connotations ... are now lauded and rewarded as correct and respectable (p. 119).

The new Rainbow political structure is built on the blocks of separate identities. These social identities in the New South Africa carry their own pervasive logic.

The peculiar and contradictory consequence of this development has been that a majority of votes of Indian people during the general election of April 1994 went to the National Party which had promised to repatriate Indians when it came to power in 1948. Much of the thrust of the argument of the book is expended in explaining this particular contradiction which has had severe consequences in national politics, including the failure of the ANC to win KwaZulu/Natal.

Desai insists against more conservative commentators that the voting pattern of Indian people as among others is a 'complex sociological and psychological trajectory and *not* the result of any primordial essence or propensity' (p. 124). He makes an explanation for this phenomenon at a number of levels. Firstly, Indians can be seen as a 'middleman' minority which occupies an intermediate rather than a low-status position, and these minorities serve as scapegoats par excellence (especially as the vulnerable 'economic villain') who put a face to economic distress 'rather than ... remote, complex and hardly comprehensible forces' (p. 89). Secondly, the very logic of apartheid which systematically destroyed viable multi-racial communities and forced group separation led to a 'vivid group identity' coalescing around separate residential areas, schools, newspapers, and TV.

Thirdly, Desai employs Reich's theorising of the irrational, the character of people in mass psychology which is in Reich's terms 'totally dependent on authority, incapable of freedom and extremely accessible to mysticism' (p. 97). Innermost thoughts are governed by 'psychic processes that take place unconsciously and are therefore not accessible to conscious control' (p. 97). Reich's argument is most cogent in relation to the family and attitudes to female sexuality. In following through this argument Desai argues Indian families are 'notoriously disciplinarian *and* self-absorbed' and that family relations are 'tight and oppressive' (p. 98).

> The retreat into the family, the leaving intact of family hierarchies—is perhaps a major reason, ironically for Indian support for the NP nationally (p. 101).

Finally, Desai argues that Indian Culture is conservative, that it is part of a 'womblike structure'. Equally the political culture is conservative as progressive Indian organisations built 'a homogenous Indian identity in order to confront the State more forcefully' (p. 104). Around common persecution there was a forging of defensive strategies but within a definition of a community imagined around the confines of Indians.

Desai argues that the success of new identity politics is marked by 'a resounding absence of criticism' from intellectuals. Many intellectuals are seeking an answer to the compelling questions of identity by posing multiple identities or layers of identity, or by posing the issue as situational: that people are adopting the appropriate identity to the time and place leaving identity fluid. The question still remains that of deciding which are the primary and the secondary questions. The issue is more than one of social surveys and mass psychology; it is one which is posed within a living ideological environment in which socialist ideas are ridiculed, working class unity decried as absurd, and the values of money are absolute. How can a worker from a minority owe loyalty to an identity which is being denied by the majority? If the social milieu is polarised ethnically, how can class politics survive and prosper?

The book has much to do with the sociological diagnosis of the Rainbow phenomenon, but it concludes with a political statement which is bound to be controversial. Desai concludes with an argument for a new politics to be born around the issues of economic and political deprivation, and for activists to enter terrain 'Indian', 'even if that base is initially reactionary' (p. 125). Although he starts with an approach to the new Indian working class politics, his perspective is one which will go beyond the factory; and agitate for rebellion in the family, the squatter camp and street corner. Desai sees opposition arising among the disposed, in the

> nooks and crannies there is revulsion and revolution brewing. Yearning. And it is here where we struggle; to shatter the prism of the rainbow (p. 126).

Arise is a serious attempt to describe and draw a perspective on the querulous state of the present South African political climate from the history of the Indian people, one which delineates the fault lines between ethnic and class identity and offers a prognosis for struggle for the dispossessed. He forecasts:

> Once the South African political situation is stabilised and its markets secured, South Africa's internal bourgeoisie will renege from their feel-good, RDP-style social investment pledges and the fight for survival will be on (p. 117).

The recent decision of Cyril Ramaphosa to leave politics with the approval

of the President, to engage in the field of 'black empowerment' in the boardroom battles to construct corporate pyramids which provide the illusion of participation in the economy for the black majority, is the general trend of the Rainbow politics of the elite. This Rainbow opportunity displaces entirely the question of nationalisation and opens the door to privatisation through the enrichment of a black elite. While many politicians have sought the soft seats of corporations, none have turned to mobilise the working class to ensure delivery of jobs, houses, and decent wages. The espousing of transcendental national goals with enrichment on the basis of ethnic mobilisation is a confirmation of the process outlined in the last chapter. The winding up of the RDP as a coherent package of reform is another.

Rainbowism is predominantly a discourse to displace the concerns of the African majority from the centre stage of politics in the interests of wider unity between the races. As disappointment mounts with the lack of transformation of the conditions for this majority it may dissolve into Africanism or class discourse. *Arise* is a voice for a return to class politics.

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Short Stories From Mozambique

Short Stories from Mozambique
edited by Richard Bartlett
Johannesburg: COSAW, 1995, 279 pp.
ISBN: 0-620-19726-9

Reviewed by Fátima Mendonça
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This is a collection of short stories by Mozambican writers, representing in a general way, different moments in the development of fiction in Mozambique.

Sixteen authors make their appearance and one may question the basis on which some were selected: Leite de Vasconselos is better known as a poet and Helder Muteia as a poet and author of tales with a socio-cultural character, while Lina Magaias' texts are reportage rather than fiction.

The reader is also rather left in the dark with regard to the criteria used for placing the stories in their present order. One is left with the vague

feeling that it was all rather left to chance. Even though it is true that a purely chronological sequence can prove somewhat tedious for the reader, I feel that the editor should have shown more concern for establishing some sort of relationship between the texts. In this way, the reader could have understood better what separated the life and writings of Joao Dias (whose texts remain unfinished) from those of Mia Couto or Ungulani ba ka Khossa.

One aspect that I found distinctly pleasing, however, was the editor's decision to choose a wide range of writers, independently of their degree of aesthetic accomplishment. Not only 'the best' were selected, or those with the greatest international recognition (such as Mia Couto, who has been widely translated, or Suleimane Cassamo, recently published in France). I feel that this approach is not only permissible, but offers the best way of introducing literature which has only recently detached itself from its colonial context. The range, spread and unevenness tell the story of the stories, as much as their actual content.

This collection includes the pioneers of Mozambican fiction, such as Jaoa Dias, whose premature death in 1949 interrupted what could have been a major aesthetic development; without him, Luis Bernardo Honwana, also represented, and also one of the pioneers, would not have come on the scene.

Similarly, other authors from different cultural and historical contexts appear. Orlando Mendes and more recently Carneiro Goncalves are there, as well as a more recent generation of writers who emerged from the movement associated with the journal *Charrua* (*Plough*), such as Marcelo Panguana or Ungulani ba ka Khossa. The anthology also contains writers who, although always under the umbrella of AEMO (The Association of Mozambican Writers), came more independently on to the literary scene, like Mia Couto, Calane de Silva or Lilia Momple.

It is precisely this diversity of phases and authors which is not sufficiently acknowledged in an otherwise well-articulated introduction by Albie Sachs.

