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Introduction

Catherine Addison

This issue of *Alter*nation consists mostly of articles presented as papers at a conference on Intercultural Communication held in June 2000 at the University of Zululand. The conference was wider-raging than this issue suggests, including workshops on multicultural teaching, on translation and interpreting and on the development of intercultural communication as an academic discipline. Nevertheless, the main themes of the conference are represented in this issue of *Alter*nation, as well as some related themes introduced in four additional articles.

Annette Combrink's article, 'Mediating Intercultural Communication: The Cultural Filter and the Act of Translation/Interpreting', is placed first because it introduces the concept of cultural mediation, the facilitating of communication between individuals and groups that identify with different cultures. The article develops this concept in relation to translators and interpreters, whose task, it claims, ought to be seen not as simply linguistic—exchanging words of one language for those of another, substituting formal structures for equivalent structures in the other language. Rather, the translator/interpreter should be visualised as a cultural mediator, creatively modulating a broad range of cultural expectations in each act of translation. The task of translator/interpreter carries a great responsibility, for it involves an understanding of, and ability to express without prejudice, a broad number of sociocultural factors in every act of translation/interpreting. Leading off from these considerations, the article goes on to deal with the issue of language rights, which include the right to adequate translation/interpreting. This right is particularly relevant to participation in the legal system, in which speakers of non-dominant languages have been and often still are at a disadvantage. The importance of having a voice in order to get a fair chance in court leads Combrink to the consideration of the training, accreditation and status of court translators/interpreters.

This article is followed by Bobby Loubser's 'Many Shades of Orality and Literacy: Media Theory and Cultural Difference', a wide-raging article whose examples are drawn with equal ease from the ancient world and from modern cyber-culture. Loubser applies a broad definition of 'media studies', based on Roman

Jakobson's use of the term 'medium' in his model of communication, in which a 'message' passes from a 'sender' to a 'receiver' in a 'code' via a 'medium'. Taking his cue from Marshall McLuhan, Loubser urges that attention be paid to the medium (orality, writing, print, etc.) of messages during the process of decoding or interpretation. His article relates habitual usages of particular media to specific cultures and foresees fertile sources of cultural misunderstanding caused by different medium-based expectations.

The next article focuses on orality, which it sees as the appropriate medium for communicating and implementing development in specific cultural contexts. Written by Kennedy Chinowa and entitled 'The Liminal Function of Orality in Development Communication: A Zimbabwean Perspective', the article describes the use made of oral traditions in a performance-based project by the TfD (Theatre for Development) in rural Zimbabwe in 1983. What is recommended is not *inter*cultural so much as *intra*cultural communication, for communities are seen as possessing the knowledge and power to transform themselves, without overt intervention by external forces. This knowledge and power may be unleashed by the ludic, 'as if' scenarios played out in dramatic traditions already included in these communities' repertoires.

Taking an anthropological angle on intercultural contact, Gina Buijs' article, entitled 'Gender and Person in African Societies: The Role of Hermeneutics', focuses on a specific type of cultural misunderstanding. She reveals the ways in which the status of women in African societies has been diminished in the minds and writings of male colonialist anthropologists, who have brought their own gender stereotypes and expectations into the field of interpretation. The article is full of fascinating examples of powerful women in various African societies, especially the Venda. It includes some examination of the phenomenon of female husbands, women who, because of their wealth and status, obtain their own wives by paying bride-price for them.

The next four articles are all mainly literary in focus. Placed first because it is arguably the most general, my 'Island Encounters: Intercultural Communication in Western Literary Tradition' attempts to problematise the use of Caliban and Friday as archetypally colonised people by investigating the meaning of islands and island encounters throughout the literary canon. The article includes brief discussions of Homer's *Odyssey*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Byron's *The Island*, Melville's *Typee* and Conrad's *An Outcast of the Islands* in addition to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. These texts all depict intercultural communication between a Western visitor and at least one indigenous Other in an island setting. Interestingly, the communication between these protagonists takes a large variety of different forms, none of them a stereotypical colonial encounter.

Harry Garuba's article, 'Mapping the Land/Body/Subject: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies in African Narrative', deals head-on with intercultural communication's dark side, the colonial project of subduing and exploiting cultural Others. The article emphasises the importance of maps in this colonial endeavour. Mapping is a process of naming, 'laying out' and in a sense appropriating land, people and space. Garuba's extremely erudite article proceeds by means of analysis of a number of prose narratives, including Achebe's *Arrow of God* and Farah's *Maps*. Clear demarcation of boundaries and of ownership, necessary to the making of colonists' maps, leads directly to the tragic *denouement* in *Arrow of God*. In *Maps*, the drive toward 'good' mapping and the classification of people according to geographical/ethnic origins is not conducted by colonists but by African nationalists, in this case a Somali liberation movement. And yet Somalis are traditionally nomadic people. Thus, this impulse, like other nationalist initiatives in Africa, has a paradoxically colonial origin, deriving from the colonists' concept of the national map. Developing Farah's ironic exposure of this nationalist project in the novel, Garuba speculates on the possibility of escaping the tyrannies of existent maps, with their built-in hegemonies and exclusions, by regarding mapmaking more creatively as 'wayfinding' and maps as provisional structures, forever open to reconstruction in the light of the intercultural drifting, mixing and reconfiguring that has always been the truth about Africa and its borders.

'Mistakes in the Contact Zone', by Gillian Gane, anatomizes the concept of the 'mistake' made by a non-native speaker of English and shows that such anomalies are often highly creative uses of language and as such enrich English rather than impoverish it. Gane proceeds by examining numerous works of literature in which non-standard speech is registered, as well as some instances of real-life speech. Her article gives many examples that astonish the reader with their aptness, humour and ingenuity. Her argument, that for native speakers to deride or suppress such uses of a language is to assert a linguistic hegemony whose time is long past and to debase one of the language's best productive resources, is abundantly demonstrated by her examples. True communication between members of different cultures, as with all communication, is dependent on the autonomy of both parties. This autonomy includes the right to appropriate the language of communication creatively.

Last of the literary articles, Andries Visagie's 'White Masculinity and the African Other: *Die werfbobbejaan* by Alexander Strachan' broadens the scope of intercultural communication to include the encounter between the Self and the gendered Other. His focus is Afrikaans literature and the ways in which the Afrikaans masculine self has reconfigured itself in relation to democratic rule (the Other) during the 1990s. The article is particularly concerned with Alexander

Strachan's (1994) novel, *Die werfbobbejaan*, in which a mysterious male figure, known only as 'the game catcher', is symbolically associated with a tame baboon, a newly circumcised African youth and a witch's familiar. Visagie sees these symbolic doublings as proof of a breakdown in the distinction between the Afrikaner masculine Self and the African Other on which the Afrikaner male used to depend for identity. The novel ends in death and disintegration, but the ironization of masculinity by Strachan—and its further dissection by Visagie—perhaps signal a reconfiguration of cultural and gender identities in the future.

The next four articles centre on issues of crucial interest to South African academics, both as teachers and as researchers. These articles are not as directly concerned with the theme of intercultural communication as the earlier ones, with the exception of Anand Singh's 'The Politics of Belonging: Socialisation and Identity among Children of Indian Origin in Secondary Schools in Durban'. This article, placed first in the section, examines intercultural communication among schoolchildren in post-apartheid South Africa. Focusing on children of Indian origin in both Indian-majority and White-majority schools in the Durban area, it analyses these children's attitudes towards peers and teachers as well as comparing their parents' expectations of the two types of school. Although no examples of overt racial conflict were encountered during the research described, the children and especially their parents were seen to establish firm boundaries between themselves and members of other race groups, as well as boundaries between themselves and followers of different religions. Since the demise of apartheid we might expect young people to begin socialising more freely together and breaking down the barriers between their communities, but Singh, observing that this is not the case with one group, speculates that it is not the case with other groups either. People of common origin have a sense of belonging together, according to Singh, which cannot easily be disrupted.

Robert Balfour's article, 'Critical Reflections on Language Curriculum Design in South Africa', shifts focus from the sociological aspects of education to the details of the academic curriculum. His article describes the design of a language course for entry-level university students whose mothertongue is not English. The article examines research on second-language learning both in South Africa and in other contexts and it regards curriculum design as an ongoing process. English is a global language whose benefit for millions of people world-wide is communication with other cultures. The main aim of Balfour's course, in use at present at the University of Natal, Durban, is to 'render English a more accessible and useful tool for intercultural communication'.

Two highly placed educationalists are the authors of the next article. Thandwa Mthembu is deputy vice-chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand

and Prem Naidoo is a director of the Council for Higher Education's (CHE's) Higher Education Quality Committee. Their article, 'National Education's Research Benchmarks: Realistic Targets or Pie in the Sky?', is concerned with research performance at higher education institutions in South Africa. Offering some illuminating statistics, it scrutinises the current criteria for assessing academics' research performance, and finds them wanting. The present measurement of research performance is based almost entirely on the number of SAPSE-accredited publications produced per year. Although a great many other types of research-based activities take place at all institutions, these are not counted. The fact that Historically Black Institutions are under-resourced for research in comparison with Historically White Institutions has not affected the setting of benchmarks for tertiary education: according to the Department of Education, all universities should produce an average of one SAPSE article per academic per year, and all technikons should aim for an average of 0.5 of a SAPSE article per academic per year. No consideration is taken of differences in resourcing. The benchmarks, the authors assert, are in any case totally unrealistic, since not even the most productive institutions are at present achieving anything close to these goals. Moreover, the universities' overall research output has generally been declining, not rising, in the past few years—at least, in terms of the present assessment criteria. Mthembu and Naidoo advocate a major transformation in research evaluation in South African tertiary institutions. They argue for the scrapping of the SAPSE system and the substitution of a much more holistic approach which rewards research capacity building, gives credit for publications more comprehensively and flexibly, and takes cognisance of many research activities not now accredited at all. They also espouse an equalisation of funding and other resources and suggest various measures to develop incentives in underproductive institutions.

The last of these articles is Francis Galloway's 'Statistical Trends in South African Book Publishing During the 1990s', which accounts illuminatingly for the rise and fall of book publishing in the period of South Africa's political transformation. Galloway supplies a brief history of the book industry in South Africa and an account of the relationship between politics and book publishing up to the present. She goes on to give statistical breakdowns of book production according to year, language and genre, and an exploration of the effect of the new school curriculum on the output of textbooks. The present decline in reading and book-buying in the country is viewed with concern, as it is a sign that the government's efforts to create a better-educated and more informed society are not proving successful. Although she does not recommend too much political interference in the industry, Galloway believes that 'A democratic government should provide a suitable environment for the growth of the book sector'.

The final section of the issue, edited by Judith Coullie, is devoted to book reviews. The texts discussed are all examples of African life writing, being either biographies or autobiographies of visitors to or inhabitants of Africa. Nearly fifty brief reviews of recently published books are supplied at the end of the journal. Although not all of these books were produced in South Africa, those that were must represent a significant proportion of recent local output, judging by Galloway's comments in the previous article.

In her review article 'The Incredible Whiteness of Being', that prefaces the section, Coullie speculates about the relationship between individualism and autobiography. Though texts representing the lives of groups do exist, they are not usually as interesting to readers as narratives that set forth the viewpoints of specific individuals—especially unusual personalities with vivid, singular ways of seeing. In the process of discussing a number of recent autobiographies, Coullie suggests that the most memorable autobiographical writing combines a personal and idiosyncratic viewpoint with a sense of being representative, 'having significance *beyond* the singular and distinctive experiences of the narrating subject'. This combination, according to Coullie, is present in several of the books that she discusses, especially Alexandra Fuller's *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, published this year.

Mediating Intercultural Communication: The Cultural Filter and the Act of Translation/ Interpreting

Annette L. Combrink

The Context—and Some Contextualising Remarks

> Cross-cultural communication is an extreme example of
> the fact that the world cannot be taken for granted
> (Katan 1999:95).
> ... translation mediates cultures (Newmark 1995:2).
> ... inside or between languages, human communication
> equals translation (Steiner 1975:47).

Commonplaces and strong and passionate views abound when culture, cultural mediation and communication in general are considered. This is no less true in the field of translation and interpreting, where recent theoretical reflection has centred specifically on these issues. The following situating comment is useful:

> A cultural mediator is a person who facilitates communication, understanding, and action between persons or groups who differ with respect to language and culture. The role of the mediator is performed by interpreting the expressions, intentions, perceptions and expectations of each cultural group to the other, that is, by establishing and balancing the communication between them. In order to serve as a link in this sense, the mediator must be able to participate to some extent in both cultures. Thus a mediator must be to a certain extent bicultural (Taft 1981:53).

Taft (1981:73) further indicates that the mediator must possess competencies in both relevant cultures in the areas of knowledge about society. These areas include history, folklore, traditions, customs, values, prohibitions, the natural environment,

people, communication skills (written, spoken and non-verbal), those technical skills required by the mediator's status, such as computer literacy and appropriate dress, social skills such as knowledge of the rules that govern social relations in society and, finally, emotional competence, or the level of self-control appropriate to its specific contexts (in this regard, also see the notion of the iceberg below).

This is a useful vantage point, but it still has to be qualified somewhat. Taft (1981:58) himself states that translating is one of the skills of the mediator, but that a mediator is more than a translator. Hatim and Mason (1990:128) clarify this succinctly when they maintain that 'the notion of mediation is a useful way of looking at translators' decisions regarding the transfer of intertextual reference', while Gentzler (1993:77) holds that the goal of translation is to mediate between cultures as follows: 'Its mediating role is more than synchronic transfer of meaning across cultures; it mediates diachronically as well, in multiple historical traditions' and Katan (1999:14) makes the important bottom-line statement that 'cultural mediators should ... be extremely aware of their own cultural identity; and for this reason will need to understand how their own culture influences perception'.

Mediation/mediating—a brief hiatus: To mediate means, according to *Webster's Third International Dictionary* and the *Oxford English Dictionary*, to form a connecting link, to interpose between parties in order to reconcile them or to interpret them to each other, to negotiate a compromise of hostile or incompatible viewpoints, demands or attitudes, to act as intermediary agent, be the medium for bringing about (result) or conveying (gift, etc.).

The essential thrust of the discussion is a consideration of apposite notions associated with translation and interpreting (perhaps, more accurately, what are generally considered to be the language professions, with the exception of teaching) within a broad context of rights (human rights, language rights, the right to be understood), as well as apposite notions of culture, followed by some remarks about the teaching of translation and interpreting against the broad backdrop of cultural mediation.

Translation and Interpreting: Theories and Suggestions

Translation is considered to be one of the oldest activities that humans have been known to engage in. Steiner (1975:48) suggests that 'The affair at Babel confirmed and externalized the never-ending task of the translator—it did not initialise it', and goes on to maintain that 'the subject [translation] is difficult and ill-defined'. It is, on the one hand, as described by Richards (1953:250), 'what may very probably be the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos', and yet, on the other hand, there has always been the sneaking suspicion that translation in its various forms is essentially a derivative, if not actually a second-hand, activity.

Before considering some relevant translation theories, it is important to attend to statements by Louis Kelly (1979) by way of a modest disclaimer. Kelly in *The True Interpreter* (a sane and solid guide amidst a plethora of more fashionable, esoteric, even arcane theoretical speculation), apart from providing a very useful and insightful overview of Steiner's classical division in *After Babel* (1975) of the historical periods of translation theory, makes the important comment that:

> Clearly, the repertoire of translation techniques has not evolved: there is little to choose between Cicero and Pound in range of dynamic techniques ... it is only by recognizing a typology of function that a theory of translation will do justice to both Bible and bilingual cereal packet. It is obvious that the Dionysiac language theories of Heidegger are as inadequate as the empirical communication models of Nida. These both ignore the multifarious purposes of language: language can frustrate communication, act purely as a medium of information, or create new worlds for its users. A language lives through multiplicity of function, so does translation (Kelly 1979:226f).

As a way of taking a relative shortcut to a theory of translation suitable for the purposes of this article, it is useful to quote Wallmach (1999:85), who maintains that from the 1980s onwards, descriptive translation studies and cultural translation studies could be considered to be 'the dominant discourses on translation'. The developments in the field of translation studies have been consistent and have covered, in the course of the twentieth century, a wide range of concerns. Terms generally associated with translation studies, and popularised by the acknowledged giant in the field of Bible translation, Eugene Nida (Nida and Taber published a landmark book on Bible translation, *Theory and Practice of Translation* in 1974), 'formal correspondence' and 'dynamic equivalence' still tend to shape the thinking of a considerable number of people about translation. However, these terms are considered by theoreticians to have come to the end of their useful existence. Earlier thinking on translation tended towards the prescriptive, with notions of *right* and *wrong* very much in evidence, but this approach came under fire from a variety of critics, such as Neubert and Shreve (1992), Newmark (1988), Lefevere (1992) and Van Leuven-Zwart (1992). Kruger (2000:31) discusses these criticisms at length and

points out convincingly that the new pragmatic trend that followed the rejection of the uncritical use of the term equivalence

> ... is closely linked to developments in the seventies which followed in reaction to Chomsky's TG grammar: instead of emphasising the structural aspects of language, the functional aspects of language came to be seen as more important. As a result, texts were no longer regarded as independent linguistic utterances, but rather as part of the socio-culture to which they belong. Translation therefore becomes *a communication activity* in which the *function* of the translated text in the *target culture* is given priority (e.a.).

She goes on to suggest that probably the most useful 'new paradigm' (suggested by Hermans as early as 1985) is Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), which is a more apposite and useful approach in contrast to the whole range of prescriptive approaches so much in evidence up to the middle of the twentieth century. This approach

> ... is first and foremost target-oriented, i.e. the role played by translations in the target culture is examined first, secondly historical and cultural, i.e. the point of departure is that specific texts at a specific moment in time are regarded as translations and function as translations in the target culture, and thirdly, it is descriptive, i.e. the specific characteristics of one or more translations are described .... Therefore, contrary to prescriptive theorists who theorise about translation and then attempt to prove these theories in practice, descriptive translation theorists start with a practical examination of a corpus of texts and systems and then attempt to extrapolate the norms and constraints operating on those texts in a specific culture and at a specific historical moment (Kruger 2000:39).

One could therefore begin to speak of a shift described by Gentzler (1993:185) as a 'move away from looking at translations as linguistic phenomena to looking at translations as cultural phenomena'—there has been a long history of theorisation on translation based on linguistic approaches (see Steiner 1975:236-296; on the history of translation theory, see Gentzler 1993:80ff).

Kelly (1979:227) already noted that:

> The essential variable is what the translator sees in the original, and what he wishes to pass on. Each age and culture translates anew; by their contempo-

raries translators are judged according to criteria peculiar to time, place and genre. If the translator must be a man of other cultures besides his own, is it too much to ask that his critic be likewise a man who crosses frontiers of space and time? Such largeness of vision is rare. Yet it is indispensable to those who would presume to sit in judgement on colleagues of the past. For unless our modern attitudes are tempered by understanding of past criteria, have we any right to expect fair judgement from the future?

Looking at translation as a cultural phenomenon immediately of course brings into play factors related to ideology as well. The manipulative potential and function of translation and interpreting have come into play to some extent, but there is still a wide field to embrace in this regard. This also opens up issues of ethics and fidelity. The ironic utterance '*traddutore, traditore*' (an Italian expression meaning that the translator is a betrayer) has become a commonplace in discussions about translation, fidelity and ethics. Kelly (1979:218), comes up with the provocative view that 'If there is a moral responsibility in translation, it flows from initiative *appropriately* or *abusively* taken' (e.a.). Considering the issue of translation and interpreting from a post-colonial perspective is also an interesting angle—the notion of power relations within the context of the marginalisation of languages, as considered below in the section on language rights, is also pertinent in this regard.

Taking the notion of the translator as a cultural communicator somewhat further, by concentrating on processes, Katan (1999:124) explores frames and gestalts as important strategies for translators, especially within the context of effecting cultural mediation. He maintains that: 'Many translation theorists are now convinced of the importance of frames and a gestalt approach to translation'. According to Neubert and Shreve, a good translator reads the text, and in so doing accesses grouped linguistic and textual knowledge. This 'grouped' knowledge at the level of the text has been variously named by translation theorists as 'text type' and 'genre'. However, the main area of interest is the frame. Neubert and Shreve (1992:60) for example, define frames in terms of organisation of experience and knowledge repertoires: 'This organization of experience may be referred to as framing and the knowledge structures themselves as frames'.

He quotes Hönig (1991:79-80) to the effect that 'Scheme and frame stand for different parts of the reader's expectation structures, they are structured domains of long-term memory', and this leads, according to Katan (1999:125) to a situation where, in the mind of the translator, 'a meaningful but virtual text is formed ... from the meaningful but wordless text, the translator then sketches a pattern of words in the target language'. Bell (1991:161) takes this somewhat further when he states that 'Current thinking among translation theorists ... insists that a translated text is a new

creation that derives from careful reading; a *reconstruction* rather than a copy'. This echoes Lefevere's (1992:3) views on especially literary translation as *rewriting* (e.a.). Katan (1999:125) insists that

> ... an essential difference between a traditional translator and a mediator is the mediator's ability to understand and create frames. The mediator will be able to understand the frames of interpretation in the source culture and will be able to produce a text which would create a similar set of interpretation frames to be accessed in the target reader's mind.

This view is supported by Snell-Hornby's (1988:52) view that translation should essentially be seen as a cross-cultural transfer, and Candlin (in the introduction to Hatim and Mason 1990) maintains quite categorically that the translator's work should

> ... extend beyond the apposite selection of phrases to an investigative exploration of the signs of culture ... it asks us to explore our ideologically and culturally-based assumptions about all those matters on which we utter, in speech or in writing, or in signs (Hatim & Mason 1990:vii).