Albie Sachs focuses almost exclusively on the epic times at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1990s, when a new generation of writers emerged. (I refer to the Charrua group—Marcelo Panguane, Pedro Chissano, Helder Muteia and the writers who were drawn towards the AEMO after its foundation.) The Mozambican revolutionary process ruptured every aspect of pre-existing normality, and reached into every sphere, not only economic, but also social, cultural and, in this particular case, literary. This was a time when we all took part enthusiastically and intensely in different aspects of public and cultural life. As a result of this focus, understandable in the light of this total immersion in our emerging culture, Albie Sachs' introduction fails to bring out the fact that important forms of literary life existed well

before the Independence. Thus, in this collection there are writings of authors who had already succeeded in autonomising themselves from their initial progenitor, namely Portuguese literature. This they managed to do in a phase that not only long preceded independence, but both foreshadowed and promoted it.

Thus, authors such as Joao Dias, Orlando Mendes, Anibal Aleluia, Carneiro Goncalves or even Luis Bernardo Honwana are far from being orphans of the Revolution, as Albie Sachs describes the writers in this collection. The description is indeed an apt one in relation to recent generations, but hardly appropriate for those writers, who should better be referred to as the parents of the Revolution.

In fact, in Mozambique the literary and cultural movement preceded the political movement and the creation of the national liberation movement, and was not its product, although, as Albie Sachs correctly notes, they have never dissociated, not even to this day. It suffices to refer to The Struggle for Mozambique by Eduardo Mondlane, the founder of FRELIMO, written in those distant years of the 1960s, to see how poetry influenced his perception of Mozambican reality. Many nationalist ideas were in fact presented in the form of poetry by Noemia de Sousa and Jose Craveirinha in the 1950s.

I have one further bone to pick with Albie Sachs. It relates to an argument between us which dates back to his years of exile in Mozambique. He contended then, and still insists, that in the period after independence, literature did not flourish in Mozambique. I disagreed with him then and continue to disagree with him now. He is right in extolling the notable way in which the plastic arts, such as painting and sculpture flourished in that period. I also concur with his reference to the near absence of narrative fiction between 1975 and 1984. Yet, in the dozen years after Independence there was an extraordinary outpouring of poetry, to which he makes no reference at all. Even in an introduction to narrative fiction, he should, for the sake of giving a balanced picture to the reader, have brought out the role that poetry was playing at the time; the critical word was, indeed, well represented, if not by fiction, then by poetry.

Much though I enjoyed reading and being provoked by Albie Sachs' introduction, I feel that the editor of this anthology was called upon to provide something more. In order to enable the reader better to understand the texts, a complementary set of notes should have been provided, more academic in format, to complement the general scene-setting. This could have taken the form of a preface with an academic format, detailing relevant information of literary-historical value. Alternatively, explanatory notes could have been attached to the stories or the biographies.

My main reservations, however, relate to aspects of such limited editorial assistance as was in fact offered, more especially in relation to the bio-

graphical information and the glossary. Even though these details might not be essential for the ordinary reader, they are important for students of literature and for all South African researchers (and others) not familiar with the Portuguese language. For persons such as these, this collection is precious material indeed. It is, as the publishers point out, the first anthology of Mozambican fiction available in English. One would have expected from the editor, therefore, greater attention to verifying factual information, more especially since he was in a position to do this checking *in loco*. Had he been more exact, he would have avoided placing the amiable and pacific Marcelo Panguana in the armed struggle. Similarly, he would not have 'transferred' the venerable Dr. Orlando Mendes (specialist in medicinal plants) from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Agriculture, nor transformed him into a meteorologist!

These errors are, fortunately, not numerous, but they reveal a lack of rigour and care in the preparation of the book that is out of keeping with its general importance. The fact that Richard Bartlett is not the first (and, unfortunately, certainly will not be the last) to succumb to this 'neglect', is no mitigation. On the contrary, it increases one's concern over the causal way certain researchers treat primary sources, not only in Mozambique, but also in other countries of the so-called Third World.

With regard to the glossary, it would have been convenient to distinguish between words from Portuguese and Ronga or Shangaan vocabularies, respectively. Similarly, there are references which should have been contextualised. To tell a South African reader that Ngungunhane was the 'leader of a kingdom in the South of Mozambique' is to ignore the whole of shared historical experience in this region. At the very least, the Nguni origin of Ngungunhane should have been referred to, so as to locate the Gaza Kingdom within origins meaningful to South Africans.

Similarly, to define a 'coperante' as a 'person forced to work on cooperative farms' shows a quite unacceptable ignorance of the importance of the phenomenon of 'coperantes' as it appeared in Mozambique. The arrival in Mozambique shortly after Independence of expatriates (called 'coperantes') with various specialities (medicine, education, military, etc.), with different political perspectives (socialist, capitalist) and hailing from innumerable countries (Cuba, Italy, Soviet Union, Guinea, South Africa, Chile) gave rise to a variety of opinions (favourable and unfavourable). The Cooperante thus became a kind of national institution, with all the positive and negative connotations implied thereby.

Having made these reservations, I would like to hail the initiative of Richard Bartlett and of COSAW, in once more concretising co-operation with AEMO. This anthology breaches the barrier of language and opens up to the South African imagination, vistas of a *sui generis* universe.

Mozambique is gradually ceasing to be (as in the past) only a paradise of prawns and Polana, or (as at present) a devastating zone of war and illegal emigrants. By showing the existence of the strong and creative literature of a country with which South Africa shares frontiers, languages and cultures, this collection contributes, far more than political discourses do, towards the idea of southern Africa.

Accordingly, one must express gratitude to COSAW and the Camoes Institute of Portugal for helping Richard Bartlett's work come to fruition. Despite the deficiencies referred to, the result is a praiseworthy one. Further initiatives would be equally welcome, particularly an anthology along similar lines, devoted to poetry. We have reason to hope that people will no longer find it necessary—to adapt the words of Albie Sachs—to ask the question of whether it was advantageous to have been colonised by the British or the Portuguese, but rather will feel more proud of being themselves, Mozambican and South African together, as Samora (still an important point of reference) once said.

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Frontline Nationalism

Frontline Nationalism in Angola and Mozambique
by David Birmingham
London & Trenton: James Currey & Africa World Press, 1992, 122 pp.
ISBN: 0-85255-083-9

Reviewed by Richard Bartlett
CSSALL
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The temptation to compare Mozambique and Angola often appears to make sense because of their shared heritage of Portuguese imperialism and armed struggle against it. The almost simultaneous independence in 1975 and civil wars which followed would tend to emphasise the similarities. It is these similarities which allow Birmingham to draw the two countries together in a study of front-line nationalism. But the emphasis of Birmingham's work is on nation building rather than nationalism.

Simply put, nationalism is about identity. And identity encompasses far more than a straightforward maintenance of a country after the colonial machinery has departed.

The need and desire to construct a state from the borders determined by European colonial powers is nation building. The discourse of individual and common identity which develops into nationalism is what determines and drives that need and desire.

Birmingham does not attempt to differentiate between the two; they both fall under the same banner of Nationalism. For the purpose of his study this is perhaps adequate. He does not attempt to provide an in-depth analysis of the development of nationalisms in Lusophone Africa; what he rather provides is a brief study of the difficulties Mozambique and Angola faced in building a nation with South Africa as a neighbour and Portugal as a coloniser.

The birth of African nationalism in the two Portuguese colonies is dealt with in the first two chapters. The realms of Mbundu in Angola and Mutapa in Zimbabwe are mentioned as examples of 'recovery of pride in the African past'. He also mentions the resistance of Queen Nzinga who fought against European encroachment of her land in the first half of the seventeenth century. There is a historical character as important for Mozambique as Queen Nzinga is for Angola: Ngungunhane. In the late nineteenth century he successfully held the Portuguese and British at bay for many years until his kingdom was destroyed by a Portuguese colonial military force. Unfortunately, Ngungunhane does not warrant a mention in Birmingham's book.

Factors outside of armed struggle which nurtured the nationalism of the two countries were the development of an African press, the marginalisation of educated Africans due to European immigration (especially after the Second World War), religion and the labour policy of the colonies.

Oppressive labour policy fuelled anti-colonialism, as Birmingham points out, but labour policy was implemented in significantly different ways. Enforced contract work was the bane of an Angolan's life but for Mozambicans in the southern half of their country there was a choice, albeit limited: they could migrate to the relatively well paid work in the mines of South Africa.

Birmingham presents the South African option as one of two evils, but for many Mozambicans the mines were as much an escape and source of learning and riches as they were a necessary evil. Patrick Harries (1994)[15] has shown this dual nature of Mozambican migrant labour in his book, *Work,*

[15] See his book *Work, Culture and Identity: Migrant Labourers in Mozambique and South Africa. c.1860-1910*, published in Johannesburg by Witwatersrand University Press.

Culture and Identity. In her study of labour in the colonial capital of Lourenço Marques, Jeanne Penvenne (1995)[16] illustrates the journey many Mozambicans made to South Africa in trying to escape the limited choices open to the victims of colonialism.

South Africa is a central feature of Birmingham's study as it defines the title of the book—'Frontline'. Yet, South Africa plays a relatively minor role in Birmingham's narrative. The role of destructive engagement that South Africa played in both Angola and Mozambique is well known and Birmingham relates it to the struggle the newly independent states had undertaken in building a country from the shambles of the colonial departure.

The conjunction of the title is never suitably resolved. Does the fact that nationalism in Angola and Mozambique developed on the front-line make it front-line nationalism?

The violence of the apartheid state did play a part in impressing the urgency of nation building on the independent states, but how did this violence seep into nationalist discourse, in literature for example?

A significant amount of space is devoted to discussion of the Luanda Carnival and its role in recent Angolan nationalism. In its fascination it makes Mozambique seem a terribly dull and violently unenticing place. While this is not the case, Birmingham does not seem to be able to discuss Mozambique nearly as intimately as he can discuss Angola.

For all its brevity, Birmingham's work is a useful introduction to the origins and difficulties of nation building in Angola and Mozambique. As a study of intra-regional relationships, however, many more borders still have to be crossed before one can arrive at a convincing and comprehensive argument concerning the effects of the front-line on Angolan and Mozambican nationalism.

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[16] See her *African Workers and Colonial Racism: Mozambican Strategies and Struggles in Lourenço Marques, 1877-1962*, published in Johannesburg by Witwatersrand University Press.

The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy

The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse.
by Tsenay Serequeberhan.
London: Routledge, 1994, 161 pp. plus index
ISBN: 0-415-90801-9 (hb), 0-415-90802-7 (pbk.)

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'African philosophy' has recently been the subject of a minor academic boom. Part of the explanation is probably that the debate over whether there even was such a thing as 'African Philosophy', or whether anything deserving that name was *possible*, has largely given way to more direct attempts to contribute to African problems in a philosophical manner. This suggestion is borne out by the 'advance praise' for Serequeberhan's book which includes remarks by Lucius Outlaw to the effect that *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy* leaves the question of the existence of African philosophy behind and goes on to 'more interesting and revealing issues, and more difficult ones'.

Outlaw is entirely correct, since the work under review tackles a number of deep and complex issues with genuine boldness and energy. In what follows I offer an outline of Serequeberhan's argument accompanied by some relatively minor criticisms, then discuss a number of more pressing objections and reservations, and finally conclude with a few remarks on the unique opportunity represented by the growing debate on and within African Philosophy.

The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy divides neatly into four chapters of similar length. The first two chapters are concerned mainly with issues of method and orientation. Here Serequeberhan explains and defends his hermeneutic approach, and attempts to describe and disqualify what he sees as the main philosophical opposition. The final two chapters are more devoted to problems of application, and offer analyses of colonial and anti-colonial violence, and of the status and emancipatory possibilities of the 'liberation struggle'.

Chapter one, 'Philosophy and Post-colonial Africa: Historicity and Thought' argues, with gestures at the sketchily drawn figures of Gadamer

and Heidegger, that philosophical discourse always originates in and is related to concrete conditions of existence and ways of acting and being. Serequeberhan also contends that the common horizon of all Africans is the post-colonial condition, and hence that it is against and in response to this historical backdrop that the discourse of African philosophy should be articulated. Thus:

> ... to interpretatively engage the present situation in terms of what Africa 'has been'—both in its ambiguous pre-colonial 'greatness' as well as in its colonial and neocolonial demise—is the proper hermeneutical task of African philosophical thought (p. 19).

Serequeberhan's argument here is ultimately rather thin, but is probably sufficient for its purposes. This reviewer is, in any event, inclined to be sympathetic with his approach.

That said, though, even if Fanon is correct to point out that the struggle with colonialism is 'metaphysical', (p. 6) a judgement Serequeberhan takes on board without argument, it surely does *not* follow that to resist colonial oppression is an intrinsically metaphysical act, let alone that all involved are active or conscious metaphysicians. I also think that Serequeberhan is guilty of pessimistically overemphasising the extent and depth of European control over Africa even during the height of the colonial period, and also of the extent and co-ordination of contemporary external influence and control. It is simply not the case that the United States 'rules the world' (p. 15) or that Europe exercises 'hegemonic political and cultural control' over Africa (p. 21). At these points Serequeberhan seems to presuppose exactly the alleged African passivity he so rightly condemns elsewhere.

Chapter two, 'African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse' develops on the analysis of the first chapter, but pays more specific attention to African philosophy and philosophers. Here it becomes clear that Serequeberhan considers himself to be the (self-appointed) heir to the tradition of Fanon and Cabral, which he more than once describes as 'historically astute', and the opponent of what he sees as the double menace of negritude and Marxist-Leninism. He casts Senghor as an unrepentant racist and Nkrumah and Hountondji as European-style socialists, and then lines up ethnophilosophy and so-called 'African professional philosophy' with these two figures.

This classification is both crude, and most unhermeneutically unfair to both Senghor and Nkrumah. (It is worth noting that Serequeberhan has edited a collection called *African Philosophy: The Essential Readings* which omits both thinkers.) Nonetheless the contrasts Serequeberhan establishes on

the basis of his analysis allow him to articulate his own position more clearly, and enables the reader to follow his version of the history of African thought, which is interestingly devoid of Pan-Africanism or any indication of an African appropriation of postmodernism[17]. Serequeberhan's main conclusion is that an appropriate hermeneutics for Africa should set out to reject and transcend the racist categories which dominated European thinking on Africa rather than using them as implicit or explicit starting points, which seems reasonable enough. In this regard it is worth recalling, for example, that Hegel thought history did not happen in Africa[18], which he said was the land of 'gold' and of 'childhood', and Hume, that the one and only educated black person he had heard of was probably 'admired for slender accomplishments, like a parrot who speaks a few words plainly'[19].