Katan (1999:126) does, however, caution that

> ... this holistic or global approach to translation does not mean that a cultural mediator can disregard the text itself. A successful mediator must be consciously aware of the importance of both text and context, which means both the words and the implied frames.

This cautionary note is also sounded by Mona Baker (1996:17), who warns that many scholars have now adopted a 'cultural perspective ... a dangerously fashionable word that almost substitutes for rigour and coherence'. The possible loss of rigour through an uncritical adherence to notions of culture is a real danger, and adopting the cautious approach advocated by Katan (1999:1), who regards culture as a 'system for orienting experience', is therefore the path of wisdom and discretion.

Culture and Cultural Communication: Some Comments

The notion *culture* is probably as diverse, many-sided and open to contentious interpretation as any other concept known to man. It is therefore probably prudent to take recourse to definitions hallowed by time and space and to

extrapolate carefully from them, with the necessary disclaimers and caveats either explicitly or implicitly presented.

The definition used in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1988.4:567) to introduce the topic is a useful general starting point or platform for discussion:

> Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.
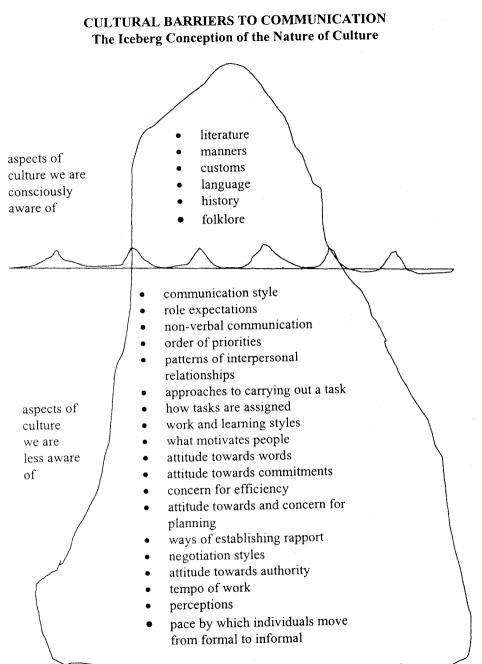
This difficult activity (the act of defining culture) had by 1984 been wryly rejected by Seelye (1984:13) when he stated that '[he knew] of no better way to ensure having nothing productive happen than for a language department to begin its approach to culture by a theoretical concern for defining the term'. Seelye's view is strongly supported by Trompenaars (1993:22) who admits that '[i]n fifteen years I have seldom encountered two or more groups or individuals with identical suggestions regarding the concept of culture'. Katan (1999:17) suggests more practically that one should look at a

> ... shared mental model or map of the world, which includes culture. The model is a system of congruent and interrelated beliefs, values, strategies and cognitive environments which guide the shared basis of behaviour. Each aspect of culture is linked in a system to form a unifying context of culture which identifies a person and his or her own culture.

In this regard then, it is important to identify a model of culture that would constructively advance this discussion. The model proposed by Hall in *The Hidden Dimension* (1982:19) (called a 'triad of culture'), and refined by Macnair and Corsellis (2000:12), provides a useful springboard for the present purposes. In both instances the metaphoric framework suggested is that of an iceberg (cf. below).

Culture when conceptualised in these terms provides an illuminating framework for this discussion. The iceberg theory has in fact also been endorsed by Brake *et al* (1995:34-39), when they point out that:

> Laws, customs, rituals, gestures, ways of dressing, food and drink and methods of greeting and saying goodbye ... these are all part of culture, but they are just the tip of the cultural iceberg ... the most powerful elements of culture are those that lie beneath the surface of everyday interaction. We call these value orientations. Value orientations are preferences for certain outcomes over others.

CULTURAL BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION
The Iceberg Conception of the Nature of Culture

aspects of
culture we are
consciously
aware of

- literature
- manners
- customs
- language
- history
- folklore

aspects of
culture
we are
less aware
of

- communication style
- role expectations
- non-verbal communication
- order of priorities
- patterns of interpersonal relationships
- approaches to carrying out a task
- how tasks are assigned
- work and learning styles
- what motivates people
- attitude towards words
- attitude towards commitments
- concern for efficiency
- attitude towards and concern for planning
- ways of establishing rapport
- negotiation styles
- attitude towards authority
- tempo of work
- perceptions
- pace by which individuals move from formal to informal

It is at this point that the sensitivity of the translator should be at its most acute, and it is this particular kind of sensitivity that should be systematically and consistently inculcated in the would-be translator/interpreter. In the training of translators and interpreters a natural sensitivity to the issue of cultural difference should be enhanced further, and constructive and sustained attention paid to those cultural issues that are located under the surface, where the bulk of the metaphorical iceberg floats.

An acute and nuanced awareness of cultural difference as being embedded in the very nature of humanity and in the very structures of the languages under consideration would materially enhance the products of translation and interpreting and underpin consideration of what would be a given in the linguistic and cultural context of an individual and a language community—the language rights of individuals as located within the context of fundamental and universal human rights. The mode of handling language rights can in fact mean cultural enslavement or cultural liberation.

Language Rights of Citizens

Language rights have been very much in the forefront in South Africa in recent years, as a direct result of the enshrinement of language rights in the country's constitution and of campaigns of varying strength and intensity aimed at raising awareness of these rights. The actual enforcement of these rights has, sadly, been less vigorously implemented.

Tying in with the post-colonial context discussed below is the telling statement by Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1989:470) that:

> If you want to have your fair share of the power and the resources (both material and non-material) of your native country, you have to be able to take part in the democratic processes in your country. You have to be able to negotiate, try to influence, *to have a voice*. The main instrument for doing that is language. You must be able to communicate with your fellow citizens in order to be able to influence your own situation, *to be a subject in your life, not an object* to be handled by others.

This view is of enormous importance when the whole vexed issue of language rights and people's access to such rights comes to the forefront. It is within that context that the following comments will be made.

While some examples of linguistic iniquity discussed later come specifically from the legal sphere, the issue of multi-language access of citizens in countries around the world is generally a very fraught one, and problems within the

legal field can be readily extrapolated to other fields. Alexander (1999:34f) discusses this problem and refers to the fact that the USA, for example, will have to relinquish once and for all the notion of the melting-pot in favour of the only workable notion—which he considers to be a 'salad-bowl' approach. He points out the immensely complex and sophisticated range of problems concomitant with the issue of linguicism:

> These are complex questions that relate as much to the history of human rights as they do to the development of communications technology and consequent changes in the operational modalities of the world economy (commonly discussed under the rubric of 'globalisation'). It is clear, however, that the struggles that have been triggered by these developments around issues of *'culture'* and *'language'* are also class struggles about *domination* and *subordination*, about hegemony and democratic choice, about homogenisation and the intrinsic value of cultural diversity. At the national level, but in slightly different permutations, the same struggles are taking place in most of those countries (including European countries and 'emerging' markets such as South Africa) which attract economic immigrants and political refugees (Alexander 1999:34).

Linguicism, considered to be an essentially invidious way of propagating and consciously enhancing existing and new linguistic inequalities, is defined by Skutnabb-Kangas (1988:13) as 'ideologies and structures which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and non-material) between groups which are defined on the basis of language (on the basis of their mother tongues)'. Linguicism as a means of establishing, maintaining and enforcing skewed power relations in terms of language rights is explored in greater depth by S.M. Beukes in her thesis *Vertaling in Suid-Afrika: 'n Kritiese Perspektief* (1993).

The debate about language rights, which is of crucial importance within the entire sphere of translation and interpreting, is intimately connected with the debates on language and the postcolonial situation. There are a number of vociferous advocates of the rights of indigenous languages in the African context. Chief among these has been the Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1994:6), who has stated that:

> The real aim of colonialism was to control the people's wealth ... [but] economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others. For colonialism, this involved two

aspects of the same process: the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography, education, orature, and literature, and the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser. The domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised.

The grim consequences of the negation of the natural language of people are sketched by Kwesi Prah (1995:45f), who states categorically that:

> Concepts, abstract notions, and scientific linguistic tools are most accessible and provide greater facility for effective usage if they are grounded in language which provides the systemic grid for interpreting and intervening in reality .... In all developed societies science and technological development is based on the native language, cultivated as the mother tongue. In Africa, the position is different .... African languages are underrated as possible vehicles of science and technological development. Because they have for decades been underrated, this has led to a retardation in their development and meant as a consequence a retrenchment of African languages and cultures in the effort to develop Africa. This retardation implies stagnation and the confirmation of the inferior status of African languages and cultures in the general discourse on development in Africa.

The importance of this notion is underlined in the extract from the point of departure of the landmark Addis Ababa (1986:2) conference on language that:

> [Language] is at the heart of a people's culture ... the cultural advancement of the African peoples and the acceleration of their economic and social development will not be possible without harnessing in a practical manner indigenous African languages in that advancement and development ... to liberate the African peoples from undue reliance on the utilization of non-indigenous languages as the dominant, official languages of the state in favour of the gradual take-over of appropriate and carefully selected indigenous African languages in this domain [and] ... to encourage the increased use of African languages as vehicles of instruction at all educational levels.

This is an area of concern within the South African context as well—witness the many cries for empowerment of the African languages that, across the tertiary sector,

have seen a disastrous decline in student numbers in recent times. It would seem, ironically, in spite of measures designed to enhance their use within all the fields of function of languages, that these languages are more at risk now, for a number of reasons both cultural and economic, than they have ever been before. This grim reality has important implications for the training of interpreters and translators. The market for interpreting would seem to have become narrowed very much to the area of legal interpreting, as will emerge more fully below.

The whole fraught issue of language rights within the context of the law has ramifications internationally and nationally. Gonzalez *et al.* (1991:5f) deal with this issue very explicitly when they maintain that:

> Bridging the language barrier between public language and the home languages of community members, either formally or informally, has become a prominent issue in our daily lives .... Nowhere is this fact more apparent than in our legal system. Language services have historically, although not systematically, been provided for non-English-speaking participants in the criminal justice system when deemed necessary by the trial judge ... to this day, limited- or non-English-speakers who come before the courts have no guarantee that their stories will be told or that they will understand what the court is telling them. Moreover, when they do tell their stories, it is more likely than not that significant portions of their testimony will be distorted by the interpreter ... as a result the fundamental right of non-English speakers to participate in the legal system is violated.

Awareness of this problem is also implied in Macnair and Corsellis (2000:1) when they point out that, in the British Probation Service, which is working with the Prison Service, national standards have been developed which require:

> Services to ensure that they provide suitably qualified interpreters in all circumstances where offenders or their families might otherwise be disadvantaged.

This is spelt out even more clearly subsequently when they state that:

> A refined appreciation of language and culture is now recognized as a necessary precursor to the Service more effectively working with all of the Communities that make up the ethnically-rich society in England and Wales .... Working across language and culture corresponds with the Probation Service's aspiration to work with and value 'diversity'. Some aspects of the

differences between cultures are more evident than others. Aspects such as literature, language, history and customs may be quite evident. Others such as non-verbal communication, interpersonal relationships, attitudes towards authority and perceptions of professionalism may also be very different but less evident. It can be suggested that it is in the more subtle and less evident areas that issues may arise that impact upon criminal behaviour and, for legal services across the range, how they and their staff should best respond (Macnair & Corsellis 2000:2).

The situation and the most apposite approach for dealing with it are summed up in the following terms:

> The staff of Probation Services work with people at a number of points in the process from offence to, and beyond sentence ... and the absence of [these] competencies in such situations leads to each party being dysfunctional in their individual input and dysfunctional in their relationship to each other (Macnair & Corsellis 2000:7).

The situation in South Africa with regard to language services being provided for purposes of obviating the iniquities inherent in the situation of virtual linguicism pertaining to English and to a lesser extent Afrikaans is very similar to the situation outlined above. In the case of legal interpreting, South Africa is, ironically, ahead of the world in the sense that legal interpreting is provided free of charge in the African languages through legal interpreters appointed on a permanent basis by the Justice Department. This is commendable, but the system is not without problems. While some of these interpreters are excellent, the quality of service rendered by others is not in line with the requirements so clearly spelled out by Gonzalez *et al.* (1991:473ff). Provision for better pay and for better qualification structures for such interpreters has been slow in coming and the situation is still far from ideal. In terms of other, more general but no less crucial, provisions being made to enable the citizens of the country to participate in everyday life in a manner in which provision is made for their language and culture, the picture is bleak. With the present precarious situation of the Pan South African Language Board (up to June 2001 the Cabinet had not succeeded in appointing more than seven members out of a possible thirteen to the new Board) and the general unwillingness to provide adequate translation and interpreting services (see for example the study by Reinhardt 2000, for information about language provisions in the provincial legislatures), it is well-nigh impossible to provide the sort of services required for the most basic adherence to this crucial, indeed central, requirement of the Constitution.

Apart from the fact that this constitutes an essential breach in respecting the rights of citizens, it also constitutes a more insidious and invasive breach: there is an impoverishment of the cultural multiplicity of the nation through the gradual erosion of the rich layers of cultural complexity captured in the various languages of the country. This means that, both above and below the surface, the iceberg itself is melting down and imperceptibly letting cultural complexity become absorbed in a homogenising ocean.

Training and Accreditation of Translators/ Interpreters

The language professions are crucial for the preservation of national identities as well as individual and collective dignity and pride. But they are also crucial for communication between different nationalities, different cultures and religions. They are important for keeping together our multilingual and multicultural global village. They are important for their knowledge and experience of how to bridge interlingual gaps. They are tools for mutual understanding, for cooperation and peace (Dollerup & Loddegaard 1992:5).

Both the training and the accreditation of translators/interpreters have been a site of explosive contest for years. This is not surprising when one considers the complexity of the processes of translation and interpreting, as indicated in the preceding discussion, combined with the very complex considerations that have to be brought into play in talking about training. The profile of the court interpreter (and this could be extrapolated to any translator/interpreter), as described by Gonzalez *et al.* (1991:19) is illuminating:

A court interpreter must have a superior, unquestionable command of two languages and must be able to manipulate registers from the most formal varieties to the most casual forms, including slang. The interpreter's vocabulary must be of considerable depth and breadth to support the wide variety of subjects that typically arise in the judicial process. At the same time, the interpreter must have the ability to orchestrate all of these linguist-ic tasks while interpreting in the simultaneous and consecutive and interpre-tation modes for persons speaking at rates of 200 words or more per minute.

Sanders (1989:25) compounds the bleak picture by noting that:

These cognitively complex tasks demand acute memory, concentration, and analysis skills. Court interpreters must possess a wide general knowledge of the world ... unfortunately, these high-level interpreting skills are hard to find, and the demand for qualified court interpreters has not been satisfied.

The same type of information emerges from Macnair and Corsellis (2000:13) who maintain that the role of interpreters as a channel of communication can be described in the following way:

Communication:	Is more than the written and spoken word—therefore means working across language and culture.
The interpreters:	Will bring their own culture and therefore stereotypes, racism, sexism, etc. with them.
Good training:	Will help interpreters not just with the language issues but also with the cultural issues and help the interpreter to act professionally, i.e. in an 'extra-cultural' fashion.

In summary, then, the thrust of their argument is that good interpreting arrangements are necessary to ensure that justice prevails, that accurate and relevant communication is effected in order to enforce informed and legitimate judgements—all crucial concomitants of the visibility of justice for all participants in the process.

The point that needs underlining here is that in the training of translators and interpreters the cultural sensitivity outlined in the iceberg model needs to be enhanced to a point of sophistication that is not of necessity available wherever translators and interpreters are trained. If an interpreter/translator is to avoid the pitfalls implied above (his own existing biases and prejudices), the training process will need to be rigorous and wide-ranging.

The kind of profile outlined above is applicable to practically any language practitioner. For purposes of training such language practitioners, it would be essential to have:

• A coherent system of training of language practitioners across all the training institutions, in other words, proper co-ordination within the SAQA context.

- A proper and coherent system of accreditation and registration that will make it possible for candidates to obtain and to maintain a suitable level and mode of accreditation. Gonzalez *et al.* (1991:19-20,15) make the point that prior to the 1979 institution of the Federal Court Interpreter Examination, 'few practitioners of this exacting skill had their interpreting skills assessed', even though 'court interpreting is the fastest growing field of specialization in translation and interpretation inside and outside the United States ... because it is an emerging field, little is known about the highly precise and demanding work done by court interpreters'. At present the only system that is in operation in this country is the process run and administered by the South African Translators' Institute, a process that is gradually gaining in credibility and acceptance, but which is hampered by lack of resources.
- General acceptance of such a system. Macnair and Corsellis make the very strong point that, in the United Kingdom, only interpreters from the National Register of Interpreters are now used (2000:7). Unfortunately this kind of situation is not yet on the cards in South Africa in the very near future—the government has not yet approved a National Language Policy and plan, and before this is in place it would not be possible to set up further structures, as the necessary framework of enabling legislation would not be available.
- A sense of linguistic pride acknowledged by speakers of the indigenous languages. These languages should be allowed to develop within the framework of all the language functions necessary for the maintenance and active constructive development of a language.
- A general acceptance of the high levels of skill involved in the language professions, so that adequate remuneration would be a matter of course and good candidates could be attracted to the profession.

Conclusion

The cultural mediator, translator or interpreter will need to understand how culture in general operates and will be able to frame a particular communication within its context of culture. Then, as mediator, he or she will need to disassociate from that frame and mind-shift or chunk to a virtual text which will guide choice when creating a new text for the addressee (Katan 1999:241).

It is an undeniable fact that should the factors considered here not be factored into any act of translation and/or interpreting, the act would in itself be a failure, since the necessary cultural mediation would not take place. Misperception, misinterpretation and mistranslation, which might easily occur, would lead to a breakdown of the process and this would ultimately result in the aims of mediation, as spelled out at the beginning of the paper, not being achieved. Under these circumstances, essential connections and links will not be made, so that the intended act of inter-cultural communication will founder on the hidden bulk of the cultural iceberg, that could have been avoided by a deft and well-considered act of inter-cultural navigation.

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Many Shades of Orality and Literacy: Media Theory and Cultural Difference

J.A. Loubser

Sometimes cultural difference is dramatically illustrated by historical events. In 1879, the Anglo-Zulu War began in South Africa when, at the so-called Ultimatum Tree on the banks of the Tugela River, the British authorities issued an ultimatum to the Zulu chiefs who were not familiar with the concept of a formal ultimatum. Consequently, the Zulus did not respond to the threat until it was too late. Such misunderstandings are bound to occur when people from differing cultures meet. It is a well-known phenomenon that delegates at the United Nations speak to one another from different cultural premises. Some of the language groups represented do not have indigenous words for concepts such as 'human rights' or 'democracy', which sometimes leads to misunderstandings.

Over the past centuries anthropologists have documented some intriguing instances of cultural difference. Lucien Levy-Bruhl, for example, reports a letter carrier from (the previous) Bechuanaland as saying, 'I will not carry letters any more. If this letter had talked to me on the way, I would have been so scared'. Other letter carriers are known to have speared the letters they were carrying for fear that the letters would suddenly speak up (Olson 1994:30f). A similar understanding (with a different approach) is reported of an American non-literate, Equiano, who says, 'I have often taken up a book, and have talked to it, and then put my ears to it, when alone, in hopes it would answer me; and I have been very much concerned when I found it remained silent' (Peters 1998:44). In Buddhist monasteries of China and Tibet, prayer drums with written prayers are used. It is believed that the prayers continue to be prayed as long as the drums are being turned around. To Western literates, this practice seems perplexing. The same can be said of the icons of the saints in the Coptic churches of Egypt, which are believed to be alive and constantly praying for the faithful. Having been an object of study for a long time, cultural difference has recently entered the inter-disciplinary scene. One of the pertinent questions asked is 'How can one approach the issue of cultural difference without reverting to a colonialist discourse?'

In this regard, I wish to argue that unless we have an adequate theory for dealing with cultural difference we shall inevitably revert to a colonialist discourse. The contribution of this paper to such a theory is to explore the relationship between media and culture. For this we need a much wider definition of the concept 'medium' than merely taking it as referring to modern communication media, such as newspapers, television, telephone and radio. In this article, the term 'medium' refers to any type of material (airwaves, paper, laser beams, micro chips) that is used to encode ideas and concepts. Thus we can speak of an oral, manuscript, print or electronic medium when any one of these materials is used as the physical medium for encoding the signs of a semiotic system. To this definition we shall return shortly.

The study of cultural difference has received a dramatic new impetus of late. For many centuries, the academic world had been oblivious to the influence of communication media on culture. There was little or no awareness of how media were influencing the shape of culture. A sign of this new development was UNESCO's expressed aim to eradicate illiteracy on the globe by the year 2000. Such an association of poverty and illiteracy is bound to be challenged, but it makes a powerful statement on the issue of media and culture. Recently, historians have documented the development of communication media—from oral communication to scribal me-dia, and from scribal media to different phases of manuscript culture, and from there through the printed media to the plethora of electronic media of today[1]. This new awareness of media did not necessarily involve an understanding of the properties of media or of the constructive role they play in the development of culture.

Over the past century or so, media-related issues have manifested themselves in various forms and under numerous headings. The earliest such investigation is found in the nineteenth century in the work of the brothers Wilhelm (1786-1859) and Jacob (1785-1863) Grimm on the German fairy tale This interest has generated a mighty stream of studies in folklore and oral narratives that have made an impact on many other disciplines. An example of how the new knowledge was assimilated in other fields is the publication in 1901 of a study by Herman Gunkel on the role of the folk tale in Genesis (see Gunkel 1964; Zipes 1988). The study of oral history, narrative ethics, narrative philosophy, etc. is evidence of this interest[2]. What

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[1] Such a description of the progression of communication can easily support colonialist and racist arguments.

[2] The recently published anthology of Asante and Abarry (1996) gives an impression of how wide this field has become. Though focused on the African heritage, such a volume of 828 pages would have been unthinkable without the massive interest aroused in the manifestations of oral culture in the Western academy.

the brothers Grimm and the theorists who succeeded them failed to realise were the reasons why the oral texts[3] exhibited peculiar characteristics. In other words, *they did not specifically focus on the media aspect of their subject matter.*

Another discipline with an interest in media-related issues was Classical Studies. In the 1920s, Milman Parry and Albert Lord studied Slavic bards in an effort to understand Homer's epics. Ground-breaking theories concerning the extensive memory spans of oral performers as well as their 'rhapsodic' method of composition[4] prepared the way for further studies in orality in ancient Greece by Arnold van Gennep, Eric Havelock and others.

At the time of their studies there were already a number of scholars working on contemporary oral art forms, Vasilii Radlov, Friedrich Krauss and Marcel Jousse. The latter identified mnemo-technical devices—devices that are developed for memorising large bodies of information in oral cultures—and pointed to the profound difference between the 'literary' products of oral and literate cultures. His work is of special interest because he was the first to propose theories to explain the 'verbo-motor' lifestyle.

Jousse can with some justification be called the father of contemporary media studies[5].

One of the most active fields for media-related studies is theology. Many of the studies in folk tales and oral traditions were applied to a study of the world and culture of the Bible. Such studies have contributed to the understanding of cultural difference. The contemporary science of translation had its origin with Biblical

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[3] The term 'text' is used in this article in a non-literary sense. Etymologically it is derived from the Latin 'texere', 'to weave'—an image that applies to the webs of meaning that are woven into messages in whichever medium they are expressed. As will be seen later, texts are not only written or printed. Under 'text' I understand a coherent set of ideas that have been encoded in any medium. It is therefore feasible to speak of oral texts.

[4] The 'rhapsodic' method involves a 'stitching together' ('raphis' is Greek for 'needle') of epics consisting of 20 000 lines out of stock formulae, stock characters and a loose plot line with variant subplots. The bards make up the epic as they proceed, modifying their materials to suit the interests of the live audience. The mass of variant material from one rendition to another is estimated as 40%.

[5] That Milman Parry studied with Jousse was brought to my attention by Prof. Edgar Sienaert of the Centre for Oral Studies at the University of Natal (Durban), who has undertaken the monumental task of translating Jousse's works from French into English (see Jousse 1990; 1997; see also my review of Sienaert's latest translation in Loubser 1999).

scholars[6]. The same can be said of the discipline of hermeneutics, of which the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is generally acknowledged as the father. At present, scholars using social scientific, historical, rhetorical and socio-rhetorical methods to study the Bible are all contributing to our understanding of the cultural difference between the Near Eastern World of the first century CE and other cultures. A sub-discipline specifically directed at the medium of communication is that of textual criticism. This involves a study of all aspects of the production and transmission of the early Biblical manuscripts. Because the Jewish and Christian traditions span 3000 years and involve a great diversity of cultures, these traditions will remain some of the most important sources for scholars doing multi-cultural and media research. (According to the 1997 *Yearbook of the Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 34% of the population on earth identify with the Christian tradition.)

A last area where media issues came into focus is with the introduction of recent media technologies such as the modern printing press, radio and television. Neo-Marxists were the first to point to the role of social class in media ownership and the interpretation of texts (see Chandler 2001). This generated some research and served to emphasise the decisive role that media control played in the production and dissemination of information.

A breakthrough on the theoretical side came from a somewhat different direction with the work of the Canadian theorist Marshal McLuhan (1911-1980). McLuhan, whose seminal work is *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), drew on his studies of social change during the transition from manuscript to printing culture in Western Europe to suggest a sweeping media theory epitomised in the slogan, 'The medium is the message' (see also McLuhan 1967; 1994). While the slogan suggests a deterministic point of view, this is not the case with McLuhan. He pioneered an understanding of the dialectical way in which media and society influence each other. With the advent of television as a mass medium, the ground was cleared for widespread interest in the role of communication media in culture. The advent of the Internet and the dramatic changes brought about by satellite telecommunication have accelerated interest in this field. Departments of Communication Science have mushroomed at universities around the world, populated by students eager to exploit the new technologies. It is probable that students of computer-enhanced media are

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[6] Presently, major parts of the Bible have been translated into about 1200 of the 2000+ languages spoken on the planet. The person who has contributed in this field more than anyone else I know is Eugene A Nida (1996; for a summary see his latest publication on the sociolinguistics of translation). For any scholar, an involvement in the complexities of Bible translation is a good introduction to multi-cultural understanding.

now conducting most of the creative thinking on media and culture. Many media studies come from students with interests in journalism, though many unfortunately restrict their scope to the practical and technical aspects of contemporary media without developing a broader theoretical perspective.

The scholar who cast oral theory into a popular form was a Jesuit priest and professor in humanities, Walter Ong. His book, *Orality and Literacy, the Technologizing of the Word* (1982), has been widely read, criticised and applied to a great variety of study fields. Ong's most basic insight is that 'writing restructures consciousness' (Ong 1982a:78)[7]. Though often criticised, along with Eric Havelock[8], for positing a 'great divide' between oral and literate cultures, he presented a clear and distinct typology with which scholars began to work. He also contributed toward restoring the dignity of orality and enabling people from predominantly oral cultures to recover some of their heritage. In this sense Ong's studies and those of the scholars coming after him contribute toward a post-colonial scholarship. Since Ong's first publications a number of scholars have produced seminal works. Jan Vansina, who brought his experience in Central Africa to bear on the subject, published a noteworthy book, *Oral Tradition,* in 1965 and thoroughly revised it in 1985. Rosalind Thomas (1992) and Susan Niditch (1996), reviewing the archaeological evidence in the light of the new theories, both published monographs on orality and literacy, respectively in ancient Greece and ancient Israel. Such studies have been going on for more than a century, but what is new is that these scholars are reviewing the archaeological evidence in the light of recent theories of orality and literacy. Ruth Finnegan, through numerous publications (see 1977; 1988; 1992), refined the procedures for studying oral culture.

The preceding discussion shows that a significant body of learning has been accumulated over the past century and especially during the last quarter of the twentieth century. These studies focus mainly on the roles of orality and literacy in the shaping of societies and the texts (see note 2) that we find in those societies. The studies are seldom presented under the heading of 'media' studies, and they are seldom integrated into a general theory of culture[9]. A consequent question that has to be asked is whether and to what extent studies on orality and literacy (or media studies) can enhance our understanding of cultural difference. Can one understand more about the differences between peoples and cultures by investigating the different media technologies in a given social context? What exactly are the relations between media and culture, and media and social reality? Is the time favourable for formulating a theory of media and culture? How significant would a theory of media be to specific modes of interpretation, such as postcolonial readings, deconstruction, structuralism, and feminist readings?

Such questions are being raised. What then are the consequences of the development in media technologies for multi-cultural understanding? Two examples illustrate the challenges posed to students of media. The first, brought to my attention by Dr L. Bregman, concerns the recently restored Globe Theatre in London, which has the object of presenting Shakespearean plays in their original setting (see Cramer 2001). In spite of the efforts made, it has been realised that any reconstruction can only be partial. The arrangement of space, light, sound and smell can be physically reproduced, but other conditions are more difficult to replicate. Elizabethan audiences were known to participate in a mode different from contemporary audiences. They would empathise with the characters on stage to a much larger extent than present audiences and would reply spontaneously to the 'rhetorical' questions of the characters, sometimes holding the actors personally responsible for the misdemeanours of their characters. Thus the nature of the theatre as medium has changed over time. This example illustrates just how difficult it is to reconstruct the way in which a text functioned when media properties have changed. A second example we can briefly examine is the e-mail message. Whereas the first e-mail messages resembled the form and shape of regular letters by mail, they soon developed their own rhythm. Because e-mail allows for a rapid exchange of information (press a button and it is delivered), writers are bound to compose cryptic and sharp notes. The author of this article has witnessed more than one misunderstanding where a recipient, still expecting the mode of communication promoted by letters, was offended by the abrupt and seemingly impolite style of e-mail exchanges. Thus we are presently privileged to witness the birth of a new genre,

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[7] This statement has been seriously challenged by Scribner and Cole. With the publication of their book, *The Psychology of Literacy* (1981), they reported that they found that the introduction of script into traditional society produced no general cognitive effects such as the ability to memorize, to classify, or to draw logical inferences (Olson 1994:20). Olson (1994) spends the major part of his book refuting this finding. My own critique of Scribner and Cole's finding is that the time span over which they conducted their research was too short. Shifts in consciousness patterns related to media usage usually occur over long periods of time.
[8] Havelock's publications of 1982 and 1986 propose that Greek literacy, advanced by the unique invention of a complete alphabet, enabled the scientific and philosophical revolution of the Classical Era.

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[9] It is noteworthy that Werner Kelber (1983) is criticized for failing to 'ask what happens when the medium of communication becomes the bridge from the present to the past' (Byrskog, 2000:132). This remark clearly indicates the need for media theory.

the e-mail message, thanks to a change in media technology. Already this genre has subdivided into a spectrum of different types of message, for example, the chat-line, the memo, the commercial advertisement, birthday e-cards, the e-mail joke and many others. Murphy and Collins (2001) write illuminatingly on the form and protocol of on-line instructions on the Internet. All this raises a question: 'How much will the electronic media contribute to cultural divides between First and Third Worlds?'

These two examples concern differences in communication that arise when the media of communication change. In the above cases the changes are not as radical as, for example, a change from orality to a culture in which electronic media are used (as is the case for some people in Africa, Latin America and Asia today). When representatives from two extreme media cultures meet—for example, rural African people (orality) with 'Westernized' people (electronic media)—we are bound to witness tragic misunderstandings and conflicts of interest. A case in point is the manner in which global markets, with the help of electronic media, from time to time challenge Third World currencies. As translators have increasingly come to realise, it is not sufficient to translate propositional meanings from one language into another language if there is a large cultural divide. Paralinguistic features such a social organisation, cultural and media practices play a significant role. This was one of Walter Ong's main interests (as also of Goody & Watt 1963; 1977) for working on orality and literacy.

Let us then consider a brief sketch of Ong's typology. According to him, words in oral cultures are dynamic, charged with power. Curses and blessings are efficacious. Those who can speak the best (and the loudest) are promoted to leadership positions (usually adults and males). Orality induces a specific textual style. Concepts are arranged in additive rather than subordinate sequences. Oral communications employ redundancies to ensure the transmission of information. For the sake of clarity and definition, communications are often agonistically toned. Characters and situations are cast in terms of monumental stereotypes. Stories employ plots that are differently construed from the way they are in modern genres. Audiences are used to empathetic and participatory reception of oral materials. In oral societies memory is all-important for the preservation of information. This also has social and political consequences. The elders and shamans, who preserve the memory of the tribe, enjoy positions of power and privilege. Basic political units in primary oral societies are seldom larger that 50 persons. Oral societies are conservative and traditionalist (Ong 1982a:41). Ong's major thesis is that the features mentioned above are directly related to the inherent advantages and limitations of the oral-aural medium, rendering this medium of communication one of the most significant factors in the formation of culture.

In contrast to the above, post-oral cultures still depend heavily on the spoken word and retain many of the features of orality (fairy tales, for example, are read to children from printed books or watched as animations on television). This is often called a 're-constituted' orality. Subsequent media integrate orality into new post-oral media contexts where its effects can linger for many centuries. Oral conventions may even influence the highest products of literate culture. For example, James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* has been studied for its reflections on orality as well as literacy. Post-oral societies exhibit a tendency toward innovative thinking because of the enormous amount and diversity of information that can be processed due to better techniques for recording, storing, retrieving and disseminating data. Once this process has begun, more techniques follow. Two examples may suffice for demonstration. At its height of influence, the famous library in Alexandria (third century BCE), which became the prototype of all libraries in the Greco-Roman world, housed between 400 000 and 1 million written book rolls. This way of managing information became the foundation for the sophisticated civilisation of Antiquity. However, when duplicates and the length of the scrolls are taken into account, it turns out that the information stored did not exceed the size of a contemporary village library with 50 000 books, according to my own calculations. In another example, it is calculated that before the invention of the movable type printing press by Gutenberg (fifteenth century CE), there were only 40 000 manuscript titles in all the libraries of Europe. Within one century there were about 1.8 million. Together with an increasing ability for managing massive quantities of data, post-oral societies tend to develop different social structures, such as nuclear families and national states. Abstract notions of history, nature and of self are developed. An increased tendency for individual reflection leads to new levels of competition, capitalism, liberal democracy and the rule of law. Religions become based on sacred scripture. Above all, increased ability to handle information leads to massive technological innovation that influences all aspects of life.

Any study of cultural difference has to deal with the above typology. This model is, however, general and abstract and can barely serve as a basis for refined and detailed observation, analysis and description of cultural difference. Ong's sharp distinction between orality and literacy, if it has any use, would apply only to primal oral cultures in which writing is completely absent. (This is said *contra* Ong, since in my opinion the most serious criticism levelled against his work is that he does not distinguish sufficiently between the many different types of orality.) It would be a serious methodological mistake to use this description to identify a set of 'oral features' in a written document and then to assume that the documents are indicative of the conventions of a primary oral society. In the words of James Barr, used in a different context, this amounts to 'an illegitimate transfer of meaning'.

To what extent can Ong's orality-literacy typology further an understanding of cultural difference? Let us consider an example. Although traditional African culture is rapidly dissolving in South Africa due to urbanisation and universal schooling, all the 'oral' features discussed above can still be recognised among its 'indigenous' population. Here we think of aspects such as the extended family (primary oral group); traditionalism (necessary to preserve information for survival), a communal and inclusive tribal ethic ('ubuntu'); the tendency for politics to be relationship-driven instead of by the rule of law; a cyclical sense of history; emphasis on ritual, hereditary leadership and wisdom instead of an abstract view of history and nature; the experience of ancestral spirits and myths. Many of these features have been branded as 'typically African'[10] and can be ascribed to the oral-aural culture that has until recently dominated in Africa south of the Sahara (except Ethiopia).

To some extent, then, Ong's typology assists us in noticing typical oral features in African culture. By pointing out universal aspects, this approach defeats a narrow ethnocentrism that wishes to make these features unique to one race or continent. As already mentioned, it also fosters an awareness of oral culture and assists people to preserve their oral heritage. This is, however, where the usefulness of the typology ends. As any student of South African culture will know, there are hardly any communities left that participate in a 'pure' oral culture. On the oral-literate continuum, the mass of people is gravitating toward the literate and semi-literate middle classes. Thus, we can observe many different types of orality and literacy. One also has to deal with the fact that a simplistic distinction between 'oral' and 'literate' cultures often forms part of a colonialist discourse. Therefore, while scholars need to use abstract paradigms, we caution against this misuse. For the same reason we also have to emphasise (with Ong) that one culture is not superior or inferior to any other. People can live dignified and humane lives in any culture. This is especially important when we consider the contrast between a primary oral culture and cultures that have been shaped by post-oral media technologies (for example, Western or Chinese/Japanese cultures, using writing, printing and electronic media).

There are some urgent considerations before the scholar of cultural difference can proceed to move away from the usual generalisations. Let us therefore ask (again), 'To what extent is the use of specific media indicative of general

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[10] Though often associated with Africa, these features can be observed among primary oral cultures all over the world. Today in Africa there are large sections of the indigenous population that are no longer living in a primary oral society—for example, the urban middle class in most cities, the Euro-African and Indian minorities, and the Arabic population north of the Sahara.

cultural trends?' There are good arguments for rejecting a deterministic position or, in other words, one that accepts media usage as the primary determining element of culture. Apart from media, factors such as climate, economic conditions, population density and natural resources all determine human culture. Remarkable, though, are the correspondences that can be noticed between similar cultures in different parts of the world. Let us briefly review some of these cultural types. In the most diverse climates and regions one finds small *hunter-gatherer societies* communicating with gesture and sound, using stone tools, ruled by family heads assisted by wise individuals. The San of Southern Africa, the Aborigines of Australia and Taiwan, and some tribes in the Amazon and Borneo are examples of these societies. One finds as well *nomadic clans* in different parts of the world. They use primitive recording techniques, manufacture ceramics and use animal transport, while they gather in larger federations and are ruled by patriarchs. Examples of these are the Khoi-Khoi peoples of South Africa as they were in the seventeenth century. Another type of culture is found among those living in *agricultural settlements*. These are experimenting with more sophisticated sign symbols, melting metals, transporting goods with horses and carts, and ruled by kings. The neolithic people in the Yellow River valley near Xi'an, China in 2000 BCE and the people living presently among the upper reaches of the Nile valley in Egypt belong to this category. Writing first developed more than five millennia ago in the *small urban settlements* of Mesopotamia, Egypt and China, where people developed irrigation systems, opened trade routes and were ruled by feudal kings. Since the eighth century CE we see the gradual development of a manuscript culture in the Ancient Near East, opening the way for the empires of antiquity with their improved communication systems and extensive governmental control. So one can multiply examples of trans-regional and trans-ethnic cultural types that are found independently from one another. Does this mean that cultural change is *always* driven by new media technologies? It seems that communication media are integrally related to the dominant cultural paradigms. Theorists like McLuhan and Ong point out that the rise of the *nation state* in Western Europe coincided with the invention of the printed media. At present the electronic media are enabling global communication to such an extent that national boundaries are no longer obstacles to stock markets. Trans-national institutions are flourishing, heralding the formation of new social and political units. These examples show how media usage corresponds with and depends on the other elements of a cultural system and cannot be isolated from those other elements.

If we wish to conduct a detailed investigation of how media influence culture, we need a sustainable theory of culture. Among the multitude of definitions, there is the broad understanding that culture is a unique human product that appears when humans modify nature. This modification of nature is the result of the unique

human capacity for symbolisation, in other words, the capacity to represent information by means of symbolic systems. Of all the primates, only humans have the capacity for sophisticated symbolisation. Culture is therefore unique to the human race[11]. This definition can serve to clarify the role of media with regard to *culture as the symbolic representation of concepts by means of media*. This is the widest possible definition of culture that I can think of.

As an example of cultural production we can consider a 'table'. The idea of a 'table' as an 'article of furniture supported by one or more vertical legs and having a flat horizontal surface' cannot exist without being represented in a certain medium. When the idea is only an image in the mind, it is encoded in the neural network of the brain. This is then the primary medium. (The electro-chemical reactions in the brain serve the same purpose as ink and paper, to supply a material medium by means of which ideas are encoded.) The concept 'table' can also be encoded in the oral medium by being verbally described. Gestures can be used to enhance the oral description. It can further be represented as a drawing on paper. And, above all, it can be represented in wood or some other material. This is the medium in which it becomes useful, but the latter is only one possible representation. By this statement the distinction between a drawing of a table and a real table is suspended. I wish to contend that 'real' tables are also symbolic representations, in this case not of ideal tables in a Platonic 'realm of ideas', but of processes and objects perceived in reality. Thus, for example, the abstract idea of a level surface fixed horizontally at a certain level can be seen as representative of what someone has perceived in nature. What makes it a cultural product, a table, is the fact that it could be symbolically represented and rationalised before being produced in a certain medium. The use of media in such a series of multiple symbolisations applies not only to tables but to all cultural objects.

Since the medium, according to our definition, is an integral component in every process of symbolic representation, it follows that an analysis of media usage is profitable for the study of cultural difference. Usually the media are not the focus of attention in cultural activities, though there are specific occasions where they become that. This is when, in Roman Jakobson's terms, a certain aspect of a message

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[11] Other primates are also known to make use of symbols, but the human capacity for symbolisation is qualitatively different from those of any other animal. In California, a gorilla, 'Koko', is reported to have learned 500 symbols of American sign language. It was found that she always understands words in the same way, regardless of their order. 'Words' always have only one meaning. The capacity for polysemy is lacking (according to programme on Discovery Channel on DSTV SA, November 21 1999).

is *over-determined*[12]. In the communication of messages, media over-determination occurs when the sender of a message explicitly focuses on the medium, for example, when the sender of an e-mail message includes some remark about the medium ('I hope you can open my attachments in your browser'). Usually, the interpreter has to rely on implicit data to examine the 'media texture' of a text ('Had I been present, I would have told her so myself'). Perhaps *Finnegan's Wake* (1939) is the best example of a text in which the medium is over-determined. In this work the phonetic quality of the text usurps the conventional linguistic aspect, breaking up the expected semantic patterns and creating multiple levels of meaning and quasi-meaning. It is a play of the oral-aural medium with the visible, typographic medium.

The media aspect, however, does not need to be over-determined to be the object of study. All texts exhibit a media texture. (Under media texture we understand *the network of signs in a text that relate to the management of the media used in the production of meaning*. This applies even to the most primitive of texts, namely, those that exist only as webs of concepts in the mind. In such cases, the 'neural' medium will determine features such as the durability of the text and the 'density' of information.) The 'poetics' of a text, or the totality of features influencing the style and composition, usually reflect properties specific to the media used. Thus we find an *oral* texture even in written texts when these reflect the style and conventions related to oral communication. Over the past decade I have compiled a list of the general properties of media that influence various aspects of the communication process (Loubser 1986; 1993; 1995; 1996). These can be used to analyse and describe the media texture of a text. As such the media texture also points to the other textures of a text[13].