Chapter three, 'Colonialism and the Colonised: Violence and Counter-violence' contains Serequeberhan's version of Fanon's defence of violence as a response to colonialism. Fanon's position[20] is reasonably well known, and all I need to say here is that Serequeberhan reproduces several of its defects. It may indeed be true that any resistance (even so called 'passive' resistance and civil disobedience) may be seen as a form of violence:

> In this context a 'nonviolent' resistance is a contradiction in terms precisely because any self-assertive act of the colonized is bound to violate—hence do violence to—the rule and standard or norm of subjugation and domination on which the colonial relation is grounded (p. 74).

Even so, it surely does *not* follow that a single analysis of violence will cover all examples, and even less that the paradigm example of 'armed combat' will help us understand a protest march or a stayaway, or even the many possible tactical and moral variations on the theme of combat itself. One is also inclined to suspect that Serequeberhan made up his mind on this issue well in advance, especially in the light of the dedication of his book to the 'Eritrean People's Liberation Front'.

Finally, chapter four, 'The Liberation Struggle: Existence and Historicity' draws together what has gone before and offers an account of how the overcoming of the neo-colonial situation could establish the widespread 'practice of freedom' in Africa. It is clear that many lessons about democracy remain to be learned on the African continent (and for that matter all over the world), and that what goes under that name is often little more than one-party neo-colonialism, effectively based on the maxim that the transition from colonial to perpetual legitimate rule requires only one election. Serequeberhan's assault on this problem area, though, is undoubtedly the weakest aspect of his argument.

Without offering any substantial theory of what society is, how it is continuously generated, how it effects people or how social transformation might be effected, he details a scenario where urban dissidents flee the centres of neo-colonial government and discover a ready mass of politicised proto-revolutionaries in the rural districts, from whom the urban intellectuals learn, and with whom social transformation is forced ahead towards the institution of popular democracy. In all this there is no criticism of nationalism, and none of the remarkably strict dichotomy between rural and urban life which informs the argument of the chapter. (Serequeberhan is quite emphatic that the rural revolution is the '*sine qua non*' of the transition to genuine democracy.) The remaining content of the chapter consists largely in the articulation of a rather idiosyncratic neo-Hegelian theory of history.

At one point in the chapter, Serequeberhan (again following Fanon without any criticism) more or less accuses Senghor of becoming a neo-colonial dictator. These unfortunate remarks show more than intellectual petulance and low standards of factual accuracy and it is significant that Senghor's own political career amounts to a counter-example to the Fanonist argument Serequeberhan develops here: Senghor's most reliable source of votes in his five successful presidential elections was the rural population of Senegal.

Turning to more general issues, I think it is fair to say that there are two particularly glaring failings in this book. The first, and lesser, is the absence of any suggestions as to how the violence the second part of the book so emphatically endorses could be abandoned once its original objectives (the overthrow of the colonial or neo-colonial dispensation) are satisfied, or of how violence within and between emancipatory groups can be contained or mediated in the interim. This criticism stands even though in Serequeberhan's defence it must be conceded that there is clearly something fundamentally valid about Fanon's existential analysis of the colonial condition and the related endorsement of the empowering and therapeutic potential of violent resistance.

The second and greater failing is the lack of any useful analysis of the category of race. Serequeberhan claims to take his 'methodological cue'

[17] For both a vigorous and up-to-date appeal for Pan-Africanism and a critical engagement with postmodernism see, e.g. *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* by Appiah, A (1992) and published by Oxford University Press, Oxford.

[18] See *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction* by Hegel, G.W.F. (1975), translated by B.H. Nisbet and published by Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 174f.

[19] See 'Hume's Racism' by Popkin, R.H. (1977/8) in *The Philosophical Forum* 9,2/3.

[20] See 'Concerning Violence' in *The Wretched of the Earth* by Fanon, F (1967), translated by C. Farrington and published by Penguin, London.

from Fanon, and 'the various attitudes that the Negro [African] adopts in contact with white civilisation' (p. 11). For Serequeberhan, then, to be African is to be Negro, and the problem facing Africa is 'methodologically' white. This is surely most unhermeneutical: the proper opposition to racism is anti-racism, not some symmetrically opposed counter-racism[21]. The 'methodological cue' also sits rather uneasily with Serequeberhan's often vitriolic criticism of Senghor's alleged racism.

(As an aside on this point, it is unclear quite what one has to do to count as an 'African' author in the intellectual culture which sustains contemporary African Philosophy. Being of African origin, or birth, is a good start and authors which can properly claim this tend to do so quite pointedly. Being of Afro-diasporic extraction is also acceptable. No matter where you are born, it is an unstated but definite disadvantage to be white. Now, while philosophy may take identity-politics as its *subject*, it is surely a mistake to allow such manoeuvring to warp its *practice*.)

The various debates proceeding under the banner of African philosophy constitute a potentially useful force in the contemporary intellectual scene. In the main, African philosophy resists the crude divisions that still separate much 'analytic' from 'continental' work elsewhere. It is generally less susceptible to ingenuous claims of political neutrality and also to the odious appeal of pragmatism. Perhaps most interestingly it is also the site of a tremendous opportunity for African intellectuals: to involve themselves in steering and transforming a continental appropriation of modernity which, even if it is inevitable, and even though Africa remains a major victim of European modernity, can learn from the mistakes of its historical precedents.

Fanon said that 'The colonial world is a Manichean world'[22]. In the end, the most severe limitation in Serequeberhan's analysis and prescriptions alike is his inability to get beyond this aspect of the thinker who he holds in most esteem. Nonetheless, the post-colonial world calls for altogether more subtle and nuanced moral thinking, situated in the terrain 'beyond good and evil'. The efforts of such philosophers as Appiah, who attempts to articulate a non-racist Pan-Africanism which is sensitive to the contemporary politics of difference and the post-modernisation of culture, and Mudimbe, who painstakingly traces the path of the many representations of Africa[23] and

[21] The first four chapters of *In My Father's House* by Appiah are especially worthwhile on this topic.

[22] See Fanon (1967:31).

[23] See *The Idea of Africa* by Mudimbe, V. (1994), published by James Currey, London and Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

sympathetically considers the value of traditional thought without falling into ethnophilosophy[24], indicate what is possible here, and it is in comparison to their work that Serequeberhan's must be judged. Despite its flaws, though, it is a valuable contribution which raises the level of the debate in various ways.

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Words that Circle Words

Words that Circle Words. A Choice of South African Oral Poetry
edited by Jeff Opland
Johannesburg: Ad Donker, 1992, 328 pp.
ISBN: 0-86852-187-6 (pbk.)

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To some extent the texts in this collection—or, more specifically, the way in which Jeff Opland assembles and presents them—would seem to herald, or at least coincide with, some of the concerns of post-apartheid South Africa. Not, however, for any particular ideological *engagement* they may be thought to display. At the time Opland puts together this collection (1989—the date mentioned in the *Preface*), the question of artistic (and academic) involvement in the struggle against white hegemony is arguably much more of an issue than it is in this, the aftermath of 1994, but Opland is unambiguous in his desire to prevent his own political convictions from interfering with the selections included in the anthology (p. 29). Oppression of black by white is a strong theme, particularly in the sections on work and political songs (the pass laws are a notable topic) and—more generally—in the praise poetry (the 'modern performances' at the end of the collection directly address issues like homeland independence, forced resettlement and worker solidarity). By and large however, the poems and songs 'produced by South Africans at leisure, in love, working, grieving, praying, travelling, fighting and dancing' (to quote the backflap) function at a remove from the nitty-gritty of struggle politics. Besides, as Opland remarks (p. 29):

[24] See *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge by* Mudimbe, V. (1994) and published by Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

> Afrikaners protested in song against their subjection to English power a century ago just as forcibly as blacks are now protesting their frustrations under Afrikaner rule. And poems are being [were being?] produced in praise of the Matanzimas of South Africa by traditional oral poets who support their politics of collaboration, poems often bearing just as much *artistic merit* [e.a.] as some of those produced in opposition to the apartheid system.