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[12] Media over-determination is not the same as any of the six functions described by Jakobson, although it is related to the phatic and the metalinguistic functions. In the case of literature, 'instances of the phatic function are to be found in the opening scene of Eugène Ionesco's Bald Soprano and in many scenes of Harold Pinter's early plays. The metalingual function is often the principal focus of stage directions, whose express purpose is to clarify the dialogue and the delivery intended by the dramatist' (Issacharoff 2001).

[13] For the concept of 'texture' I am indebted to Prof. Vernon Robbins (1996a:2-4 and 1996b:1-17). Robbins' socio-rhetorical analysis consists in plotting the different textures in texts (inner texture, and social, cultural, ideological and sacred textures) as they interact with the contexts of sender and receiver. This author wishes to suggest 'media texture' as a further element for consideration in socio-rhetorical analysis. For this purpose, however, both the terms 'media' and 'text' as used in socio-rhetorical analysis need to be expanded.

Let us first examine those media properties that regulate the *production* of messages. The production of texts depends on the manipulability of the medium. One may ask, 'How easily can a text be produced and changed?' In the oral-aural medium, texts are produced instantaneously once the sender has learned how to use language. In contrast, printed messages require sophisticated technology and cannot be produced or altered without an investment of time and effort. Another factor is the total volume of signs/symbols that can be carried by a certain medium. If a politician prepares to address an audience, the length of his or her message will be adapted to the medium, whether it be a live address, a radio address or a television interview. A live address may allow for about 40 minutes, a radio address less, and a television interview for even less. When using different media, for example, reading a book or watching television, the total volume of signs communicated will differ. This relates to the capacity of media to allow for 'infodensity': the amount of information that can be transmitted *within a given time*. The infodensity of oral-aural communication is relatively low in comparison to high-speed electronic data transmission. The last property related to the production of messages is mass—the physical mass of the medium required. In the transmission of oral messages, the physical mass of materials used is almost negligible, whereas stone tablets used for monumental inscriptions have a considerable mass. The more mass a medium requires, the more difficult it becomes to produce a text. Thus, oral-aural messages are rapidly produced with very little effort and appear to have no mass. During oral-aural communication, the volume of signs and information transmitted is relatively low in comparison with print and electronic media.

The *format* of messages also depends on media properties. Different media require the use of different codes that affect the format, its form and style as well as the demarcation of units. The oral-aural medium requires the use of mnemonic devices such as repetitive formulae and a paratactic style. Stylistic devices such as rhyme, rhythm and metre serve to optimise communication. The oral medium fosters the development of a range of genres, for example, the folk tale, sung epics, etc. Only with the advancement of writing could genres such as the historical essay and the modern detective story develop. Where oral-aural communication depends on the management of sound, writing depends on the arrangement of visual marks on a two dimensional surface. What sound and time are to orality, space is to writing. Another media property that influences the format of messages is the capacity of the medium for synchronising with other media, namely, its multi-media capacity. The spectrum of media that can be incorporated has a direct bearing on the length and style of the message. Oral-aural communications allow for the use of gesture and intonation. Printing, however, could only begin using photographic pictures after the development of the technology in the 1840s. The importance of this for the format of

the printed text can be observed in the contemporary glossy magazine, where much of the printed text serves to introduce and comment upon graphic images. Related to the multi-media aspect, but not the same, is the capacity of media for intertextuality: the incorporation of other texts using the same medium in a message. During oral-aural communication, intertextual reference can only come from memory. Because memory is in a permanent state of flux, such references are usually adapted to the present needs of the audience to such an extent that the original context becomes obscured. Exact verbal citations do occur in oral cultures, but they are far less usual than free re-contextualisations, reconfigurations, adaptations and echoes of the texts to which they refer. In the manuscript culture of the first century, many of these intertextual modes are preserved (see Robbins 1994:82; Byrskog 2000:13). Thus, we see that the format of messages is strongly determined by the medium employed.

A third aspect of messages that is influenced by media properties concerns the *distribution* of the messages. How far and wide messages are distributed depends on the durability, affordability, range of reception and copying and storage capacity allowed for by the medium, as well as the type of censorship that is possible. Let us consider the distribution of oral-aural communications in a pure oral society in comparison to the manuscript culture. During oral communication, only those within hearing range can participate. Although rhetoricians since Classical times have charged their students for instruction in eloquence, the spoken word has the advantage of being relatively inexpensive; however, it has the disadvantage of disappearing as soon as it has been uttered. This limits the range of messages to the immediate hearers and those among them who can remember and transmit the message. Social structures are developed to support the preservation of memory. This involves the institution of elders (who preserve the memories of the tribe), the ritualisation of myths, the development of a culture of bards and singers, etc. In predominantly oral societies, gifted individuals specialise in memory[14]. By way of generalisation, one can say that the copying and storage of information in an oral culture remains volatile and evanescent when compared to writing. This puts a serious limitation on the range over which oral texts can be distributed. The distribution of written documents is also limited by their cost. Ink, papyrus and parchment for producing manuscripts come at a price. It is calculated, for example,

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[14] An example of these are the Tannaim in Rabbinic Judaism who served as 'memory banks' for the rabbis and were often the object of ridicule because they memorized without understanding (see Gerhardsson 1998). Such 'human memory banks' could verbally recite large parts of the Torah, Mishnah and Talmud—no small feat if at more than 19 000 modern printed pages. Youngsters are found in contemporary Islamic communities who have memorized the complete Qur'an.

that 350 sheep or goats were slaughtered to produce one of the 50 copies of the Bible that the Emperor Constantine ordered for the churches in Byzantium in the year 330 CE (Millard 2000:45). Parchment manuscripts, especially codices, could be used for centuries and were distributed as far as transport routes went. Though such documents could never be copied with photographic precision, they represent a huge advance over oral communication. This medium enabled the dissemination and standardisation of the scientific, religious and philosophical information of the Arabic and European cultures during the Middle Ages. A manuscript culture of a similar type was recently observed in Ethiopia by the author. These examples serve to show how media have a direct bearing on the distribution of messages; but messages can also be suppressed. In an oral culture use is made of taboos to prevent people from speaking about certain matters. To prevent information from spreading, it is often expedient to 'kill the messenger'. In manuscript and printing cultures the burning of books is the most efficient form of censorship.

A last series of media properties that influence messages are those that have a bearing on the *reception* of the messages. Here properties such as accessibility, aesthetic impact, opportunities for reflection and feedback, and the level of distortion play a role. When examining a message, the scholar has to ask: 'To how many people is this message accessible?' The medium used, whether the oral, written or electronic medium, will make a considerable difference. Another question must seek to determine the non-verbal (illocutionary) aspects of the message: 'What aspects of the message cannot be encoded in the medium?' In the first century, the reading (or rather, performance) of literary works was often accompanied by sound, music and gesture and it elicited empathetic responses from participating audiences[15]. Today, some of those manuscripts are extant, but the illocutionary force has been lost. When reading such manuscripts at contemporary academic institutions, scholars often fail to imagine such paralinguistic aspects (for example, speed, tone, etc.) as presupposed by the author of the written text[16]. (Ancient texts are treated as having

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[15] In a personal research of about 250 pictorial representations of writing on vases and reliefs in the Greco-Roman world, only a few instances were found where people were depicted with manuscripts without also the depiction of musical instruments, singers or dancers.

[16] This is especially true for Western documents. The ideograms of Chinese and Japanese writing allow for the communication of a register of connotative meanings that is not found in alphabetic script. It was pointed out to me that the Japanese 'kanji', being a short poem written by means of ideograms, 'evokes multiple associations, making reading an adventure in nuances, connotations and memories' (Bregman, Temple University, Philadelphia).

been produced by 'disembodied brains', to adapt a remark at an SBL session by K.C. Hanson, with reference to the regular Pauline studies.) Another manner in which media influence the reception of messages is in the degree to which access and backtracking is allowed. The spoken word depends on linear, hierarchic, synchronous communication. No backtracking is possible except by breaking the live transmission of information. This fosters a sense of interiority, of emotional participation in a communicative event (Ong 1982a:71-74). Whereas oral texts encourage communal participation, printed texts lead to silent and individual introspection—the extent to which this actually happens depends on the type of society at hand. Audiences tuned to oral-aural texts tend to dance and celebrate; silent readers of printed texts tend to reflect and think. Books allow direct access to information. Manuscript scrolls do not provide such access—the literary scroll of the Hellenistic age (often 10 meters long) had to be perused from beginning to the end to find a specific reference. Books and codices (since 150 CE) can easily be paged through. The electronic word processor is only the latest technological advance in allowing direct access to the information contained in documents. The effect that such diverse media have on the receivers of messages can be observed in the time required to access information. Technical information takes much longer to be communicated orally. In printed form references can be made more easily. The media also determine the type of reaction required from the audience, whether it is immediate feedback (as in an oral dialogue), a response over a couple of weeks or months, as in the Hellenistic letter, or an immediate typed response, as per e-mail chat-line. (See the interesting article by Murphy and Collins 2001 on the protocols and conventions of instructional discussions on the Internet.) Lastly, we note the amount of distortion caused by the medium of communication. No medium allows for a perfect reproduction of signs. Speech is always heard somewhat differently from the way it is pronounced. There is always some 'noise' that can lead to misunderstanding. Over time, all media decay. In an ancient Near Eastern text there is an admonition to write the same text on both stone and on clay tablets. Should the world be destroyed by fire, the stone will crack but the clay will be baked hard. If the world is destroyed by water, the clay will dissolve, but the stone will endure. In China we find a remarkable instance of how the distortion of sacred texts was kept to a minimum. From the seventh century CE the Chinese developed the practice of making carbon rubbings on rice paper. This is still practised, as observed by the author in the city of Xi'an. The Buddhist texts, brought to China in the seventh century were translated and engraved on stelae. From these, carbon copies were made. In the West no technique for exact copying existed before the printing press. We find even today that libraries have a problem with microfilm that decays faster than paper. Moreover, scientists are worried about the medium and language to be

used for instructions at sites for nuclear waste, because in ten millennia the waste will still be radioactive and no human message has endured for so long (Kaku 1998:265-294).

In summary then, the media texture of a message can be examined by considering the media properties that influence the production, format, distribution and reception of the text. Studies that concentrate only on concepts (as do all ancient studies) or codes (as do structural and semiotic studies since De Saussure) are bound to miss this important aspect. Such studies tend to present a 'docetic' view of reality, treating texts (and culture) as if they consist merely of some abstract system of ideas. This is bound to produce a distorted view of cultural difference as well, and to lend itself to a colonialist discourse. It is therefore in the interest of multi-cultural communication that the media aspects receive their due attention.

In this paper I have argued that the integral and constructive role of media should be considered in a theory of culture. This has been illustrated by means of examples taken from a variety of cultures. It is now time to move forward from the simplistic categories of the past[17]. Studies over the past two decades have shown that we can no longer speak of a great divide between orality and literacy. Neither can we speak in a simplistic sense of 'African' or 'Western' culture. There are many different shades of orality and literacy and many manifestations of the same cultural type in different places on the globe. We therefore need a theory of culture that allows for more sophisticated typologies.

Through the contributions of many scholars during the past decades, the ground has now been prepared for media-critical studies in a variety of fields. We can only hope that scholars and students of literature, history, psychology, philosophy, theology, journalism and other disciplines will make use of this opportunity to engage in a recent and rewarding field of investigation. A rich harvest can be expected. The most important result of such studies will be, as we have argued, an enhanced understanding of multi-cultural issues.

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[17] Derrida's rejection of Levi-Strauss's lament over the introduction of writing among the Nambikwara comes to mind. Derrida derides the latter for denying that the Nambikwara had writing at their disposal. He points out that they were using a great variety of signs like 'dots and zigzags on their calabashes'. It is a serious question whether Derrida, in his zeal to defend the dignity of a primary tribe, has given due cognisance to the role of media in the formation of culture. For a report on the issue, see Peters (1998:27f).

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The Liminal Function of Orality in Development Communication: A Zimbabwean Perspective[1]

Kennedy Chinyowa

Introduction

The search for more sustainable methods of communicating development to disadvantaged communities in Africa has preoccupied national governments, non-governmental organisations and international aid agencies for the past few decades (Mody 1991). So far, modern technological media like radio, film and television have been the most prominent approaches employed by development workers to address problems associated with malnutrition, sanitation, HIV/AIDS, illiteracy, family planning, gender inequality and political repression. However, these mass media have not been effective enough to address the needs of impoverished African communities (Breitinger & Mbowa 1994). As Everett Rogers (1989:68f) points out, instead of seeing development communication as a mass-media centred process based on technological innovations, development workers are increasingly turning to more participatory approaches that enable them to reach out to mostly rural-based populations. One of these alternative communication strategies is community-based Theatre for Development (TfD).

Yet even TfD itself has also recognised the ineffectiveness of applying an exogenous, also called 'top-down' or 'outside-in', approach to development. In the exogenous model, initiatives for development come from outside the target community. Development goals are designed without the involvement of the community, which is usually reduced to the status of passive recipient. As a result, the exogenous approach has been found to be rather mechanistic, externally-driven, lacking appropriate dialogue, reciprocity and feedback (Mda 1993; Kidd 1983).

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Most TfD practitioners have come to realise that a more effective development strategy is the endogenous, also called 'bottom-up' or 'inside-out' approach. The endogenous model involves active participation of the target community in development. It recognises that processes of transformation are internal to the mechanisms of social systems and cannot necessarily be determined by external agents. In so far as it constitutes an internal process of action, reflection and praxis, the endogenous model has come to be characterised by a strong tendency to make use of the people's own local resources.

This paper will focus on how TfD has turned to orality in order to dismantle the oppressive structures of underdevelopment and create conditions for social change. Using the illustrative paradigm of a TfD workshop carried out in a rural district of Zimbabwe, the paper argues that far from being merely pleasurable entertainment, the liminal function of orality is central to the capacity building potential of the endogenous TfD model. Through the agency of indigenous performance genres like ritual, storytelling, poetry, music, song and dance, orality seems to act as 'folk media' for reconstituting a more conducive social reality. The signifying elements of orality will be shown to have the necessary ingredients for influencing change and development among marginalized communities in Zimbabwe.

Orality and Function

Isidore Okpewho (1992:5) points out that African oral literature, which is also referred to as orality, consists of what the people traditionally say, such as proverbs, idioms, chants, puns and riddles, and what they make or do, such as rituals, stories, poetry, songs, music, dances and masquerades. Austin Bukenya (1983:1) goes further to define orality as

> ... those utterances, whether spoken, recited or sung, whose composition and performance exhibit an appreciable degree of artistic characteristics, accurate observation, vivid imagination and ingenious expression.

In this paper, the word 'utterance' will be taken to mean different ways of communicating messages through both verbal and non-verbal language. What particularly characterises such performative modes of expression is their undying presence within the contemporary African milieu. They tend to share functional qualities that enable them to continually adapt to changing circumstances.

Even in their present modified forms, the oral performance genres have remained part of the Zimbabwean people's everyday experience. The capacity of

memory to keep on extrapolating these art forms from the past testifies to their staying power. The oral forms point beyond the moment to exhibit an art-for-life's-sake function. This is evidenced by the fact that in many peasant communities today, orality continues to manifest itself in the ritual celebration of the people's life cycle. Through song and dance, people still celebrate child-birth, marriage, fertility, harvest, labour, death and ancestral presence. The same kind of celebration is evident in more secular performances such as children's games, storytelling, praise poetry and other recreational activities. In short, orality remains an artistic medium for producing and expressing the people's way of life, what Scott Kennedy (1973:73) has called the 'drama of life'.

The function of orality can also be observed in the people's tendency to want to 'return to the source' of indigenous poetics for more credible and enduring forms of popular expression. This can be demonstrated at political rallies, church gatherings and sporting events where people easily resort to poetry, narration, song, dance, chanting and drumming. For them, such 'folk media' create a greater sense of credibility and purpose. By using their own language idioms, the people find the messages more appealing, easier to express and comprehend. They feel incited and confident in creating their identity, and in the process, ensure the survival of their culture. More importantly, these 'folk media' bear the stamp of collective authority by encouraging more audience participation. As Mineke Schipper (2000:169) comments, the use of previous aesthetic knowledge makes people, just like computers, inclined to admit only compatible information. People tend to be 'programmed' by their cultural and social legacies.

The influence of orality became more pronounced during Zimbabwe's protracted liberation struggle from 1966 to 1979 which later culminated in the attainment of political Independence from Britain in April, 1980. Even though successive colonial regimes tried to suppress indigenous forms of expression, a strong cultural revival was experienced, especially in the war front. In the words of Stephen Chifunyise (1994:55):

> The dynamic use of diverse and popular forms of indigenous performing arts, for instance ... ritual dances, poetic recitation, chants, songs and storytelling enabled the combatants to mobilise ... the peasants' solidarity with the liberation struggle.

This oral renaissance became popularly known as *pungwe* (all night celebration). Apart from being a carry-over of the pre-colonial performing arts, *pungwe* became an effective way of 'telling' the story of colonial injustice and nationalist resistance. While participating in a variety of oral performances, peasants had so much control

that Ross Kidd (1983:12) was persuaded to describe the *pungwe* as 'a theatre-with-the-people experience'.

Orality and Liminality

Apart from its function in contemporary cultural contexts, orality also tends to effect transformation within its participants through the process of liminality. The term *liminality* originates with the Belgian anthropologist, Arnold van Gennep (1960:65), who used it to refer to 'the making of change among tribal peoples'. The theatre anthropologist, Victor Turner (1988), later extended the use of the term to refer to a transitional phase in ritual events characterised by the symbolic death and rebirth of participants undergoing change. Turner (1988:76) associated the liminal state with conditions of uncertainty and possibility, the very source of change, yet felt that it did not have 'any hope of realisation outside the ritual sphere hedged in by strong taboos'.

However, later anthropological studies by Colin Turnbull (1995), Barbara Myerhoff (1995) and Don Handelman (1990) have come to view liminality as a condition of intense processuality characterised by fluid, shifting and dynamic energy. Because of its capacity to play 'betwixt and between' structures, the liminal state is best suited to conditions of social inconsistency, indeterminacy, conflict and contradiction. In its original ritual context, Turnbull (1995:76) argues that liminality enables willing participants to become something else. It has to be experienced rather than reasoned, hence the difficulty involved in expressing it in words. But when taken out of its ritual domain, liminality implies a way of 'seeing', 'perceiving' and 'knowing', experienced by participants as they move from one state to another during the rehearsal process. It involves the exchange of one state for another, a process of being transformed in performance. As Turnbull (1995:79f) concludes, the experience of consciously or unconsciously achieving transformation is the process of entering the liminal state. It is an 'other' condition of being in which 'this-ness' becomes 'that-ness'. It is not just a medial state of transition.

How does orality relate to liminality? Orality is the *process* by which liminality, and, by extension transformation, come to be realised. The genres of orality, like storytelling, for instance, are like codes that enable individuals to express themselves in the process of making meaning, and ultimately to think, act and feel 'as if' they were something else. According to Suzanne Langer (1953), symbols, in this case, oral codes, can fire the imagination, and call into play insight, feeling and belief that alter people's perceptions of themselves and others. The invisible referents to which the oral codes point may become realities made manifest through the rituals, stories, dances or songs. Thus orality plays a liminal function by

affording participants the opportunity of inscribing their fates, desires and beliefs in its frames of reference. New possibilities are brought into being as participants are transported to unfamiliar 'worlds', knowing full well what they are doing and why they are doing it.

Development Communication: The Murehwa Workshop

In designing development messages with target communities, TfD practitioners are making use of indigenous performance traditions. In other words, orality has become the means by which people's experiences are being framed to create an awareness of their predicament and, where possible, to act to change their circumstances. In Turnbull's (1995:248) view, members of the community perform to behold themselves, and want to become what they behold. Orality thus enables communities to design, express and interpret development messages through a kind of rehearsal for action. This form of 'action learning' is what has been variously termed the 'endogenous' (Epskamp 1989) or 'organismic' (Knowles 1984) model of education.

The endogenous approach allows TfD practitioners to make use of those parts of lived experience that are performed. According to Norman Denzin (1992:138), everyday life can be understood through mass-mediated performances that can render the imagined reality more real than the real. Culture becomes a performative act, a verb not a noun. As participants construct their own performance texts, they become the locus of power, agency and representation. They are active subjects rather than passive objects of the development process, being capable of exploring and interpreting their own situation and taking action to transform their lives. The development workers assume different roles as facilitators, catalysts, or even co-participants. As a participatory action learning process, therefore, the endogenous method enables TfD facilitators to communicate development through the performative functions of human experience.

The example of a TfD workshop held in Zimbabwe in August 1983 can perhaps illustrate the practicalities of the endogenous model and the liminal role played by orality in communicating development. In his report on what has come to be popularly known as the Murehwa workshop, the Canadian TfD practitioner and co-participant, Ross Kidd (1983) indicates that what became important during the workshop was the villagers' own contribution to the development process. Peasants were made to take control of the 'learning' process rather than remain passive recipients of ideas from outside. On their part, development workers also learnt to work *with* rather than *for* the community. They became facilitators and animateurs instead of directors, technocrats and performers. Kidd (1983:7) explains it as follows:

Their job was to animate and facilitate a drama-making and analysis process: getting the villagers to do the thinking, to question their assumptions, to look for root causes, to strategise and ... to make plays and songs as a way of focusing, concretising and generating analysis.

The actual workshop process drew heavily from the villagers' *pungwe* experience. *Pungwe* had not only revived the community's oral traditions, it had also taught them to articulate their grievances. Most importantly, *pungwe* had created a forum for community celebration, decision-making, confidence-building and critical thinking. As guerrilla fighters tried to mobilise peasants for the liberation struggle, the villagers could also express their views and concerns through poetry, song and dance. Thus *pungwe* allowed room for popular participation in the conscientisation process.

The Murehwa workshop itself shows a clear shift in development communication strategy from an exogenous to an endogenous approach. This is evident from the different phases of the participatory action research process adopted by the TfD facilitators as follows:

1 Pre-Planning Stage

The development workers began by reviving the *pungwe* tradition as a way of harnessing culture for development. Preliminary meetings with villagers were punctuated by an exchange of games, songs and dances between peasants and TfD facilitators. This helped to establish rapport with the villagers and to make them responsive to the data gathering process. Problems confronting the Murehwa community were easily identified. These included water shortage, lack of capital, gender conflict, teenage pregnancy and youth unemployment.

2 Planning Stage

After building a relationship with villagers and identifying their problems, the next step involved mapping out ways of making villagers realise the need to solve these problems. Villagers were engaged in collective discussions to plan the course of action to be taken, a process that Kidd (1983:18) calls 'conscientisation'. They were participating in the shaping of their own learning.

3 Action Stage

The planning stage culminated in organised action by the villagers. This was perhaps the most crucial stage, where ideas were put into action. Oral performances were employed to express the villagers' problems and to search for solutions in a

histrionic way. Orality thus became both the medium and the message as storytelling, music, song, and dance easily turned into role playing and miming of the villagers' own experiences. It became easy for the TfD facilitators to take advantage of the spontaneous role playing to raise development issues with the villagers.

4 Observation Stage

To see if action was producing the desired results, TfD facilitators realised that role playing was actually a powerful medium for eliciting villagers' perceptions of their problems. During the act of performance, villagers were also discovering themselves through what Gareth Morgan (1986) describes as 'conversing with experience'.

5 Reflection Stage

The act of observing themselves in action formed the basis of critical reflection leading to a gradual shift in perspective. As the villagers observed and reflected in action, they could figure out the possibilities of solving their problems. Thus orality became the medium for a form of reflective practice in which villagers analysed their own experiences.

6 Evaluation Stage

This was a rather negative turning point for the whole workshop process. While villagers had been left free to contribute their ideas on development, TfD facilitators finally hijacked the workshop by excluding villagers in the evaluation phase. Instead of helping villagers to assess whether their action had made a difference to what they had thought and felt before the workshop, development workers went away to do the final analysis by themselves (Kidd 1983:72f). In a way, they were now imposing their own thinking on the development of the community instead of drawing conclusions from the views of the villagers.

7 Re-Planning Stage

Because the TfD team had usurped the final evaluation phase, they could not revisit the workshop site to assess whether the capacity-building process they had helped to erect could sustain itself in their absence. In the end, their development agenda became illusory because the people for whom it had been intended were no longer part of it. It is only when participants can identify with the development process that they are interested in its continuation.

In spite of its final shortcomings, the Murehwa workshop demonstrates the extent to which orality functions as a medium of communicating development using the endogenous approach. In Victor Turner's (1995:10f) taxonomy of the shift from ritual to theatre, orality constitutes the *limen* phase of community action. The Murehwa villagers, for instance, made use of orality to address their problems. Song and dance created a threshold of possibilities in which villagers could act out their experiences and forge an *identity* for themselves. As Christopher Odhiambo (2001:85f) points out, TfD engages its participants in 'fixing', 'un-fixing' and 're-fixing' people's attitudes, habits and behaviours. The human condition is not permanent but a social construct capable of being 'un-fixed' and 're-fixed'. In a sense, the 'un-fixing' process is made liminal by the medium through which people's problems are articulated and redressed.

Orality also manifested itself through the *imaginative* recreation of games and stories that afforded workshop participants the joy of creating new ways of 'seeing' the world through play. As Turner (1995:11f) argues, play is not just fun but a liminoid mode, the source of the 'as if' or 'subjunctive mood', the mood of maybe, might-be, fantasy, desire and conjecture that ultimately triggers thought, feeling and intention. The aesthetics of play are a storehouse of *creativity*, a striving for new forms and structures, a gestation process and an anticipation of post-liminal existence. Among the Shona-speaking people of Zimbabwe, the equivalent for play would be *mutambo* (game). A defining characteristic of *mutambo* is the way it gives power to the weak against the strong as reflected in the popular adage, *chihwerure hachiendi kumba* (playful jibes should not be taken home). In other words, the weak are given licence to vent their grievances against the powerful for as long as it is done through play. In the process, play becomes the most appropriate medium of self-affirmation, self-discovery and self-recognition. It performs the liminal function of transforming the indeterminate, unfamiliar and uncertain into the determinate, familiar and certain, enabling people to free themselves from their unfavourable conditions and realise their potential for change.

At another level, the use of orality during the Murehwa workshop had a *regulative* effect on the villagers' way of behaving, thinking and feeling. As Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1998:123) realised during his experiences with the Kamiriithu community in Kenya, ritual, narrative, song and dance represented a process of being and becoming. They were a domain of culture that embodied the people's moral codes and aesthetic values. Their enactment could transform the performance space into a self-contained arena of struggle, tension and conflict that eventually shaped the people's memory, history and culture. Likewise, in the Murehwa workshop, orality not only helped to transform the *dandaro* (open space) into a site of communal regeneration but also effected mental, emotional and behavioural change within the villagers. The open space allowed information and events to be

played out in a very free form and also provided an opportunity for almost infinite variability in terms of movement, participation and expression. Thus orality's potential to equip villagers with the confidence to assess their needs was greatly enhanced by the familiarity of the village setting.

Perhaps a more striking feature of orality's liminal function was its application as an *inter-textual* activity, the way in which the different oral genres intertwined in a mutually supportive, enriching and interdependent manner. Messages were communicated through a variety of 'folk media' channels, each complementing and reinforcing the other. For instance, when performing their stories, villagers would combine narrative with music, poetry, song and dance to create different levels of meaning and interpretation. The music and song also helped to vary the action, to bridge scenes and to boost audience participation. Inter-textuality may therefore be regarded as a holistic means by which villagers expressed their thoughts, feelings and actions. It was a clear demonstration of a multiple process-oriented communication strategy.

Conclusion

This article has shown that orality constitutes the 'logics of design' (Handelman 1990) behind the endogenous approach to development communication. Because of its liminal capacity, orality has become the paradigm of process in TfD workshops. It is the means by which messages are composed, delivered, perceived and interpreted. Orality is the *how* of the TfD workshop, the generative process behind the development product.

During the Murehwa workshop, orality manifested itself as a form of interactive reflective practice by means of which participants were able to create and negotiate development *by* and *for* themselves rather than having it brought to them from outside. Orality was the driving force behind TfD's desire for redressive action, being the medium through which villagers questioned, grappled with and confronted their problems. As a culture-based communication strategy, therefore, orality transforms development communication into an almost 'natural' outgrowth of the existing social system.

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Gender and Person in African Societies: The Role of Hermeneutics[1]

Gina Buijs

Perhaps the greatest gains that have been made in feminism relate to the interpretation of western value systems, rather than those of indigenous societies, which traditionally form the grist of anthropological research. Writing in honour of Audrey Richards, generally acknowledged as one of the most distinguished English female anthropologists, Pat Caplan (1992:70) berates the failure of what she terms 'feminist anthropology' to make any significant impression in the discipline as a whole. She notes that many have argued that anthropology is inevitably hermeneutic, an approach which Ricoeur defines as 'the comprehension of the self by the detour of the other' (in Rabinow 1977:5). But, she adds, we need to acknowledge, and this happens only rarely, that in making this detour the self also changes. Heidegger is reported to have said that what is decisive is not to get out of the hermeneutic circle, but to come into it in the right way, for in the circle is hidden the possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing. For Heidegger truth is to be found in silence, or the spaces between words. This paper is an attempt to investigate gender and person in some African societies, what Edwin Ardener (1972:135) has so cogently termed 'Belief and the Problem of Women'. In his seminal paper Ardener (1972:140) notes that in terms of the then prevailing functionalist orthodoxy,

> ... it was hard for anyone with fieldnotes on women to see that they were effectively missing in the total analysis, or more precisely, they were there in the same way as were the Nuer's cows, who were observed but also did not speak.

Writing in the same volume as Caplan, Jean La Fontaine (1992:90) remarks in 'The Persons of Women' that the universality of gender symbolism has an immense intellectual appeal, and one which in the 1970s first seemed to offer a real chance of making generalisations which would be applicable world-wide, while at the same time allowing scope for the understanding of cultural differences. Human biology provided a seemingly invariant base upon which different clusters of concepts linked gender with a wide range of other cultural representations. The analysis of these clusters of ideas would offer a new understanding of myth and ritual as well as explaining the universal 'fact' of inequality between the sexes, ultimately providing fundamental insights into the nature of human society.

La Fontaine notes that today such expectations would be considered naive, for there has been a move away from elaborating abstract dualities towards a focus on the context in which ideas of gender are elaborated. She writes:

> ... it is increasingly obvious that to link the categories of gender, especially as they are symbolically displayed in myth and ritual, directly with the social behaviour of living individuals *creates* problems of interpretation, rather than solving them (La Fontaine 1992:91).

She concludes that cultural analysis is inadequate without a consideration of the social structural context in which ideas are embedded.

La Fontaine argues that in order to provide a framework for apparent contradictions between images of African women in ritual and in the reality of their own lives, attention needs to be paid to two topics of investigation: one, the social construction of the person, and the other, kinship. Both personhood and kinship are critically implicated in the understanding of women, she says. La Fontaine begins by pointing out that Western thinking is characterised by a particular concept of the person, which Mauss (1938), among others, drew attention to. This concept gives unique moral worth and independent social identity to each living human, conceived of as unique. The human being and the social actor are the same, since the concept of the person contains both meanings.

Yet in other societies the concept of the person differs from that given above in important respects. La Fontaine notes that while Fortes argued that Mauss was wrong in declaring the Western concept of the person to be unique, Fortes' ethnography of the Tallensi shows that they envisage human beings who are not persons and persons (crocodiles incorporating ancestral spirits) who are not human, and this observation can be generalised to most African societies. John Middleton (1960) shows that for the Lugbara, women lack an essential element of personhood, as do some Lugbara men. Harris (1978) notes that among the Taita of Kenya the

personhood of women is limited in that the full range of ritual powers is not open to women. What Harris stresses, notes La Fontaine (1992:92), and it is clear in the other accounts of African notions, is that personhood refers to a moral career, to the completion of a lifespan replete with the 'proper' statuses and social attributes.

In this paper I look in a preliminary way at the 'personhood' of Venda women, especially the status of the father's sister or paternal aunt, the *makhadzi*, and that of the headwoman or *vhamusanda*, as well as the institution of woman to woman marriage, evidently common in much of pre-colonial Africa and still existing in Venda today. The comparative invisibility of women in functionalist analyses, however, is also evident in respect to the ethnographer in places. Stayt's (1931:xi) monograph on the Venda, still (along with the works of Van Warmelo and Phophi) the major work on the Venda, has a foreword by Winifred Hoernle in which she comments on the 'high position given to women in this society, both in the administration and religious ritual', which, she says is 'unique for South Africa'[2]. While Stayt dedicates his book to 'my wife', it becomes apparent that this unnamed person, only mentioned directly in the 'Preface' and 'Introduction', was much more than photographer, map compiler, companion and 'enthusiastic helper' to her blind husband. She was also co-author of the book, as the following remarks reveal:

> ... of the hundreds of wives possessed by some of the more powerful chiefs a great many ... are little more than slaves; ... in many of the large villages one cannot fail to notice numbers of these old, ill-favoured women carrying enormous loads of wood and water and constantly at work about the kraal (Stayt 1931:201).

Presumably Mrs. Stayt did not consider her own position as an anomaly.

The position of father's sister or *makhadzi* is central to an understanding not only of chieftainship in Venda but of the kinship relations of commoners as well. Stayt (1931:195) comments that:

> ... metaphorically speaking, the chieftainship is a pie, which, although carried by one member of the family, has the thumbs of four others embedded in it. The relative importance of the owners of these thumbs must be thoroughly understood in order to appreciate the true position of the chief, the man who carries the royal pie.

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[2] Hilda Kuper's (1947) monograph on the Swazi and Eileen and J.D. Krige's (1943) famous work on the Lovedu were yet to appear.

A chief is succeeded by his son, who is appointed by the *makhadzi* and the *khotsimunene*, his father's brother. When these two appoint the new heir, they at the same time appoint one of his sisters to be the *khadzi* and one of his brothers to act as *ndumi* (the official brother of the chief). On the death of their brother these two will take up the positions of *makhadzi* and *khotsimunene*. The respect and obedience due to a father by his son is transferred upon his death to his 'female father' and 'little father' 'and until their deaths they have the right to command the person of their late brother's son, whom they have appointed to represent the family' (Stayt 1931:196).

The *makhadzi* is the late chief's eldest sister, although she may not be a uterine one. The chief is supposed to consult her and follow her judgement on all matters concerned with affairs of his people. She lives at the chief's capital, with her husband and children living elsewhere. She receives a percentage of all taxes given to the chief, who must grant all her reasonable requests. She is treated with most of the respect and formality accorded to the chief. Even men, Stayt says, to whom all other women kneel, must kneel to the *makhadzi*. Her food is prepared, like that of the chief, by one of his wives, and presented to her with the same ceremony as it is given to him. All this respect, notes Stayt, is the outward and visible sign of the real power which she wields in the state. In addition, her home is a sanctuary for criminals and murderers, whom she may reprieve and her consent is needed before war may be waged. In all these matters her judgement takes precedence over that of the chief and he is bound to submit to her decisions.

Huffman (1996:93), commenting on the importance of the *makhadzi* in Shona chiefdoms, writes:

> ... in the Shona kinship system today, a father's sister is known as *samakhadzi* and she officiates over inheritance proceedings when her brother dies. In 1956 a sister of Chief Maranke in eastern Zimbabwe acquired authority over part of the community when she was installed with him and several cases of headwomen are known among the Manyika.

Huffman speculates that these are 'probably vestiges of a more complex role in the past, for a special sister of a Zimbabwe ruler had similar duties to the Venda *makhadzi*, called *VaMoyo* in Rozwi praise poetry (Hodza & Fortune 1979:15-17, cited in Huffman 1996:64). Shona traditions recall the sister of the founding father as the 'great ancestress', the senior female representative of the ruling clan. Each new chiefdom was supposed to begin with the ritual incest of the chief and his sister. Huffman comments that the documentary evidence on whether the chief and his sister ever married is ambiguous, although he cites Bocarro (in Theal 1964:3.358)

who refers to the Monomatapa[3] as having many chief wives: 'most of them are his relations or sisters ... the principal one, called *Mazarira* ... is always one of the king's sisters'.

Stayt remarks that sometimes a chief's wife is addressed or referred to as *makhadzi*, which, he says 'adds another source of confusion to the difficulties that exist for anyone attempting to differentiate the various people called by this term'. However, he has an explanation ready: 'In this case it is readily explained by the fact that the chief's great wife is often also his sister, and so called by the people *makhadzi*, possibly it used to be a marriage injunction for the chief's sister to be his great wife' (Stayt 1931:208). Van Warmelo and Phophi (1948:37) comment that:

> Some chiefs even marry daughters of minor wives of their fathers, that is, their half-sisters. The object of these virtually incestuous marriages of chiefs is to ensure that the *musanda* (royal kraal) will be full of princes who know the manners and rules to be observed in the villages of royalty (the real reason is probably a relic of the 'sacred kingship', which can find spouses fit for the king only among his closest relatives (i.e. his sisters).

In an interview with the author (22 March, 1998), Mr. David Malelo, one of the *vhakoma* or headmen of *Musanda*[4] VhoNetshiendeulu, noted that the term *makhadzi* can be translated as 'one who commands, or is in control', an adviser. This meaning of the term *makhadzi* is not found in Van Warmelo's Venda-English dictionary, nor in Stayt, but the usage was reproduced in an article on the Mphephu succession dispute in the local English-language Venda newspaper *The Mirror* of 9 January, 1998. Mr. Malelo commented to me that when a man succeeded his father as chief, all the late chief's wives would be classed as *makhadzi* as well as the actual father's sisters. Mr. Malelo added that when there was a problem in the *musanda*, the *makhadzi* would be summoned and they would offer advice; 'they *must* be there' he said.

Gillian Feeley-Harnik (1997:161f) comments that the women so commonly called 'Queen-Mothers' by early ethnographers of African societies (see for example Roscoe 1911 on Buganda and Rattray 1923 on Asante) were structurally significant,

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[3] Monomatapa was the name given by the Portuguese to the ruler of the Mutapa state, which broke away from Great Zimbabwe and ruled to the north and north-east of the Zimbabwe plateau, as well as much of the Zambezi lowlands in the sixteenth century (Hall 1987:118).

[4] *Musanda* is a title referring to the headwoman. The literal translation is chief, or chief's court (Van Warmelo 1989:235).

not just figureheads but political actors in their own right. She argues that male-centred models of hierarchy and change, brought from Europe, appear to mask more complex assumptions about social reproduction, which, if better known, might provide a wider common ground in which to explore the dynamics of international relations between Africans and Europeans from a comparative and historical perspective. Feeley-Harnik writes of the great nineteenth-century Madagascan female rulers who were disparaged by their French colonial conquerors, and notes that even Maurice Bloch (1986) chooses to analyse the Merina royal bath[5] in generic rather than historical terms, persistently referring to the central royal figure as 'he' or 'the king'. This, despite the fact that from 1828 to the French invasion of 1895 Merina royals were women (with one exception who was strangled after two years in office).

Most scholars, writing of African kings, treat these figures as if they were unitary individuals. The literature on female rulers shows more awareness of polybodied qualities. These qualities encompass gender distinctions and other socially recognised differences such as condition of life, relatedness and locality (Feeley-Harnik 1997:163). As in European instances, these qualities might appear merged in any single manifestation of royalty, but the African data suggest that these apparently unitary composite creatures are better understood as historically situated facets of more complex beings and as the dynamic outcome of powerful unions among these different facets. Feeley-Harnik (1997:163) notes:

> ... here in particular, African polyarchies seem to show striking differences from European forms in their emphasis on what Weiner called 'sibling intimacy' in Polynesian polyarchies.

Okonjo, writing of the Igbo, notes that all the Igbo of each political unit to the west of the Niger were subject to two local monarchs, both of whom were crowned and acknowledged heads, lived in palaces and ruled from thrones. The two monarchs were, one, the male *obi*, who in theory was the acknowledged head of the whole community, but who in practice was more concerned with the male section of the community, and, two, the female *omu*, who in theory was the acknowledged mother of the whole community but who in practice was charged with concern for the female section. She says:

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[5] The 'royal bath' was an annual New Year ritual in which the Merina monarchs of Madagscar reaffirmed the alignment of society, royalty and astronomy in celebrating the fertility of the monarch and by extension the people and the land (Bloch 1987:271-297).

... it is important to note that the *omu* was not a queen in a western sense, she was neither the wife of a king nor the reigning daughter of a king who died without a male heir. In fact, she did not derive her status in any way from an attachment or relationship to a king (Okonjo 1976:48).

European models of political reproduction appear to emphasise queen mothers and sons, and, secondarily wives and daughters. Sisters are scarcely mentioned, yet when these African cases are read more closely, these 'mothers' are so often 'sisters' that Feeley-Harnik says that Luc de Heusch (1958) has to invoke substitution to make his evolutionary Oedipal argument about mother-son incest as the *point de rupture* catapulting kin-based societies into bureaucratic states (Feeley-Harnik 1997:163). The relationships are in effect those between brothers and sisters, but de Heusch chooses to 'convert' them into mother-son relationships to fit his model. In Africa the vernacular term for 'queen-mother' may be better translated as 'female ruler' or it may be a generic term like *kabaka*, applied to the 'king', 'queen-mother' and 'queen-sister' in Buganda. Feeley-Harnik says scholars might like to be more specific about the kinship relations involved, as when Rattray (1923:82,n1) notes that the Asante Queen Mother is 'not necessarily the chief's mother, more often his sister'.

Throughout Madagascar such terms as 'ancestor', 'leader', 'ruler', 'slave' and 'follower' are not normally marked according to gender (as they are not in most languages) and when gender is indicated concordant suffixes are used. While French observers, writing in the late eighteenth century and the nineteenth century, argue that the Malagasy prefer male heirs, Malagasy documents from the Merina royal archives emphasise the role of a group called 'brothers and sisters' in deciding succession and a clear emphasis on brother-sister endogamous unions and the heirs of such unions. (Feeley-Harnik 1997:165). We can note a similarity here to the role of the *khadzi* in determining her brother's heir among the Venda.

Ife Amadiume (1997:21) criticises Meyer Fortes' account of the Tallensi of northern Ghana for disregarding the important role played by women in Tallensi society:

> ... in Fortes' Tallensi data we see the consequences of gender prejudice and ethnocentrism, as a result of the masculinization of language and the imposition of the structures of Greek and Hebrew mythologies on Africa. (The book she refers to is entitled *Oedipus and Job in West African Religion*.) The narrative of the data is in the masculine gender as Fortes writes of 'nature of man', 'mankind', 'gods and men' and so on.

Amadiume notes that the dominant maleness in Fortes' account is contradicted by suppressed and fragmented information in the data, suggesting a missing matriarchal system. She quotes Fortes (1959:27):

> But the ancestress of a lineage or segment is almost as important as the founding ancestor, and the spirits of maternal ancestors and ancestresses play as big a part in a person's life as his personal ancestor spirit.