Indeed, the political strands reflected in this volume frequently bear little—even no—resemblance to our inexorable march towards the officially proclaimed non-racial democracy. I am tempted to see in this a not insignificant critique of political correctness. Opland, for his part, singles out 'unabashed ethnocentrism' as a 'hallmark' of the oral text, and warns 'the reader overly sensitive to sometimes excessive ethnic abuse' to, as he puts it, 'best lay down the book unread' (p. 21). (To illustrate: 'I made you look, I made you *poep*, I made you kiss a kafir cook' goes a delightful English-speaking lullaby (p. 45), not to mention the incessant slaying, devouring and plundering of the ethnic other outrageously celebrated—to my own fragile liberal sensibilities at least—in many of the praise poems).

So just how does *Words that Circle Words* relate to our evolving political horizon? Partly, I suppose, through its timeous appearance. Although the book is published in 1992, Opland's *Preface*, dated 1989, situates the preparation of the book at just about the end of Nelson Mandela's period of imprisonment. 'There is no unifying symbol in South Africa', Opland writes in the *Introduction* (p. 24), 'neither a flag, an anthem, nor a head of state—accepted by all its peoples, and no song that is universally popular'. With hindsight, cynicism aside, this may *now* appear unduly pessimistic. Judging by the number of bumper stickers, the flag of the new South Africa is doing fairly well (give or take a few rugby fans), even amongst those who were actually quite O K with the old. Nelson Mandela has cast his spell of *Madiba magic*, and now basks in the respect, even admiration (if not exactly political support) of the very people who had wanted to lock him up and throw away the key. In fact, an epilogue inserted, according to Opland, after the completion of the anthology, partly acknowledges these developments in its mention of South Africa entering a 'new phase' (p. 305), and aptly closes with a praise poem about—who else?—Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. The point about the lack of a universally popular song still holds true though. Despite the SABC's carefully stage-managed attempts during the 1995 rugby world cup, I confess to still not knowing the words of *Shozoloza*.

Quite apart from its historical opportunism, the anthology's biggest relevance to our new atmosphere is, however, simply the 'South African' of its title. Given the strong anthropological flavour of its academic study, one can be excused for generally thinking of the oral text along largely ethnic

lines: Xhosa poetry (the study of which has made Opland famous), Zulu poetry, Khoi poetry etc. What exactly is meant by 'South African' is of course beset by a range of nagging theoretical questions, deftly side-stepped—this reviewer, for one, is grateful—by Opland: 'South African' basically coincides with the 'people of South Africa' (even though Opland reserves the right to occasionally extend the latter, as in the case of 'South Africans' having played an important part in the historical development of territories to have become independent countries only later on, Moshoeshoe being the most famous example), people in the sense of 'inhabitants' (p. 29). Whatever its theoretical straight-forwardness, this does not mean that the term 'South African' is without problems. Here Opland runs into more or less the same dilemma as university principals, bank managers and Olympic team selectors country-wide, namely: how to get a representative mix? Three points can be made here. Firstly, Opland's inclusions are made on the basis of language, 'a system of classification that is objectively justifiable and has nothing to do with race' (p. 24)[25]. Secondly, he limits himself to what is 'traditional' in the sense of being 'transmitted orally' (Opland likes using the term 'folklore' in this regard), the most important consequence of this decision being the *exclusion* of texts having become popular by virtue of the electronic media, for example. This would to a large extent explain the poor representation of English songs—duly acknowledged by Opland—vis-à-vis songs in our other languages. (Also, perhaps, the exclusion of someone like Mzwakhe Mbuti?). More about this aspect later on. As such, the texts of this anthology 'are designed to be received and appreciated within a relatively small social group' (p. 20). Thirdly—and, from the point of view of the reader, most significantly (even though Opland does not actually make this point)—Opland not only undermines his linguistic division ('de-ghettoises' the texts?) by mixing the texts of different linguistic provenance (there is no section of 'Zulu (language) poetry' or 'Afrikaans (language) song' for example), but effectively suspends this division altogether through the mere fact that all the texts are presented in English translation, the original-language texts being supplied in only two cases, that of the Venda *Tshikanda* songs and of the Zulu (and subsequently Afrikaans) political song, *Mayibuy'iAfrika* ('Let Africa Return').

The effect of this methodology is, unfortunately, to seriously compromise the stated aim of the book, namely to make the reader appreciate the

[25] Yet the division remains. Michael Chapman thus concludes the *Introduction* to his *A Century of South African Poetry* (1981): 'Until South Africans are proficiently multilingual, the most satisfactory arrangement would seem to be seperate anthologies catering for different languages'.

'artistic merit' (see first paragraph) of the various oral texts. True, *Words that Circle Words* is a good, compact resource book on a vast subject, the introductions to the different texts (often in the words of the original collector/translator) providing important information on the socio-historical origins of a particular song or poem, frequently including interesting pointers to the circumstances of the actual performance, vital, as we know, to the very existence of the oral text. Textual annotations (particularly for the praise poems) usefully elucidate many an obscure reference. The fact that everything is presented in English obviously means that the English-speaking reader is left in no doubt as to what the text is about, not to mention the kinds of metaphor it employs. In short, our linguistic deficiencies no longer prevent us from having insight into the imagination of the oral poet.

But at what price? Opland offers no information on the translation process itself, or of difficulties encountered in its course, other than to confess to a certain degree of freedom: 'I have not hesitated to edit the translations of others ...'. This liberty he justifies in the light of his motive to have the texts 'appeal to the reader *as poetry*' (e.a.)—'scholarly accuracy' or 'literalness' are of secondary concern. One can therefore assume the translations to be adequate versions of what we may call the *linguistic content* of the texts, a linguistic content which, 'however compelling might be the constraints inhibiting a full appreciation of their [the texts'] original character as oral performances' (p. 19), Opland nevertheless sees as more or less equal to the task of conveying artistic appreciation. In this vein he invites us to 'read [the poems] as they are heard, in a rush, with an ear for the rhetorical patternings and an openness to the power of the imaginative language' (p. 20).

Now, the problem is that this 'imaginative language' abounds with phrases that, to my English-accustomed ear, often sound hopelessly contrived, if not downright ridiculous. Herewith some random examples:

> That such a beautiful woman should belong to a senior! (p. 49) - Xhosa
> There lies the thing, O alla! (p. 98) - Afrikaans
> Do I fear to pitch down a pit? (p. 131) - Zulu
> She doesn't wee she shooshes. / Splasher in the Ngcobo's potty. (p. 152) - Zulu
> Oh, the horse has no village-community! (p. 161) - Sotho
> He's a fart who expels wind / whose bum puckered as his guts ballooned .... (p. 182) - Xhosa
> After you fucked your own mother / Where in hell did you think to find succour? (p. 218) - Xhosa
> He hit the horse setting out with the men / How nice! How nice! How nice! (p. 248) - Ndebele
> As it is today - yes! - we invoke the Zizi / Of Sijadu, of Furry Penis-sheath, / Of Tasselled Penis-sheath - yes! (p. 256) - Xhosa

Admittedly the above phrases are here offered completely out of context. Then again, I find it hard to imagine a context in which they would fit, in which they would not be profoundly *inimical* to the kind of 'openness to the imaginative language' Opland invites us to. The point is that they simply do not do justice to the artistic context of the texts in this anthology. As I remarked earlier, this is not to say that the quality of the translation itself (as transcription of linguistic meaning) is necessarily in question. But I would advance that the kinds of connotations and nuances attaching to the above phrases when expressed in their original language are simply impossible to render in English. In fact, I would go so far as to argue that the artistic appreciation of the English-speaking reader would be better served if he *didn't know* the linguistic meaning of these phrases. *Words that Circle Words* boasts a number of first translations (notably of the nineteenth century Xhosa praise poems assembled by the Rev. W.B. Rubusana), of major importance, no doubt, for scholarship. From the point of view of artistic merit, however, the songs and poems in the collection are, quite simply, *over*translated.

Somewhat ironically, Opland opens the anthology with a prologue—the title poem—in which the unequal relation between linguistic meaning and poetic appreciation is illustrated with great skill. In his response to a performance of the Xhosa oral poet David Manisi (entitled 'Homage to David Livingstone Phakamile Yali-Manisi'), the poet Patrick Cullinan writes (p. 33):

> Now hear Manisi in his praising:
> the words that circle words.
> You have the skill, Imbongi,
> And yet this tongue
> I hardly understand.
> I say you do,
> but do not make your song:
> your poem calls back.
> It is
> and is not memory. Your words
> beat time, they drum
> and circle round each other ....

Opland is far from insensitive to the implication of these words. 'Patrick Cullinan invokes his own cultural traditions in his reaction to Manisi's praise poem, the words of which he does not understand, and with sensitivity he finds common ground', he reflects in the *Introduction* (p. 27). Earlier he offers the standard apology for committing (reducing) the oral performance (which is a social *act*) to the written word (which is a lifeless *object*), concluding that '[t]he problem is insurmountable' (p. 18). Against this

background, and if we concede, furthermore, the artistic inadequacy of rendering linguistic meaning as per English translation, Opland's objective to present the oral text for its artistic merit, as poetry in the full sense of the word, becomes positively arrogant. Then again, given that *Words that Circle Words* is a book, with a certain brief and within certain physical confines (300 pages, for example), intended to be read by people who are accustomed to appreciating poetry through that medium (and indeed *prefer* it that way), could it really have been better?

As far as the socio-historical context of the individual texts is concerned, Opland's brief annotations are on the whole appropriate. Within the artistic perspective that he adopts, annotation can be distracting; the poems should be allowed to 'speak for themselves' (p. 20). And yet what is to my mind the most fundamental aspect of orality, namely its existence in *sound*, the fact that it is by definition an *aural* medium, a language that is always *heard*, could conceivably have been integrated into the structure of the anthology without undue distortion.

As it turns out the aural nature of oral poetry is the one aspect almost totally ignored by Opland, with no more than two or three references to features of sound in the entire collection. Of course, this lack could to some extent be addressed through annotation—indications of pitch, tone, tempo—although these would hardly benefit poetic appreciation. An obvious strategy would furthermore be to provide the reader with the melodies of the songs. But it is the retention of the text in the original language (or at least parts of it where the text—like some praise poems—is relatively long), which would constitute the most significant gain. Firstly, it would credit those readers who have the necessary linguistic skills to understand at least some of the non-English texts in the original—the case of the overwhelming majority of South Africans. Notwithstanding Opland's high-powered international standing (currently teaching at Charterhouse, England, Opland is an Honorary Professorial Research Associate of the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London), surely the book is *also* intended for them? Secondly, even a purely phonetic reading of a language not at all understood would at the very least enable the reader to pick up patterns of repetition and rhythm obscured in the translated text. (In the case of the *Tshikanda* songs where the original version of the chorus is retained, Opland concedes this very point.) Thirdly, the presence of the original language would, from an aesthetic point of view, have the effect of 'dignifying' the linguistic meaning in those cases where the English translation presents it as absurd, even where, once again, the reader has no knowledge of the original language. This point goes to the core of what I would contend to be the essential *difference* of linguistic meaning in the oral context, namely that oral linguistic meaning is *more* than the 'meaning of the words' (as abstracted

signifiers arbitrarily associated with signifieds—see the structuralist (Ferdinand de Saussure) and indeed 'post-structuralist' (Jacques Derrida) view of language), but that it is linguistic meaning informed, as it were, by semiological structures that Western scholarship has come—in the light of a certain linguistic experience—to simplistically categorise as *extra*-linguistic: affective or symbolical sound, sometimes also called 'musical'. Oral linguistic meaning is, perhaps, *fundamentally* aural-linguistic meaning[26].

To conclude this review, it may be appropriate to offer a few further reflections on the 'mix' Opland presents us with, more specifically on the relatively poor representation of English. The poetry section of the volume is dominated by Xhosa (a fact explained by Opland's own expertise in this area), with significant contributions in the other African ('Black') languages. Afrikaans has only one entry, namely Piet Draghoender's *Klaaglied* ('Lament'), English has none. 'South African oral poetry', Opland tells us, '... is of one type. It is praise poetry (also referred to by scholars as eulogy or panegyric)' (p. 25). Fair enough. English and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans have simply not produced this kind of poetry, at least not in the 'traditional' sense—important to Opland—of transmission by word of mouth. (Piet Draghoender's *Klaaglied* is one of a kind, it 'defies classification', p. 25). But what about songs? Once again, English fares badly. There is, as Opland points out, the matter of scholarly attention to consider. Scholars have on the whole concentrated on the African languages, with at least some attention being paid to Afrikaans (particularly, perhaps, within the context of a once nascent Afrikaner nationalism). English, by contrast, has received none, largely because, as Opland contends, 'English songs sung in South Africa ... are by and large the common inheritance of English-speaking people all over the world, and do not appear to have been adapted to local conditions or to have established an indigenous South African tradition' (p. 21f). Hence the paltry number of English songs, fully three of which are contributed by people in Opland's immediate entourage (his children Daniel and Samantha, and his sister, Beryl Eden).

The question arises: how hard did he try? Opland quotes lengthy passages from Ralph Trewhela's *Song Safari: A Journey Through Light Music in South Africa* (1980) and from a 1987 letter he received from Gareth Cornwell, Chief Curator of the National English Literary Museum in Grahamstown, both making the point that an authentic South African English *vox pupili* (in the words of Cornwell) hardly exists. Maybe this is true. On the other hand, it may also be that Opland's insistence on 'folklore' (texts transmitted orally in relatively small-scale communities) effectively pro-

[26] See Alant, JW 1996. *Beyond Traditional Literature: Towards Oral Theory as Aural Linguistics*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Natal, Durban.

scribes the *very possibility* of South African English songs. Perhaps English-speaking South Africans simply do not happen to live in the kinds of communities Opland would regard as a fertile breeding ground for 'folklore'. The problem is that such an assessment, reinforced by the 'obvious' absence of oral cultural genres (in the specialised sense of praise poetry and different types of songs, all related to a particular aspect of human activity), all too often play right into the conceptualisations of simplistic dichotomies, the most famous, at least as far as orality is concerned, being 'orality vs literacy', most strongly developed in the writings of Walter Ong. True, it has become fashionable to question this dichotomy. (Ruth Finnegan has been consistent in her critique of it; powerful objections have also come from Stephen Feld, Karin Barber, Leroy Vail and Landeg White.) All the same it is extremely difficult to avoid, and the average reader will most certainly find it (even if Opland does not present it as such) in *Words that Circle Words*. Why are there so few South African English songs? Because out of all the South African linguistic divisions, English speakers are the least traditional, the most modern, the most literate ....