In his 1996 book on power and symbolism in ancient Zimbabwe, Tom Huffman refers repeatedly to the role of the 'ritual sister', which he bases on Venda ethnography. Following designs commonly found on the *hakata* (the Shona term for divining dice), he describes the herringbone pattern commonly found in *dzimbahwe* (stone circles) structures as representing senior female status and the check or chevron design as representing male status. I suggest that instead of the unsatisfactory term 'ritual sister', which does not convey the pragmatic power wielded by the holders of this position, we may adopt the term 'female ruler'. That such a term can be considered legitimate may be inferred from Huffman's own account of the royal burials at Mapungubwe, arguably among the most splendid in sub-Saharan Africa. Huffman notes that three of 23 burials excavated by Fouche (1937) and Gardner (1963) were associated with gold objects. The first one he discusses, Number 14, 'was probably that of a woman, buried in a sitting position facing west. She wore at least a hundred gold wire bangles around her ankles and there were over 12,000 gold beads in her grave'. Huffman notes that high status people were often buried sitting up and that the posture and gold ornaments indicate that the three people buried on Mapungubwe hill were rulers, 'perhaps a king with a 'ritual sister', or a king with his brother and sister'. Huffman (1996:188) does not suggest that the female burial is that of a ruler in her own right, although the 12,000 gold beads, not found in the other burials, are evidence for this. But later he quotes from Theal 'the *mazarira* of the Mutapa king in fact supported Portuguese requests for trade' and adds 'although female status is secondary in a structural sense, actual status would be historically contingent on the forces of individual personalities. Thus there could have been times when a ritual sister and royal mother had greater standing than their male counterparts' (Huffman 1996:109; Theal 1964:368).

Huffman acknowledges a debt to Adam Kuper's book *Wives for Cattle* (1982) in his conceptualising of the social systems of the ancient Zimbabwe kingdoms. Kuper (1987:112), in a later paper on southern Bantu marriage systems, says firmly that 'women were thought to be dangerous to cattle and could not take part in pastoral activities'. Women, indeed, may not have openly herded cattle, but that large numbers of them owned cattle and much other stock, quite independently

of their husbands or fathers, is made clear by Van Warmelo and Phophi (see especially 1948:1217-1234). Kuper (1987:112) goes on to state, referring to the Lovedu, 'Political influence is not exercised directly by the queen, but by her male advisers'. Such was not and is not the case among the Venda *makhadzi* and I doubt very much if it ever was the case among the Lovedu.

The role of the *makhadzi* in Venda can be seen clearly in the matter of succession. Stayt comments that, although in normal circumstances the eldest son of the great wife is the heir, this law is by no means rigid, as, if the *makhadzi* considers him undesirable as the head of the family, she may designate any other son, the choice resting entirely with her.

> Her power in this matter often results in the personal equation influencing her choice unfairly, and sometimes she may, for her own ends, pass over the lawful heir on some trivial and invalid excuse, nominating another son over whom she has more influence. If her nominee is accepted, all is well, but this personal element in the appointment of the heir, although theoretically very limited by customary law, is the font of endless family feuds. In the past the death of almost every patriarch resulted in family disruptions, the deceased man's brothers refusing to recognise the *makhadzi's* nominee and attempting to usurp her power by setting up as head of the family the man whom they considered would best serve their ends (Stayt 1931:170).

That matters have changed little since Stayt wrote is shown in a newspaper report of 9 January 1998. Alpheus Siebane, a reporter for the *The Mirror*, wrote a front page story detailing the ousting of the Mphephu royal council and the appointment of a new acting leader, Prince Toni Peter Ramabulana Mphephu, who was to fill the vacuum created by the death of the previous paramount chief of the Venda, Khosikhulu Dimbanyika Mphephu, who had died a few weeks earlier in a car crash. Siebane reported that the new acting chief, a young man, would fulfil the duties of the late king together with his female aide, Khadzi Mavis Mphephu. Prince Toni and Khadzi Mavis were both installed as the chief's assistants during his inauguration in February, 1994. The report continued:

> Prince Toni will act as chief until the royal family decides to install a leader. According to members of the family, this is not going to be an easy task. The late Chief Dimbanyika was married to one wife who has only one child, a six year old girl named Masindi. She is the only child that the Mphephu royals recognise .... Another elder member of the royal family, VhaVenda Phophi Mphephu, who acted as acting leader (regent) when

Dimbanyika was still very young, will not be left out in the cold. She will assist the young leaders as an adviser. She is one of the members of the former leadership who, among others, is being favoured by the new leadership (Siebane 1998:1).

Stayt (1931:215) notes that in Venda

... there are women petty chiefs in their own right, such as Nyadenga of Phiphidi and Nyakhalavha of Khalavha. When the father of the present Chief Tshivhase left Phiphidi to establish his new capital at Mukumbani he made his daughter Nyadenga petty chief in the Phiphidi district; she was his heir, the only child of his great wife, but could not succeed her father as a great chief. At Phiphidi she has the full rights of a man, and is only subordinate to the chief himself. Her position will be inherited by her eldest daughter.

Tshisinavhute of Mianzwi was also a female ruler in her own right. Tshisinavhute is the title of the Mbedzi[6] ruler who has been female since at least the end of the nineteenth century and possibly much earlier. The first female Tshisinavhute, Mufanadzo, had been given the gift of rainmaking by her father but according to oral tradition had had to enlist the help of Chief Ligege Tshivhase to drive out and kill her brother who had also been a powerful rainmaker at Mianzwi. Since then succession to the headship and powers of rainmaking at Mianzwi have been matrilineal (Ralushai & Gray 1977:6), though I am not persuaded that the term 'matrilineal' is entirely a suitable one here, since inheritance is from mother to daughter and not from mother's brother to sister's son. The change in succession from male to female may be partly explained by the increasing incidence of male circumcision, which was introduced from Sotho areas into Venda at the end of the nineteenth century. Ralushai mentions raids on the Mbedzi in search of uncircumcised men who were detrimental to the rainmaking powers of the Mbedzi, as males who had been circumcised were not allowed to hold sacred objects. Tshisinavhute, as a woman, was saved from such raids[7].

In a similar manner to Tshisinavhute, the origin of the Vondwe female chieftaincy appears to lie in a succession dispute involving a sister and her brother, although here the accounts given by local people and that given by the headwoman herself differ considerably. Matshidze (1988:24) dates the emergence of female chieftaincy at Vondwe to the installation of Nyatshitahela in 1914. In this account Nyatshitahela was the wife of Chief Rammbuda of Dzimauli[8]. Following a succession dispute, she fled with her only son to her maternal grand-mother's home and upon the death of her father, Headman Ramugondo of Vondwe, returned to Vondwe and became headwoman there. Some of Matshidze's informants said that the Vondwe ancestors preferred a female ruler; others that Nyatshitahela had engineered the removal of her classificatory brother who had been installed as chief shortly after the death of her father. Musanda Gumani, the present headwoman, told me (26 April 1998) that her ancestor was made headwoman at Vondwe by her brother, a local chief. She said that Nyatshitahela had been married to another chief nearby who had died. The people of his village blamed his wife and wanted to kill her. To save her, her brother removed her to his own chiefdom and made her headwoman of Vondwe.

Although Nyatshitahela was succeeded by several male descendants, their reigns were inauspicious. One died after having been struck by lightning, and his son, who succeeded him, died childless in 1976. It was at this point that the chief's family and the community reached a decision that there should be a return to female rule, since it seemed that Nyatshitahela was asking for a female successor as the males had not fared well. The present headwoman was installed and given the title Gumani at the age of twenty-one in 1976. Musanda Gumani has commemorated her ancestress by naming a local school after her. VhoGumani herself is an educated woman who is a senior officer at the Thohoyandou Central Prison, which is situated not far from her *khoro* or traditional court, where she hears cases on Sundays in the company of her *vhakoma* or headmen.

The position of female headwoman in Venda was a reflection not only of the standing of women in this society, but also of their wealth (see Jeannerat 1997:99). Van Warmelo and Phophi make it plain that women could build up wealth in various ways: by farming, through increase in livestock, pottery and, very often,

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[6] The Mbedzi predated the ruling Singo dynasty in Venda and may have had VhaNgona (aboriginal) antecedents as well as Karanga ones.
[7] There appears to have been some rivalry between Tshisinavhute and Modjadji of the Lovedu. Ralushai notes that the title Tshisinavhute translates as 'one who does not set a price', indicating that payments to her for rainmaking were voluntary, whereas it was known that Modjadji would not use her powers without payment.

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[8] The three major chiefdoms in Venda are those of Mphephu, Rammbuda and Tshivhase. Mphephu was created paramount in colonial times but formerly had no actual control over the other two. With the death of the previous Mphephu chief at the end of 1998, Chief Kennedy Tshivhase has taken the opportunity to assert his claim to preeminence in Venda, with well publicised meetings with President Mbeki at Mukumbani.

by skill in herbalism and divining. This wealth was used in the same way as by males, to *mala* (pay bridewealth) for women, either as wives for their sons, or for themselves.

> Women of all ages, both wives and widows and unmarried girls, may be the owners of livestock. Nor is there any distinction between royalty and commoners in this regard (Van Warmelo & Phophi 1967:1217).

That this situation was common in many parts of Africa is shown by Amadiume's account of the types of wealth accumulated by Igbo women in Nigeria. Wealth for women included livestock, fowls, dogs, rich yields in farm and garden crops, many daughters who would bring in-laws and presents, and many wealthy and influential sons. Wealth included titles and possession of wives by 'male daughters' who were first daughters, barren women, rich widows, wives of rich men and successful female farmers and traders, the kinds of women, Amadiume (1987:31) says 'whom I shall refer to as "female husband"'.

The most wealth among Venda women was accumulated by herbalists or diviners. Referring to herbalists (*nanga*) as 'doctors', Van Warmelo and Phophi (1967:123) remark:

> ... the property which a woman acquires in this manner is kept in her household. It is entirely her own because she earned it with her own knowledge of medicine. Her husband does not dispute her right to own it.

Although she must not use her property without first consulting him, it seems that this is largely a formality and that he is in no position to object to her plans.

> Ramahanedza's wife, Nyamunawa, is a great specialist in the doctoring of children's ailments .... Through her success in her practice she has in the course of time acquired a herd of cattle larger than that of her husband Ramahanedza.

Unlike the custom in some other parts of South Africa, Venda female diviners were usually married. I asked Mrs. Nyamunene of Tshikambe (20 October, 1987), a well-known diviner who received her calling when she reached puberty, if the ancestors had a problem with her marriage. Mrs. Nyamunene explained that she 'went to her husband as a *maine* (diviner) and that he was quite happy about her profession because of all the goats she received in fees', adding that moreover her clients continued to consult her after her marriage. Mrs. Nyamunene had used her

goats to *mala*[9] two wives for herself. The children of these wives were now married and their children (who were part of Mrs. Nyamunene's extended family) assisted her in collecting the *materia medica* which she needed to continue her profession.

Van Warmelo and Phophi (1948:113) note:

> It also happens that a woman gives her son cattle to *mala* (pay bridewealth) for a wife. (Bridewealth payments legitimize marriages, and more especially, the children of marriages.) A wife thus *mala*'d with cattle provided by her husband's mother is termed *tshiozwi*. Many mothers thus provide their sons with marriage cattle earned by themselves.

But the status of these wives is not the same as those whose bridewealth has been given by the bridegroom's father:

> Nyamaswidi once gave eight head of cattle earned by her by doctoring people sick with malarial haemorrhage to her son Mutafunari to *mala* with. When the girl so married arrived she was known as the wife of the *tshiozwi* hut (Van Warmelo & Phophi 1948:113).

Tshiozwi is a bush or grove which is sacred because the graves of the chief's family are there. The term denotes the wife of a chief, who, when widowed must remain in a village near to that of her late husband until her death and cannot return to her own people. Van Warmelo and Phophi note that by extension it is used of a woman *mala*'d by another woman, so that she (the wife) may not go away with this son to live elsewhere but must continue to live with the old woman, her owner, near the graves (Van Warmelo & Phophi 1948:113).

Wealthy women use their cattle not only to obtain wives for their sons, but for themselves too. Stayt (1931:143) notes that the practice of obtaining wives by the lobola system is not confined to men:

> ... any woman who has the means may lobola a wife in exactly the same way as a man may do, and although this is not common among the poorer people[10] it occurs not infrequently among the ruling classes. Women in

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[9] The term *mala* here is the equivalent to the Zulu term *ilobolo*, known colloquially as *lobola* and referring to custom whereby a payment passes on marriage from the family of the bridegroom to that of the bride.

[10] Mrs. Vusani Ramabulana (1997) told me of her domestic helper who had paid bridewealth for a wife for her son. When the son absconded in the city, his mother kept the wife for herself.

positions of authority such as petty chiefs or witchdoctors, who have been able to accumulate the necessary wealth, often obtain wives in this way, even though they may be married themselves in the ordinary way.

Female husbands were allowed to bring up to three wives to live with them at their husband's home, and might allow their husbands sexual access to these wives, although the husband had no rights over them without his wife's permission (Stayt 1931:170).

Pfarelo Matshidze asked Musanda Gumani if her wife might become a petty or district headwoman and was told that this was a possibility since her wife was also a member of the chiefly family. 'This all lies in the hands of the *makhadzi*, if she so well wishes, or if the headwoman proposes and the *makhadzi* accepts it then she (the headwoman's wife) may become a district petty headwoman (*mukoma)*'. Matshidze (1988:39) quotes O'Brien as referring to the Narene, a small Sotho-speaking group closely related to the Lovedu, who had four female chiefs between 1870 and 1914, of whom one was a female husband, one the widow of a female husband, and the other the widow of a male husband.

Musanda Gumani was somewhat ambivalent about her wife when I spoke to her (April 26 1998). She said that the community had decided after her installation that she needed a wife as she would not have enough time to cook, to look after her home and to attend to her official duties. She had paid lobola, but explained that she and her wife had divorced each other about seven years ago. 'Now I live alone', she said. She added that she had never been married but had a lover who is the father of four of her children. Her fifth child belongs to her wife, whose sexual partner was chosen by Musanda Gumani and who had to be a member of the chiefly family. Close to the time that I interviewed Musanda Gumani on April 26 1998, she was also interviewed by an SABC TV news team for NewsHour. The story was later picked up by *Drum* magazine which also interviewed the headwoman in a story headlined 'As chief she dutifully married a woman—and it works like a charm!' When the *Drum* reporter visited the headwoman, her wife was away on 'fed-up leave', but this did not deter reporter Don Makatile: 'We were determined to meet Matodzi and eventually tracked her down'. Since *Drum* reported Musanda Gumani as being a 'born-again Christian', she may have been somewhat embarrassed by the existence of her wife, or may have actually divorced her. Whatever the case, it was evident that the wishes of the community had been honoured at the time of her accession.

Conclusion

To return to 'the spaces between words': much of the anthropological literature on Africa spends a considerable time detailing the role of women as objects of exchange, but relatively little exists on women as social actors in their own right. This article has been a brief attempt to outline some areas in which women in Venda were and are able to wield considerable social and political power

The term 'father's sister' for *makhadzi* does not convey the importance of this position as much as 'one who commands or controls' does. Why should Van Warmelo and Stayt have missed this? Perhaps the answer lies in the proverbial reply given to Rattray by the Asante chiefs when he asked them why they had not told him about the role of women in their society. They said that they thought women were of no account in European society 'for we have seen how you treat your women'.

The *makhadzi* is a force to be reckoned with in her brother's household, an adviser whose presence is necessary at all important times in the life of her brother and the lives of his children (and wives). Through the accumulation of wealth in various ways Venda women can fulfil similar roles to those of men in Venda society and build up families of their own. The respect given to wealthy women may be translated into political and religious status that they hold in their own right. It seems to me that the standing of women in Venda may well have been replicated in most other African societies (see Paulme 1963:*passim*; Amadiume 1987:31), but at the end of the nineteenth century the advent of Christianity and its European bearers, the missionaries, meant that the voices of women were no longer heard in the same ways. Venda was one of the last Southern African societies to feel the effects of mission education and thus we are perhaps able to see in Venda society more clearly the role of women as social actors in their own right.

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Island Encounters:
Intercultural Communication in the
Western Literary Tradition

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According to postcolonial theory, the stereotype of intercultural communication between Western and 'Other' cultures since the voyages of discovery has been a colonial encounter. Although some postcolonial critics (for example Brantlinger 1988:173; Smith 1985:317f) distinguish between later nineteenth-century contact and earlier exchanges, the tendency is to generalise. Robinson Crusoe's interaction with Friday and Prospero's with Caliban, which surely predate the period of high imperialism, are widely regarded as archetypes of the colonial relationship (Mannoni 1956:*passim*; Fanon 1986:36,107; Baker 1985:389; Cartelli 1987:101). These characters' encounter is not of course a meeting of equals but the preface to a master-servant relationship. The scenario is an island and the protagonists strangers, one of whom is indigenous and the other a visitor from a distant land. The visitor takes command because he possesses magic or an apparently 'natural' superiority and, although he rules the island and his 'subject' for a time, his real aim is to return 'home' whence he came.

What I intend to do in this paper is to anatomise the island archetype, showing that it has been rather too simplistically constructed. The mythology of islands is older than Shakespeare and does not have to demonstrate the dominance of the stranger. As recent critics have shown, postcolonial theory has led us to find the imperialism of the late nineteenth colonialism under every bed and to read the imperialism of the late nineteenth century into all texts, often quite anachronistically (Brotton 1998:29; Johnson 1998:231). An examination of some canonical island texts demonstrates that these stories often reverse or vary quite unexpectedly the stereotypical pattern of colonial relationships. This is true even of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, but much more of Homer's *Odyssey*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and Byron's *The Island*. Later texts—from the mid-nineteenth century into the early twentieth century—do react to the growing pressure of imperialism and racism, as an

examination of Melville's *Typee* and Conrad's *An Outcast of the Islands* may demonstrate. However, none of these is a simple model of colonialism in miniature. Perhaps we may conclude that colonialism has never been simple, or that it is merely one manifestation of a wide continuum of possible encounters between Others.

The condition of being on an island is to be *isolated* (a word deriving from the Latin *insula*, island) and hence to have any relationship made singular and significant. In Western mythology, islands are usually distant places, the objects either of quest and discovery or of exile and deprivation. Avalon, Cythera, Utopia, the Blessed Isles and Atlantis are all versions of the first of these possibilities; Lemnos and the islands of Circe and the Cyclops are versions of the second. To Christopher Columbus, Paradise itself was an island which had broken off from the mainland and floated off into the west where he might—perhaps—rediscover it (Sandford 1928: 27,36-55). The island resembles other symbols of male desire such as the secluded garden, except that its desirable secrets are guarded not by dragon or wall but by that great emblem of mystery and power, the sea. Thus, island stories invariably include voyage narratives which effectively place the island of quest beyond the quotidian horizon, contributing thereby to the Otherness of characters and events.

This Otherness is directly related to the island's ambivalence as a symbol. For what is distant and exotic, enchanting and full of delightful mystery, may, with a small sleight of hand, turn out to be frighteningly foreign and alienating, a cause of loneliness and homesickness, the psychological manifestations of *isolation*.

Odysseus is the Western original of the voyager, to whom islands, however enticing, are always in the end places of sorrow and isolation. For his quest is to sail *beyond* the islands to his final destination: home. (The journey home is called a *nostos*.) Hence, the time he spends on islands is a time of displacement, or even imprisonment, as in the case of the islands of the Cyclops and of Circe. Yet even when the island is as beautiful and inviting as Calypso's, the 'navel of the seas', presided over by the love-struck goddess herself, Odysseus is in exile there (Homer 1980:2). Calypso and her island are in the long run little different from Circe and hers, or the Sirens and their rocks, for all of them offer a dangerous temptation and their enchantment must be avoided by the quester passing through. On Calypso's island, Odysseus relapses into a childlike *nostalgia*, sitting at the edge of the sea, weeping as despondently as Philoctetes on Lemnos (Sophocles 1913:391,421). But this unmanly behaviour is in the end justified, for eventually the goddess takes pity on him and allows him to voyage onward, leaving her behind, like Dido a supernumerary to the great male plan, her island a digression in the path of the journey's relentless purpose.

Thus, the island is an ambivalent symbol, a utopia or a dystopia or some combination of the two. A very particular mixture of delight and exile is required for

an island to be a suitable stage for the colonial encounter. The place must have desirable qualities to awaken the cupidity of the visitor, but he is in exile there, and must 'make do' with the materials at hand—including the indigenous inhabitants—in order to improvise a temporary home.

In the postcolonial version of the story, the island's inhabitants are not goddesses and their labour is necessary to make life on the island bearable for the visitor. It is significant that Odysseus does not colonise Calypso's island, because she is firmly in charge there. His idleness and nostalgia are in stark contrast to Prospero's and Crusoe's resourcefulness. And, in *The Tempest* and *Robinson Crusoe*, Caliban and Friday are not only not deities, but they are flawed beings—at least, in the eyes of their overlords. Although Prospero and Crusoe teach their servants to speak English and attempt to 'civilize' them, neither master is convinced that this process will ever be complete. According to orthodox postcolonial theory, the Fanonian hierarchical dichotomies of white/black, civilised/savage, good/evil, self/Other come into being out of the unequal power distribution of this relationship, in which the superiority of the first term in each pair can be asserted by more advanced technology—or, in the case of Prospero, magic (Fanon 1986:132-38; JanMahomed 1985:82). But, of course, the dichotomies are also a matter of belief. If Calypso is a goddess and not a savage island maiden, it is at least partly because Odysseus believes her to be so.