Despite my own theoretical objections to orality/literacy, I have also thought along such lines. As I said, it is difficult to avoid. But occasionally the best challenge to theories comes around when one isn't looking for it, when one is 'relaxing'. I chanced upon an evening with the Blarney Bro's (a guitar-playing, folk-singing duo popular around Durban) a couple of weeks ago. The setting: the Athlone Hotel in Durban North, in a lavish tent named 'The Barn'. The decor: appropriately 'American-cowboy' (or an attempt at it): heavy wooden benches, stacks of hay. Lots of smoke. Lots of booze.

The first thing that surprised me was the crowd of people. Not bad for a working day. Then the people themselves surprised me. I was prepared for a typical non-participatory audience, small groups sitting around tables sipping long drinks, breaking into polite applause at the end of each song. Oral theory had told me that audience participation is a big thing in traditional cultures, then dwindles—disappears—as social roles become increasingly specialised, as people move—to employ Ong's terminology—from being event-orientated (auditory synthesis) to being object-orientated (visualist synthesis). And yet there was very little of that. The BMW's safely immobilised and the cell phones momentarily out of earshot, these middle-of-the-road swimming-pool-and-security suburbanites set about their *heidi-hi* and *heidi-ho's* ('aural patterns'?), their refrains, their call-and-responses. And there was spontaneous dancing (from the start, no exhortations necessary), not on a specially demarcated dance-floor, but right there in the aisles, amongst the chairs and tables, sometimes even on them. I recognised John Denver's *Grandma's featherbed*. Memorable.

So they didn't necessarily know the words of the songs. And none of

the songs (a mixture of what seemed to be Country-and-Western and Irish folk) was in any way 'indigenous' to South Africa. Yet it struck me that something in the *performance*, the way in which these songs were celebrated, the dancing, the fake American ranch vibe, was, maybe, authentically South African. At any rate the people around me were 'people of South Africa', inhabitants. And for what it's worth, the kind of scene-setting that I indulge in above would not have been inappropriate (minus the light bulbs and white faces) had it featured amongst the introductions to the texts in Opland's collection. Maybe the day will come that an oral anthology that affords itself the epithet 'South African', will also give account of cultural events such as these.

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The Grotesque in Literature?

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Those of us who feel that the relationship between literature and the grotesque is an area of crucial importance for the whole field of literary (and cultural) studies, and that this area has not received anything like the attention that it really deserves, primarily since it has all sorts of implications both theoretical and practical for the way in which we constitute the field, are bound to feel disappointed and perhaps a little cheated by this anthology of essays published last year. Certainly the title suggests something far more definitive than what we actually have—to the extent that there may be a trades description problem here. Meyer's anthology is far too disparate a collection that does not hang together all that well; it certainly does not have anything like the cohesion one would expect of an anthology with this title. The quality of the two-and-a-bit-page introduction (which I would characterise as 'very poor') only serves to confirm this judgement. The introduction fails to provide anything like the overview or theoretical

synthesis that I think is really required for this project to work, particularly given the title that Meyer has chosen, which seems to me to be better suited to a New Accents/Critical Idiom type text. Because of this lack of an adequate synthesising overview, the anthology has a somewhat uneven, *ad hoc* quality. The clearest sign of the editor's failure is his assertion that the grotesque is a kind of universal archetype, a viewpoint that gets flatly contradicted in the cultural materialist position on the grotesque that informs Leonard Cassuto's article 'Jack London's Class-Based Grotesque', and is unequivocally expressed in the final statement on the grotesque in Tim Libretti's article on proletarian fiction ('What a Dirty Way of Getting Clean: The Grotesque in Proletarian Literature'). For Cassuto and Libretti the grotesque is a social and historical form, whose power and role can shift significantly within different social and historical contexts (see p. 114, p. 190).

Let me point out a few points about the articles on the grotesque that the introduction might have drawn our attention to. The essays tend to divide themselves quite neatly into those who see the grotesque as a positive, subversive and disruptive force (in Bakhtin's sense) and those that see the grotesque in a negative sense, as a sign of cultural malaise and psycho-social distortion. This is the case particularly with the articles that deal with the modern grotesque, seeing the texts under analysis as presenting a critique of modern 'normality' as itself grotesque. The articles also seem to be divided as to whether the grotesque provides a new tool or angle on familiar terrain, or is a category that represents something deeper and more radical, a category of the socially repressed that is the direct and powerful expression of the most fundamental psychological and cultural ambivalences regarding the human body, using the transgressive shock of dismemberment, disfiguration and unsettling deformity in order to point to the radical uncertainties regarding the repressive role of order and law in the social constitution of the subject. Thus this latter position is likely to suggest texts for analysis that are shockingly or offensively transgressive in the way that they subvert the staid, the normal and the accepted in violently challenging established conventions and rationalities. As Bernard McElroy points out: 'The grotesque does not address the rationalist in us or the scientist in us, but the vestigial primitive in us, the potential psychotic is us' (quoted in Jack Slay's article p.105). McElroy's *Fiction of the Modern Grotesque* is an important theoretical source for a number of the articles, and would appear to be, on the strength of the references made to him and material quoted, to be a most incisive and exciting theorist of what is termed the 'contemporary grotesque' (as opposed to the Renaissance grotesque most famously and definitively explored in Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World*).

The introduction needed to state things more authoritatively and to provide a kind of theoretical synthesis that would prepare the ground better

by stressing points of contact and difference between the articles, and in so doing ensuring that it helps to assert the recent shift in critical reading towards what we might call categories of the 'Other', those categories which seem to be almost beyond categorisation in their elusiveness and contradictoriness because of their strong roots in the human unconscious, categories such as the uncanny, the fantastic and the grotesque which are now seen as having a very special connection with the cultural imagination. It is unfortunate that the reader does not emerge from a reading of this volume with a sense of this.

Though some of the articles are thought-provoking, and provide valuable insights into the grotesque and the role that it can play within literary texts when it comes to the actual texts that are under analysis, the reader is bound to feel let down. The texts analysed tend to be peripheral texts, not in the sense that they are not key canonical texts, but that any reader who has some familiarity with the notion of the grotesque will readily think of texts that would seem to be crying out for this kind of analysis as more centrally and importantly texts of the grotesque. These key texts that one would think of as being ripe for rereading in terms of the notion of the grotesque are conspicuously absent. Moreover, the title of this anthology would seem to be something of a misnomer since some of the articles refer outside of literature, to other cultural forms (fine art and film). This flirtation with film might of itself point to the text's gravest limitation: it is not possible to look at a bit of art and, particularly, a bit of film, without suggesting that given the strong presence of the grotesque in contemporary film, particularly the dominant popular genres of horror and science fiction/fantasy, the scope of the volume should have been broadened considerably. If film is in, it should be in a lot more substantially, and the title should reflect this. There is also a strange absence of satire and comedy, the two modes or genres in which the grotesque plays a powerful role, particularly in regards to subversion of the stereotypical and the conventional. What this anthology should be about is deepening our sense of the importance of the grotesque for the analysis of literature, not presenting new angles on writers and texts that do not ostensibly seem to have a grotesque element or connection with the grotesque. It is in terms of this that I think that the volume fails—and it is in terms of this that I think the different articles must ultimately be evaluated.

Tim Libretti's article presents the most exciting exploration of the politics of the grotesque, suggesting that the grotesque, though bound up within a particular context, has the power to act as a positive force for the restoration of the human in the face of the human alienation created by capitalism, particularly insofar as it reaffirms the importance in human life of the physical dimensions of death and renewal. Libretti links the grotesque

subversion of the whole, the closed and the complete, to the bourgeois control over the means of cultural production and the practice of concealment and effacement which characterises this control. He further links the grotesque to the social and physical alienation (away from a sense of self as physical whole and part of a social whole) created by capitalism and the development of the 'atomised bourgeois individual' (p. 182). Grotesque laughter here (and this is the first time laughter is referred to in the anthology) serves as a 'disalienating' force (p. 187) restoring the wholeness shattered with the radical division of labour within the capitalist system.

Of the rest of the articles included, I would say that the pick are: Jack Slay's 'Delineations in Freakery: Freaks in the Fiction of Harry Crews and Katherine Dunn', Kelly Anspaugh's 'Jean Qui Rit' and 'Jean Qui Pleure': James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis and the High Modern Grotesque, and Greg Metcalf's 'The Soul in the Meat Suit: Ivan Albright, Hannibal Lecter and the Body Grotesque' (if only for its interesting confrontation with the horror of the grotesque, its dominant mode within contemporary popular culture).

These titles (Anspaugh's excluded) of themselves give a clear indication of the lack of centrality of which I have already spoken. I fear that it cannot be argued that the volume escapes this censure on account of the sense of the width of the field that the range of its selections affords.

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Rethinking South African Literary History

Rethinking South African Literary History
edited by Johannes A. Smit, Johan Van Wyk & Jean-Philippe Wade
Durban: Y-Press, 1996, 250 pp.
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At a certain happy moment in the career of an academic, s/he ascends to the status of 'expert', and in so doing earns the right to tell the rest of the profession how to do their jobs. The most common event for such (invariably tedious) pontification is the professor's inaugural lecture, but there are other

moments as well. Johan Van Wyk and Jean-Philippe Wade's colloquium on 'Re-thinking South African Literary History' in Tongaat in May 1995 was such a moment, where in Wade's words they 'gather[ed] together as many experts as we could' (p. 3), and encouraged them to pronounce on the declared topic. This collection, with additional editorial input from Johannes Smit, is the result of the colloquium.

The results are not quite as dull as one might have feared. There *are* pious instructions from professors as to how 'we' should be doing 'our' research, but there are also several essays dealing in interesting ways with particular Southern African literatures, and others which summarise usefully different histories of constructing national literatures. In addition, the expert contributors disagree at times entertainingly on quite what writing a national literary history might involve.

Although they might lack (for some) the necessary epistemological self-consciousness required for writing something as important as South Africa's national literary history, the essays by Maje Serudu on Northern Sotho literatures, Jeff Opland on Xhosa literatures in newspapers in the nineteenth century, and Annemarié Van Niekerk on Afrikaans women writers, introduce fascinating material. Writing of the challenges facing Indian literary historians in forging a national literary history, Aijaz Ahmad has insisted on the need to assemble the available literatures in all languages of the sub-continent before considering any notions of a national literature. Such an emphasis is served well in the Southern African context by these three studies: the material surveyed challenges, as much as any theoretical intervention might, the received definitions of the 'nation', the 'literary', and the 'historical'.

In terms of summarising the histories of how national literary histories themselves have emerged, there are four essays worth checking. In order of appearance: Rory Ryan summarises in detail the histories of Cultural Studies in Britain and Cultural Ethnography in the U.S., though curiously mutes the defining influence of the Frankfurt School; Shane Moran in 'The New Hellenism' traces the rise of the notion 'culture' in European thought, and warns that the unifying claims of culture, including those of national literatures, have historically concealed economic divisions and conflicts; Johannes Smit surveys with varying degrees of accuracy the historical methods of *inter alia* Hegel, Marx, Ranke, the Annales School, Habermas, Geertz, and Jauss; and Michael Green in a frustratingly short section of his paper discusses the South African social history industry. The material covered in these essays—even if at times schematically—represents a useful contribution to the process of inter-disciplinary 're-thinking' inaugurated by the editors.

As to the disagreements, not surprisingly they coalesce for the most part around the relationship of the literary historian to the new nation. Many of the contributors must have shuffled uncomfortably with the liberal use of the inclusive 'we' in the collection; joined in a community of literary scholars perhaps, but certainly not united in their views on nationhood and literary criticism. Several contributors assume that the rainbow nation's literary intelligentsia can nurture nascent democratic forms: C. F. Swanepoel sees a new national literature contributing to nation-building and the Reconstruction & Development Programme (now-defunct—could there be a connection?); Johan Van Wyk justifies the quest for a new national literature as a necessary response to both the new political dispensations and conceptual challenges posed; Michael Chapman regards literary activity as concerned with justice, and the literary historian engaged in national literary re-construction as a potential contributor to the creation of a civil society and democratised public sphere; and C. T. Msimang concludes with an appeal that the artist (and, presumably, the literary critic) should show the way towards nation-building. There are several other contributors, however, who are rather more cautious about the capacity of a new literary canon to heal the wounded nation: Shane Moran, Jean-Philippe Wade, and Michael Green's papers proceed in this critical spirit, and Leon de Kock re-states his rejection of the encyclopaedic national literary synopsis in favour of plotting what he calls 'our many smaller stories'.

Two final points. It is inevitable that any such collection will be uneven, and that the editors' ability to address this will be limited by the quality of the submissions. Nonetheless, there are several essays here that would have benefited from stringent re-writing, and further research. They read as hastily-assembled and opportunistic attempts to get into print (successful, as it turns out), and they diminish the impact of the worthier contributions discussed above.

In conclusion, the context of this collection should be noted. The editors, the publisher, and seven of the seventeen contributors are based in KwaZulu-Natal, where ongoing, low-intensity civil war continues to confound the myth of a new South Africa. Although there is nowhere in the collection engagement with this immediate context, the desire for a common South African literary history might be read as a displaced imaginative attempt to transcend the economic and political tensions of the province. The competing definitions of nation, literature, and history in the collection should therefore be read not only in terms of wider 'theoretical developments', but also in terms of how local material conflicts, and the anxieties they generate, are being expressed.

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***Manuscripts* must be submitted in English (UK). If quotations from other languages appear in the manuscript, place the original in a footnote and a dynamic-equivalent translation in the body of the text.**

Contributors must submit *one computer-generated and three double-spaced printed copies* of the manuscript. The computer-generated copy may be on double density floppy or stiffie in Word Perfect 5-6, Word for Windows 6 or ASCII. If accepted for publication, the disk or stiffie will be returned together with 10 original off-print copies of the article.

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Attach a cover page to one manuscript containing the following information: Author's full name, address, e-mail address, position, department, university/institution, telephone/fax numbers as well as a list of previous publications.

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Use footnotes sparingly. In order to enhance the value of the interaction between notes and text, we use footnotes and not endnotes.

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Mngadi, Sikhumbuzo 1994. 'Popular Memory' and Social Change in South African Historical Drama of the Seventies in English: The Case of Credo Mutwa's *Unosimela. Alter*nation 1,1:37-41.

Fanon, Frantz 1986. *Black Skin, White Masks.* Markmann, Charles Lam (trans). London: Pluto Press.

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