The Tempest and *Robinson Crusoe* certainly include Western protagonists who are confident of their superiority in some respects and make use of their islands in ways not necessary to Odysseus. But even these texts are imperfect models of colonialism. In *The Tempest*, Caliban may be drawn from Renaissance views of New World inhabitants but, on the other hand, his mother is possessed of supernatural powers, is 'blue-eyed' (1.2.269) and is said to have mated with 'the devil himself' in order to conceive him (1.3.319). Caliban, in other words, can be seen as a kind of demon, a 'born devil' (4.1.188) or quasi-supernatural being, rather than a human native. This view of him is supported by his great and poetic affinity with the island itself and all its 'qualities': its 'fresh springs, brine-pits, barren places and fertile' (1.22.6f). He is like a minor spirit of place, knowing the isle's many secrets and hearing all its 'noises/ Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not' (3.2.118f) unperceived by others.

Caliban's affinities to the island are more likely to be magical than inherited, for he is, in any case, not really indigenous to it. His mother Sycorax was banished there from Argier when she was pregnant with him. Sycorax is a kind of first colonist, for she enslaves the island's true inhabitant, Ariel, and when he proves disobedient she imprisons him in a tree (1.2.263-281), regarding herself as owner of the place (1.2.331).

Prospero of course makes Ariel as well as Caliban into a servant, but his relationship with Ariel does not map neatly into a realistic master-slave one at all and belongs, according to Jerry Brotton in a recent article, more to the old magus tradition than to any colonial myth (Brotton 1998:29). Ariel cannot by any stretch of the imagination be equated with the indigenous people of any known land. He belongs unambivalently to the spirit world and can change his shape at will, speed through air, earth, water or fire and create calm or tempest on the very ocean (1.2.189-237). In Elizabethan terms, it would be difficult for the human master of a spirit such as Ariel—or even, perhaps, Caliban—to claim for himself any racial superiority to his servant, considering the hierarchies of the Great Chain of Being that place spirit above matter.

Robinson Crusoe, too, is problematic as a colonial text, perhaps mainly because of Crusoe's great affection for Friday—and, by Crusoe's account, Friday's affection for him. Although at one stage this mutual love is compared, in the orthodox colonial way, to the relationship between 'Child' and 'Father' (Defoe 1975:151), at others it seems to approximate an ideal marriage. Crusoe reminisces about

> ... the three Years which we liv'd there together perfectly and completely Happy, *if any such Thing as compleat happiness can be found in a sublunary State* (Defoe 1975:159).

This kind of homosocial bliss does not resemble most people's image of a colonial relationship.

True, Friday has no actual voice in the discourse, but Crusoe, in his love for Friday, makes great attempts to *know* him through his actions and words, and love is surely the great deconstructor of Otherness. Even initially, Friday offers himself to Crusoe (by placing his head under Crusoe's foot) not because he recognises an innate superiority in Crusoe, but because Crusoe has just saved him from certain death (Defoe 1975:147). Early on in their relationship, watching Crusoe's cooking arrangements, Friday 'took so many ways to tell me how well he lik'd it, that I could not but understand him' (Defoe 1975:154). Because of the gratuitous repetitions, it is hard to believe that Crusoe could be misinterpreting or over-interpreting Friday here. But Friday does not simply accept Crusoe's eating habits as an improvement on his old cannibalistic ones. Crusoe never manages to persuade him to take salt with his meat, despite some amusing efforts (Defoe 1975:153). On a later occasion, Crusoe records that Friday

> ... looks very earnestly towards the Main Land, and in a kind of Surprise,

falls a jumping and dancing, and calls out to me, for I was at some Distance from him: I ask'd him, What was the Matter? *O Joy!* Says he, *O glad! There see my Country, there my Nation!* (Defoe 1975:161).

When Crusoe assumes from this outburst that Friday wishes to return to his own 'Country' and 'Nation', abandoning Crusoe, he is mistaken; in fact, Crusoe confesses, he 'wrong'd the poor honest Creature very much, for which [he, Crusoe,] was very sorry afterwards' (Defoe 1975:162). In other words, Crusoe's close observation of Friday can lead to a revision of an earlier assumption. Friday, even though he comes across to the reader as the *object* of careful, almost scientific scrutiny, is in fact a *subject*, since he is not predictable and operates from a position of freedom—freedom from Crusoe's compulsion and full understanding, among other things. Looked at thus closely, the Crusoe-Friday relationship is just not the simplistic exploiter-exploited model that some theorists would have us believe.

Perhaps the most extreme refutation of the hierarchical oppositions between the Western traveller and the island Other takes place in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, written within a few years of *Robinson Crusoe*. The encounter in question is part of Gulliver's last, most significant voyage, the one that sets the tone for the rest of his life: 'A Voyage to the Country of the *Houyhnhnms*'. In the course of this narrative, the explorer meets a community of Others who so overwhelm him with their superiority to his own people and culture that he develops a nauseous loathing for his own that takes him years to reverse. Even as the book ends, he can permit his wife to dine with him only at the opposite end of a long table and is still unable to bear any human touch.

Of course, the Houyhnhnms who so impress Gulliver with their peace, beauty and wisdom are not—in shape, at least—human. Thus, Gulliver's desire to dissolve their Otherness and identify with them is doomed to failure. He is forced to recognise that he is not a Houyhnhnm but a Yahoo. The Yahoos—whom he actually encounters on the same island before he meets his first noble, horse-like Houyhnhnm—are described from the start in terms that one might be tempted to call racist were they not more extreme than this. Their description actually degrades the human to the level of the animal:

> They had no tails nor any hair at all on their buttocks except about the anus, which I presume nature had placed there to defend them as they sat on the ground; for this posture they used, as well as lying down, and often stood on their hind feet (Swift 1969:253f).

The irony of this of course is that no *animal* is so debased; in fact, the noblest beings on the island are considered mere 'animals' elsewhere. And the irony for Gulliver of this pseudo-scientific 'Othering' discourse is that he must in the end recognise that he himself is 'in every limb and feature' a 'real Yahoo' (Swift 1969:303). He does not for this desist from using the 'Othering' discourse in describing his own species, since his admiration of the Houyhnhnms has led him to adopt their standards of judgement, and so he is forced into a self-loathing that makes him horrified even to catch sight of his own reflection (Swift 1969:316).

In his existence on the island of the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver not only does not enslave anyone but he regards himself as a 'servant' to his 'master', the benevolent Houyhnhnm who adopts him. Gulliver has no desire to return to England, and would by his own wish stay forever in his adopted 'home' were the General Assembly of Houyhnhnms not to send him packing. His return to his country of origin is so little like a homecoming that he spends five years and more attempting to acclimatise himself to the lifestyle that he hates and the human company that sickens him.

Byron's *The Island*, a less well-known text than *Gulliver's Travels*, subverts the colonial stereotype in a similar way, though from a more Romantic perspective. The island dwellers here are not horses but truly Noble Savages. The story has a happy ending, because the male hero, Torquil, never returns to Britain but stays in his acquired 'home', the island of Toobonai, to live happily ever after with Neuha, his island bride. This island is a true earthly paradise, where the curse on Adam does not apply, and the island community lives in peace and harmony without having to till the soil, so great is the abundance provided by Nature for their taking. One reason why Torquil and the other Bounty mutineers never desire to exploit this island is that they have no other home. They are declared right at the beginning to be 'Men without country' who, having wandered too long, have no further affinity with their place of birth (1:29-30). Reversing the Biblical story, they commit a forbidden act—mutiny—in order to enter this 'savage' Eden. There is no way back to the fallen world of so-called 'civilization', since retribution in the form of British Naval law awaits them there in the form of a court-martial and probable death by hanging.

Of course, the mutineers are pursued even into Eden by the long arm of this law and all except Torquil are killed by the logic of crime and punishment that pertains not only in law but also in the plots of fiction—and particularly in the plots of Byronic tales centring on moody, Satanic heroes like Christian in this poem. For *The Island*, insofar as it concerns the Bounty mutiny, is a typical Byronic tale of rebellion and retribution. Christian rises against Bligh and is punished, just as Satan is by God in the master-text of the Romantic age, Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

However, this poem deals rather briefly with the mutiny and is, in fact, one of Byron's late rewritings of the retribution stories of his early popularity (Addison

1995:703f). The Oedipal struggle between Christian and Bligh is backgrounded in *The Island* by the idyll of young love in the foreground. And although I have called Torquil the 'male hero' of the poem, in fact the hero is not male. As I have argued elsewhere, the hero of *The Island* is Neuha, who is perhaps Byron's perfect human being, a woman, black and so young that she is still almost a child (Addison 1995:701-703). 'Savage' in the noblest sense of perfect innocence and authenticity, she 'civilize[s]' her 'half-savage', 'half uncivilized' boy by teaching him peace and happiness, 'wean[ing]' him from violence and 'tam[ing]' his restlessness (2:123, 2:271, 2:304, 1:31, 2:307, 2:312). He, on the other hand, teaches her 'passion's desolating joy' (2:112) and they celebrate not their Otherness but their island-born sameness in an all-embracing love that dissolves the distances between them. However, this is not in the end a relationship of absolute equality. Neuha is dominant, taking the initiative and rescuing Torquil from his own vengeful countrymen. She saves him by leading him to an underwater cave—a place of female sexuality and delight—and allowing him to emerge only after danger is passed.

Torquil's rebirth from under the waves and subsequent full acceptance into the island community gives him a new identity that is no longer in any respect European. He is more colonised than colonising in this transformation, because he is the more passive party. His beloved Neuha makes him her choice and desire. And, as the rather talkative narrator makes quite explicit, the islanders and their lifestyle are in any case superior to all things Western. Early on, he writes:

> True, they had vices—such are Nature's growth—
> But only the Barbarian's—we have both:
> The sordor of civilization, mixed
> With all the savage which man's fall hath fixed (2.67-70).

Later he loses the 'us' and 'them' perspective, and narrates to a large extent via native focalisers. The arrival of the first Western ships, for example, is seen (in a flashback) through Neuha's eyes. She perceives them as 'thunder-bearing strangers .... In vast canoes .... Topped with tall trees ... loftier than the palm' (2.220-222). But she is no gaping natural and is capable of judgement. She observes the huge ship's dangerously 'trampling bulk' and thinks that it '[makes] the very billows look less free' (2.234,227). Increasingly, as Neuha gains in prestige in the later part of the story, hers becomes in this way the viewpoint of the narrator, gradually displacing his positionality as a European observer. Eventually the narrative seems either to become a 'tale untold' or to identify itself with the oral story of '"Neuha's Cave"' that is mentioned at the end as entering the literary repertoire of the inhabitants of

Toobonai (4:414), being told and retold in the island context and not belonging to Europe at all.

It is instructive to compare the economy of *The Island* (1823) with that of Herman Melville's *Typee* (1846), to which Byron's poem is a significant precursor. In *Typee*, the attitude of the narrator-hero, Tommo, if not his actions, is decidedly more colonial than anything observable in the earlier text. Like Torquil, Tommo 'goes native' on a Pacific island and develops a relationship with an attractive island woman. However, Torquil is not a narrator, nor even an important focaliser, and he therefore has none of Tommo's opportunities to describe the islanders' lifestyle. Tommo takes an anthropologist's pains in his depictions of Typee life and his viewpoint is decidedly Western. In his favour, however, he does make efforts to debunk the 'civilized/ savage' hierarchy. He draws a number of comparisons between European and Typee customs that demonstrate the superiority of the latter. Retaining, for the benefit of his Western readers, the gallant's jocular chivalry of tone, he writes thus of women in Typee society:

> ... if the degree of consideration in which the ever-adorable sex is held by the men be—as the philosophers affirm—a just criterion of the degree of refinement among a people, then I may truly pronounce the Typees to be as polished a community as ever the sun shone upon (Melville 1938:210).

And he finds this 'refinement' to be no mere affectation but an outward sign of a deeply-held considerateness that runs through all communal relationships among the Typee. 'During my whole stay on the island', he claims,

> I never witnessed a single quarrel, nor anything that in the slightest degree approached even to a dispute. The natives appeared to form one household whose members were bound together by the ties of strong affection (Melville 1938:211).

Stressing constantly the beauty and general happiness of these people, Tommo at times perceives even cannibalism as not so terrible a custom when compared with the atrocities practised by apparently 'polished countries' (Melville 1938:212; Herbert 1980:172).

And Tommo's affections for the Typee are not only general and communal. He becomes, as he coyly puts it, the 'declared admirer' of Fayaway, a 'gentle being' possessed not only of 'extraordinary beauty' but also of singular 'intelligence and humanity' (Melville 1938:146,118). Like the other Typee 'young females', Fayaway is superior to European women, according to Tommo, because she does not

'[display] the ridiculous affectations of gentility, nor yet [move] in whalebone corsets' but 'for the most part [clings] to the primitive and summer garb of Eden' (Melville 1938:137,94).

But Fayaway cannot compare with Neuha in importance either in her story or in the esteem of her Western lover, since she is merely an episode in both. Her viewpoint is never presented to the reader for sharing and she does not constitute for Tommo a reason for remaining on the island. Her main purpose in the story seems to be for the delectation of the voyeuristic reader. In a significant episode she disrobes in Tommo's canoe 'spreading [her garment] out like a sail' and standing 'erect with upraised arms', eliciting the remark: 'a prettier little mast than Fayaway made was never shipped aboard any craft' (Melville 1938:145). Mindful of the squeamishness of his nineteenth-century Western readership, Melville omits any direct mention of Fayaway's exposed body parts, but enough of the picture is sketched in for the rest to be supplied by the lustful imagination.

And Melville's deconstruction of the 'civilized/ savage' dichotomy is not as thorough as Byron's. Byron consistently reverses the value of these terms, so that, while 'civilization' is coupled with 'sordor' (2:69), 'savagery' is associated with nobility, culture and gentleness (2:214-217,79-102,39). Tommo nearly always uses these terms in their traditional sense, referring to the Typees as 'savage' and to Westerners as 'civilized'. According to Herbert (1980:172), Tommo remains finally ambivalent about both 'savagery' and 'civilization', but this ambivalence does not in the long run affect his situation and actions. Despite claiming Typee society as in many ways ideal, he never loses his fear of their cannibalistic practices and is all along in fact a prisoner among them. He seizes the opportunity of escape, in a clear and immediate choice of 'civilization', however flawed, over 'savagery'. After his escape, he of course returns 'home', in the traditional way, to recount his experiences and, we must infer, to publish and benefit financially from them. Thus, though he does not exploit the Typees while he is on their island, he does do so by writing about them on his return.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the action of 'going native', which is the topic of most of the texts discussed in this paper, caused increasing unease to the Western imagination (Herbert 1980:150f; Brantlinger 1988:39f). This unease was, according to certain postcolonial theorists, associated not only with the racist anthropology that broadly justified imperialism but also with the sexual repression of the age. Far from being 'noble' as earlier, Rousseauist perception would have them, savages were now much more likely to be seen by the growing evangelism of the later period as 'ignoble', 'in the spiritual darkness of their paganism' (Smith 1985:318). This was not simply a religious matter; the savage was in addition perceived both as more debased and as more sexually liberated than the civilized

person (Mannoni 1956:21; Brantlinger 1988:194f). Clearly this sexual liberation is present in Byron and Melville, but there it is associated with innocence and spontaneity and, at least in Byron, it offers the clearest proof of 'savagery''s superiority to 'civilization'.

To Joseph Conrad in *An Outcast of the Islands*—as in *Heart of Darkness*— 'going native' is associated with 'degradation' and originates in Willems' 'step[ping] off the straight and narrow path of ... honesty' (Conrad 1992:126,123). His 'Outcast' situation and eventual death are brought about by a fatal passion for a 'savage woman' (Conrad 1992:127). Willems in his relations with the ethnic Other is constantly aware of his debasement, and his compulsive desire for the woman, Aissa, is intermixed with a violent disgust that is clearly a projection of his own self-loathing. He sees his desire as 'abominable' and suffers the 'contempt for himself' of a man who recognises himself as 'the slave of a passion he had always derided, as the man unable to assert his will' (Conrad 1992:128). This failure of will is, for Willems as for Kurtz, a collapse of 'civilized' values and it is only the last and most irremediable in a series of such collapses, starting with minor acts of dishonesty in business practice.

For Willems, like 'Lord Jim' in another of Conrad's tales, goes to live on his island because of a shameful episode in his past. Unlike Jim's exile, which is self-imposed and results in no debasement either of himself or of the local inhabitants, Willems' is more-or-less enforced. His benefactor sends him to the island of Sambir after his dishonesty is discovered. And his exile there deepens, since his liaison with Aissa compels him to shift his dwelling from the house he initially shares with Almayer, another European, to the 'native side' of the river. Sambir is not only a place of shame and exile for Willems, but it is also in its physical features undesirable. Unlike the sunny islands of earlier protagonists' delight, the outcast Willems' island has only a threatening, alienating beauty and its climate is potentially death-dealing. On the 'other' side of the river, where he waits for Aissa,

> ... the heat poured down from the sky, clung about the steaming earth, rolled among the trees, and wrapped up Willems in the soft, odorous folds of air heavy with the faint scent of blossoms and with the acrid smells of decaying life (Conrad 1992:74).

And, like the climate, Aissa proves intractable to his will; she will not even obey his command to take off her Muslim veil (Conrad 1992:128). In fact, far from obeying him, she uses his passion for her to gain 'influence' over him (Conrad 1992:333). Her involvement with him, as Gail Fraser (1996:139f) points out, can be seen as an

effort to gain a measure of control of her life—of any life—in a world dominated by Western colonial powers. Her power over this man amounts, in her fantasy, to power over all white men, whom she regards as all the same and all powerful. Early on, her impression is that 'He was bigger, stronger than any man she had seen before, and altogether different from all those she knew. He was of the victorious race' (Conrad 1992:75). And her triumph, later, is contingent on the belief that 'She had found a man of their race—and with all their qualities. All whites are alike' (Conrad 1992: 333). To Willems, the knowledge that he has come under the control of a woman—a woman of 'inferior' race—is totally degrading and leads to his ultimate 'repulsion' and 'horror' of her, which, as Fraser (1996:141) notes, represent an intense, phobic racial hatred (Conrad 1992:285). One recalls Kurtz's echo of that 'horror' and his 'terrifying' footnote, 'Exterminate all the brutes!' (Conrad 1969:84,118).

Of course, the 'horror' of Willems' adopted life is, in a typical Conradian irony, not implicit in the 'savages' with whom he cohabits but in himself. Despite being as depraved and self-serving as he, they exist mainly as a backdrop to his corruption. His long-term dream is undoubtedly to subdue them to his own ends, but he does not succeed. Considering himself 'so civilized' and as belonging to the 'superior race' his ideal is to exist 'in a perpetual assurance' (given by members of other races) of his 'unquestionable superiority' (Conrad 1992:128,63,4). He would like to be a true colonist, exploiting the island and its inhabitants without ever naturalising himself by any adjustment of his own to Other customs or ways of thought. Although not harking after a distant homeland, his self-esteem is dependent on a sense of superiority to the indigenous Others which puts him always at a distance from them. However, not only does he not achieve this ideal, but he ends up himself subdued by the Other, subservient to Aissa's male overlords and betraying to them the secret of his European benefactor, Lingard. This humiliation is brought about by his own passions, by his lack of 'will', which is ironically a direct result of his inordinate cupidity, or will to possess and control.

Willems' abhorrence of the people with whom he cohabits on the island of Sambir is a far cry from Crusoe's fondness for the 'comely handsome' Friday (Defoe 1975:148), from Prospero's delight in the 'Fine apparition' of his 'quaint Ariel' (1:2:316), from Gulliver's deferential admiration for his rational and moral betters, and certainly from the rapturous wish-fulfilment of Byron and Melville in their descriptions of island beauties. Willems resembles Odysseus not on Calypso's, but on Circe's island, except that his evil thoughts turn the goddess, rather than himself, into something subhuman. Or perhaps he is the animal, but he alone cannot see this through his own swinish eyes. Whatever the truth, this either-or perception shows two people of different race as belonging to different species, one radically ignoble in relation to the other.

The racism anatomised—and perhaps even to some extent endorsed—by this late nineteenth-century novel is of central interest to the postcolonial critic because it epitomises, just as Kurtz's horror does, the dark extreme of colonial relationships. But not all intercultural communication between Western and Other protagonists in European literature is colonial in nature, and some works that, like *Typee*, include colonial elements are not essentially racist. The use of too procrustean a theoretical model can oversimplify the abundance and variety of intercultural relationships imagined in Western literature. The spirit of earlier ages is Other than our own and may represent intercultural communication in ways quite foreign to those of us who have lived through the racial hatreds of the twentieth century.

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Mapping the Land/ Body/ Subject: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies in African Narrative

Harry Garuba

I

It is no accident that maps and metaphors of mapping abound in postcolonial studies, because colonialism as a regime of power was largely organised through spatiality and subjectivity: spaces to capture, subjects to control. To capture the land, it first had to be explored and mapped, literally and figuratively. For the subject to be controlled, she first had to be contained, not only in terms of physical containment within subject territories—colonies and protectorates for example—but also contained in 'tribes', territorially demarcated, defined and culturally described. Physical containment was necessary to circumscribe the natural mobility of the body (in space) and discursive containment served to define the limits of the cultural (identity) mobility available to the subject. To appropriate the subtitle of Carole Boyce Davies' (1994) book, colonial mapping rested on the denial of 'migrations of the subject'. The surveillance and control of land, body and subject was the object of colonial geographies and, in securing this objective, the map as text, as model, as document and as claim was central to its project (see Huggan 1994:3-11). In the travel accounts of explorers and traders, the ethnographies of anthropologists, missionaries and administrators, the map, as cartographic representation and metaphor, was a dominant trope and topos in the production of imperial(ist) knowledge/power.

Colonial conceptions of space and people, and thus colonial mapping, were premised on a Cartesian logic which foregrounded the fantasy of an autonomous subject with a privileged view casting his [sic.] eye over transparent space. This Master Subject—often European and male—supposedly inhabiting an Archimedean position outside of discourse with a supposedly unmediated access to transparent space—created what Mary Louise Pratt (1992:201) describes as the 'monarch of all I survey' mode of Victorian exploration and travel writing. The positional authority of this Master Subject was constituted, first, by a division of the world into subject and

Imperialism went hand-in-hand with mapping, by which Europeans imaginatively and materially possessed much of the rest of the world, including the 'New World' (Livingstone 1992). Cartographers and other mapmakers, including adventure story writers, charted areas of geographical knowledge and *terra incognita*, and through their maps they possessed real geography. In cartographic and literary maps, Europeans charted the world then colonised it (Said 1993). The late nineteenth-century scramble to map was also a scramble to colonise and consolidate imperial power. European imperialism and mapping reached a simultaneous climax at the end of the nineteenth century.

While it is true that traditional assumptions about the cartographic map in which—as S.K. Andrews puts it—'space is used to represent space' (quoted in Phillips 1997:14) and the 'aura of knowledge' (Alpers 1993:133) which maps possess because they are seen 'to depict the world as it "really is"' (Smith 1994:449) have been called into question by contemporary re-examinations of forms of representation and knowledge, the fissures and fractures these maps created in the subjectivities and identities of the colonised are only just being investigated.

The objective of this article, therefore, is not to explore the discursive production of colonial space/maps, an illuminating and fascinating object of study in itself, as evidenced in John Noyes's book *Colonial Space: Spatiality and the Discourse of German South West Africa 1884-1915* (1992). Rather, my objective is to interrogate the discursive space produced by these maps, to explore the ways in which the maps became instruments for the production of colonial and postcolonial subjectivities by constituting and constraining what could be enunciated within their discursive space. In the process, I briefly describe colonialism's production of the category of the spatially and culturally bounded African 'native' through colonial geography and other practices and then focus on the subject formation of the 'natives' themselves within the cultural economy authorised by colonialism. (I put the term 'natives' in inverted commas this once, but subsequently leave them out in the hope that the reader will keep them imaginatively intact.) I note that the colonial 'staging' of the world as a set of geographically demarcated and bounded places created the necessity—within the dynamics of the African search for agency and subjecthood—for subject formation along certain lines, already pre-scripted within the colonialist archive. And thus followed the territorial staging of self, culture and identity in colonial and postcolonial narratives. In colonial discourse the demarcation identity in colonial and postcolonial narratives. In colonial discourse the demarcation of the physical landscape went hand-in-hand with the demarcation of the social and cultural landscape and this invariably led to the creation of new subjects, new subjectivities and the inscription of new identities. In short, the new processes of

subject formation and agency, developed in response to the new geographies into which the body was placed or dis-placed, are the primary focus of this paper.

In exploring these processes as encoded in contemporary African narrative, I begin, by way of background, with two passages from Graham Greene's *Journey Without Maps* (1936), which I employ as conceptual frames for the subsequent discussion of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964) and Nuruddin Farah's *Maps* (1986). The passages from Greene highlight the colonial anxiety about maps and underscore the necessity of appropriate mapping. Because maps make certain claims about the world, their unreliability becomes a cause for concern and this concern generates a need for more rigorous mapping. The need for more detailed mapping translates in colonialism into an obsession with mimetic accuracy which takes the form of demarcating boundaries, establishing ownership, numbering, and defining. A vast amount of literature, for example, exists on colonial attempts to describe, define and number the native and native populations. A good instance is the eight-volume work by Watson and Kaye (1868-1875); an analysis of the function of enumeration in colonialism can be found in Appadurai, (1996:114-135). This obsession for accuracy set the stage for the tragic narratives of new subjectivities and agency explored in Achebe's *Arrow of God* and Farah's *Maps*.

II

In *Journey Without Maps*, a journal of Greene's trek through the West African territory of Liberia in 1935, the idea of the map as a mimetic representation of space and a pathfinder for the traveller is foregrounded in the title of the book and the body of the text itself. Setting out, the author-protagonist laments the absence of reliable maps:

> It would have been easier if I had been able to obtain maps. But the Republic is almost entirely covered by forest, and has never been properly mapped, mapped that is to say even to the rough extent of the French colonies which lie on two sides of it. I could find only two large-scale maps for sale. One, issued by the British General Staff, quite openly confesses ignorance; there is a large white space covering the greater part of the Republic, with a few dotted lines indicating the conjectured course of rivers (incorrectly, I usually found) and a fringe of names along the boundary. These names have been curiously chosen: most of them were quite unknown to anyone in the Republic; they must have belonged to obscure villages now abandoned. The other map is issued by the United States War Department. There is a dashing quality about it; it shows a vigorous

object with all the dualisms involved in this process (e.g. mind/matter; nurture/nature; civilised/savage) and then by a configuration or mapping of space to consolidate this visual authority. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault (1977) uses Jeremy Bentham's eighteenth-century design of a prison—the Panopticon—to discuss issues of power and surveillance. Bentham's architectural design for a circular prison with individual cells which can be seen and monitored from a single vantage point consolidates containment and control by a spatial arrangement in which the observed is firmly placed within the visual power of the observer. Proceeding from this image of a prison with a central tower from which everything can be observed, and from Foucault's analysis, David Spur (1993:16) in *The Rhetoric of Empire* concludes that 'For the observer, sight confers power; for the observed, visibility is a trap'. Spatial arrangement thus becomes strategic and plays a determining role in the unequal economy of exchange between the observer and the observed. If, for the colonised, visibility is a trap, concealment and/or continual mobility become a strategy of escape.

Colonial mapping functioned within an Enlightenment logic that subordinated the world to the frames of representation designed by the (European) Subject. The Cartesian revolution in modern conceptions of subjectivity and representation created

> ... a new worldview defined by the theoretical priority of the subject and the reduction of the world to an image. As representation, the world takes on the character of an image, the result of the systematic projection of a mathematical perspective upon nature (Judovitz 1988:2).

Premised on this Cartesian perspectivalism, the underlying logic of these conceptions of the subject and representation generated the need to map, name and describe the world in certain terms which led, in the age of exploration and imperialism, to a 'scramble for maps' which, in its turn, created institutions and institutional practices and a whole series of events which in our day may look quite simply ridiculous. In *Territorial Disputes*, Graham Huggan (1994:7) provides a general picture of the intrigues and dangers associated with maps during the age of exploration and discovery:

> Mapmaking could hardly be considered a frivolous activity, however; the Spaniards, leaders in the Renaissance exploration of the New World, are known to have destroyed, or to have brought up and hidden, whole editions of books and maps because they were thought to disseminate the wrong kind of information. As the historian of cartography, Lloyd Brown, wryly

remarks, 'there was always a prison cell or a little machine waiting for the author and publisher of confidential maps and charts'.

Lloyd Brown's *The Story of Maps* (1979) presents some interesting stories of the adventures and dangers associated with maps. But the dangers that maps (re)presented were more fully felt by those who came under their power because maps not only contained but also actively constituted their subjects. Following upon Foucault's assertion that institutions and institutional practices like prisons simultaneously contain and create prisoners, colonial maps not only contained the colonised but actually created colonial subjects. Colonial resistance was thus often primarily, in a broad sense, a resistance to colonial maps and the mapping of the colonised body/subject.

Colonialism is, at this deeper level, a discourse of maps and power. The importance of the geographical imagination and the discipline of geography to the project of colonialism has been copiously documented by geographers, artists and critics. (See for instance Rabassa 1985:1-16; Carter 1987; Harley 1988:277-312; Driver 1992:23-40; Huggan 1989:115-31; Huggan 1994:3-11; Ryan 1994:15-30; Smith 1994:491-500, among others.) In their essay, 'Design on Signs: Myth and Meaning in Maps', Denis Wood and John Fels (1985:54) assert that:

> ... every map is at once a synthesis of signs and a sign in itself: an instrument of depiction—of objects, events, places—and an instrument of persuasion—about these, its makers, and itself. Like any other sign, it is the product of codes: conventions that prescribe relations of content and expression in a given semiotic circumstance.

J.B. Harley in his chapter on 'Maps, Knowledge and Power' highlights the signifying strategies which maps employ in their cartographic constructions of space. Some of these strategies which he identifies as the 'hidden rules' of cartography are 'silences', 'positional enhancements' and 'representational hierarchies' (Harley 1988:292). 'Silences' refer to the little omissions or significant exclusions of material which may undermine the supposed objectivity of the map; 'positional enhancements' ensure that the map-reader's attention is oriented towards a centre, thereby covertly promoting the authority and supremacy of a particular worldview; while 'representational hierarchies' confirm certain cultural and ideological stratifications by the ranking of visual signs within the map. Beyond these cartographic practices, Chandra Mukerji (1984:31) goes further to claim that 'the meaning of land as property to be consumed and used by Europeans is written into the language of maps'. And Richard Phillips (1997:6f) in *Mapping Men and Empire* elaborates:

Imperialism went hand-in-hand with mapping, by which Europeans imaginatively and materially possessed much of the rest of the world, including the 'New World' (Livingstone 1992). Cartographers and other mapmakers, including adventure story writers, charted areas of geographical knowledge and *terra incognita*, and through their maps they possessed real geography. In cartographic and literary maps, Europeans charted the world then colonised it (Said 1993). The late nineteenth-century scramble to map was also a scramble to colonise and consolidate imperial power. European imperialism and mapping reached a simultaneous climax at the end of the nineteenth century.

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II

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imagination. Where the English map is content to leave a blank space, the American in large letters fills it with the word 'Cannibals'. It has no use for dotted lines and confessions of ignorance; it is so inaccurate that it would be useless, perhaps even dangerous, to follow it, though there is something Elizabethan in its imagination. 'Dense Forest'; 'Cannibals'; rivers which don't exist, at any rate anywhere near where they are put; one expects to find Eldorado, two-headed men and fabulous beasts represented in little pictures in the Gola Forest (41f).

This passage reproduces and satirises some of the cartographic practices we have identified as characteristic of mapping, especially in the imperial context. It is important to note that both maps, the British and the American, are products of military establishments, which expose the relationship between the imperial gaze, colonial maps and military power. Both maps are grossly inaccurate, thus undermining the assumptions of mimetic adequacy on which maps rely for authority.

The dotted lines indicating the 'conjectured course of rivers' graphically capture the uncertainty and thus the colonial anxiety occasioned by the unknown. In fact, Greene gestures at the dangers posed to the explorer, traveller or coloniser by inaccurate maps when he says that the American map is so inaccurate that it may be dangerous to follow it. Although he does not spell out what these dangers may be, he comments wryly on 'two-headed men and fabulous beasts' and thereby evokes the textual tradition of mapping the Other in European culture—a tradition which provides the subtexts for his own map. Throughout his narrative, Greene is in constant dialogue with these other texts, variously confirming and contesting their claims and thus establishing the authority of his own narrative mapping of the land/bodies/subjects of this area of the 'African jungle'.

Moving from the coloniser to the colonised, Graham Greene speaks of the 'fringe of names along the boundary' which were known to no one in the Republic. From his perspective, these names are read as having belonged to obscure villages that have now been abandoned. Placed beside the uncertainty about the course of rivers, this speculation—'must have belonged'—about the existence of the villages, their obscurity and their having been abandoned is, to say the least, curious. This reading of the signs, I suggest, could have come only from knowledge about which the narrator is silent. It is easy to understand that the villages were obscure because they were obscure to the European gaze, but the narrator's wager on the probability of their existence and their abandonment even when they 'were quite unknown to anyone in the Republic' can be read in any number of ways. An ungenerous reading would simply see an example of the usual colonialist arrogance. But that, I believe, would be ignoring the fact that many African villages chose to resist 'visual capture'

or 'discovery' by explorers and colonial administrators by retreating further in to the forests, and that constant and continual mobility was one of the strategies of colonial resistance. Like the proverbial bird of Igbo lore, Eneke-nti-oba (quoted by Ezeulu in Achebe's *Arrow of God*), for whom constant mobility became a way of life, the villagers may have chosen to live their lives on the move, so to speak. In this Achebe novel the bird is portrayed in the following manner: 'When his friends asked him [the bird] why he was always on the wing he replied: "Men of today have learned to shoot without missing and so I have learned to fly without perching"' (45). We will return to the issue of mobility and containment within the colonial space later. For now us simply say that Greene's speculation about the villages can be read as arising from this knowledge of the mobility of communities and locales fleeing the impositions of colonial regimes.

To return to the maps: while the British map leaves the blank spaces unnamed to denote unknown territory, the American inscribes 'Cannibals' over them. Simon Ryan has identified this double manoeuvre, split, in this instance, between the British and the American maps, as a 'cartographic double movement, of erasure and projection, creating a blank, and filling in that blank with a legend' (1994:124). Greene ridicules the vigorous Elizabethan imagination underlying these maps, a satirical take somewhat similar to Jonathan Swift's famous ridicule of seventeenth-century cartographers who:

> ... in Afric–Maps
> With savage pictures fill their Gaps:
> And o'er uninhabitable Downs
> Place elephants for want of towns
> ('On Poetry' in Swift 1983:526).

The gesture of textually emptying territories and creating virgin lands waiting for European penetration is a well-worn colonialist strategy as is the projection of fantasies of savagery and cannibalism upon unknown territories. These gestures are some of the ways in which the insecurities arising from the physical terrain are transferred into the domain of textuality and some illusion of security is achieved by textual stability.

Greene's dismay at the fact that the Republic has not been adequately mapped is coupled with a slight admiration for 'the French colonies which lie on two sides of it' which have been mapped to a 'rough extent'. And later in the narrative we come to one of these French colonies:

That afternoon we went for a walk into French Guinea with the engineer.

The border is the Moa River, about twice the width of the Thames at Westminister. We crossed in a dug-out canoe, standing and balancing with the roll. It was quite easy, only a little frightening because there were alligators in the Moa. The curious thing about these boundaries, a line of river in a waste of bush, no passports, no Customs, no barrier to wandering tribesmen, is that they are as distinct as a European boundary; stepping out of the canoe one was in a different country. Even nature had changed; instead of forest and a rough winding road down which a car could, with some difficulty, go, a narrow path ran straight forward for mile after mile through tall treeless elephant grass (62f).

Here we encounter the boundary between the Republic and a French colony. This boundary, it would appear from Greene's narrative, is both real and unreal. It is only 'a line of river in a waste of bush' from which are noticeably absent all the modern protocols for marking national boundaries and inscribing citizenship: 'no passports, no Customs'. In spite of these absences, the European traveller realises that he is in another country and curiously enough remarks that 'Even nature had changed'. Despite the fact that the wandering tribesmen do not recognise it and it is not officially marked in identities and identity documents, it is, he says, 'as distinct as a European boundary'. With these absences and the non-recognition recorded by the European narrator, it is pertinent to ask what makes this boundary as distinct as any European boundary, if only because European boundaries are not marked by changes in nature. The appeal to nature is, of course, consistent with the rhetorical strategies of colonial discourse but, in this instance, Greene goes somewhat further by appealing to the modern discourse of nation and nationality as inscribed in European boundaries. So the question remains pertinent to the figuration of colonial space: why is this nondescript boundary as distinct as a European boundary?

To answer this question, it is useful to bear in mind Mukerji's assertion quoted earlier that 'the meaning of land as property to be consumed and used by Europeans was written into the language of maps' (1984:31). And, in another context, with reference to *Robinson Crusoe*, Mike Marais (1996:19f) argues that:

Despite the realist illusion of immediacy, this representation of the subject's encounter with colonial space unconsciously reveals that the former's knowledge of the latter is mediated by European discourse, and not determined by the actual physical terrain. For instance, what Crusoe is described as seeing is not a neutral space void of all presuppositions but a *property*—that is, a highly specific construction of space which, as Lennard Davis argued, is related to the development in Europe in the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries of a transcendental subject who evinced a strong desire to dominate space.

I have earlier referred to this positioning of the European subject in relation to colonial space, but the notions of property and ownership that go with it in colonialist discourse still need to be elaborated and established in relation to my argument. In her essay 'Putting Ireland on the Map', Mary Hamer (1999:184) states: 'An abstracted and standardised representation of terrain challenges direct local experience and removes, as it were, the terrain from the cognitive ownership of those who inhabit it'. It is therefore not only physical ownership that is at stake here but also discursive ownership. By relegating local experience to inconsequence, as Greene does in this text with the experience of the wandering tribesmen, cognitive ownership of the European subject is established. In his book, *Topographies*, J. Hillis Miller (1995:3f) offers an idea of how landscape may become a virtual text when a place and a narrative converge in its naming: 'names make a site already the product of a virtual writing, a topography, or, since the names are often figures, a 'topotropography'. The experience of moving across the boundary from the Republic to French Guinea is an experience thoroughly mediated by European discourses. It is only within the context of these inter-texts that we can understand how Greene's narrative has been overdetermined by a teeming underlay of antecedent discourses. This may be why Simon Gikandi says that Greene's '"journey without maps" has been pre-mapped all along' (189). The boundary between the Republic and the French colonies is as distinct as a European boundary not because there is a line of river in the bush or because nature changes. The boundary is distinct because the contesting narrative of local experience has been displaced or suppressed and a new hegemonic narrative signified in the European map has been written over it. Perception of the physical terrain is now mediated by a European discourse whose pre-eminent sign is the map. The line of river in the waste of the bush produces meaning for the narrator because of this mediation. At this point of the colonial project, the wandering tribesmen have not been integrated into this discourse and their incorporation into it was to be one of the major preoccupations of colonial administrations.

As the difference between Greene's experience and that of the tribesmen shows, it is one thing to draw a map but it is quite another to get people to accept and internalise the map. Colonial powers in several parts of the colonised world made strenuous efforts, first, to ensure the accuracy of their maps and, second, to 'fill' the colonised into them. Rigorous attention had to be paid, at the level of physical terrain, to the demarcation of boundaries, the establishment of 'true' ownership, the structuring of terms of habitation and belonging and, at the level of

identities, to the classification, enumeration and description of peoples. The desire to know by demarcation and definition was paramount, because the unknown and the unknowable presented a threat to the security of colonial rule and carried the potential of unravelling the lines of the map. The struggle to inscribe space, bodies and subjects was sometimes pursued to absurd lengths. According to Governor D'Urban in his report to the colonial office in London, Shrewsbury, the head of the Wesleyan mission in the Cape, wrote in January 1835 that 'all Africans should be registered—every man wearing on his neck a thin plate of tin containing his name and the name of his chief—to identify offenders and enable the British government to know the number and strength of frontier tribes' (quoted in Lalu 2000:54). The production of colonial space was thus tied up in many ways with the production of the colonised native. Indeed, the very category of native depended upon notions of a fixed place within the map (a demarcated land) and a fixed place in the world (membership of a fixed kinship system/clan/tribe and a pre-defined orientation to the world). Colonial mapping represented landscapes of mobility for the coloniser, but for the colonised it presented a circumscribed landscape of constraint.

Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* is located at this point, where territorial demarcation and the production of the native—the anxieties of Greene's narrative—have become an obsession for colonial administrators. Within the metaphorics of mapping and Greene's text with which we have been working, we may safely say that the primary colonial objective in *Arrow of God* is to correct the lacunae in Greene's maps and get those 'wandering tribesmen' incorporated into them. We must recall here that these geographies were closely allied with the dominant ideas of culture and identity within the emergent discipline of Anthropology. Douglas Kellner (1992:141) summarises these anthropological conceptions of identity in traditional societies in this manner:

> According to anthropological folklore, in traditional societies, one's identity was fixed, solid, and stable. Identity was a function of predefined social roles and a traditional system of myths which provided orientation and religious sanctions to one's place in the world, while rigorously circumscribing the realm of thought and behaviour. One was born and died a member of one's clan, a member of a fixed kinship system, and a member of one's tribe or group with one's life trajectory fixed in advance. In pre-modern societies, identity was unproblematical and not subject to reflection or discussion. Individuals did not undergo identity crises, or radically modify their identity. One was a hunter and a member of the tribe and that was that.

Within the discursive space produced by the map and these ideas of culture and identity, so aptly condensed by Kellner, the conflict between the two communities of Umuaro and Okperi in *Arrow of God* and then the conflict between Ezeulu and his community that ends so tragically almost appear to have been pre-programmed. For neither Ezeulu nor either hapless community play any originary role in setting in motion the territorial dispute which provides the motive force for the events recorded in the narrative.

III

In his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe touches upon the manner in which the Christian missionaries unsettle traditional conceptions of space in one Igbo village. The missionaries who come seeking converts among the people of Mbanta ask the community for a piece of land on which to build a church. After due consultation, the leaders of the community decide to offer them a portion of the 'evil forest', believing that they will reject it because the evil forest is a place 'alive with sinister forces and powers of darkness' (1958:107). The evil forest is the place where all those who have died of evil diseases such as leprosy and smallpox are buried; it is the place where those who have committed abominations against the earth, those who break potent taboos and every kind of potent fetish and unwanted evil are dumped. Within the local geography of the people, it is a place apart, the location of all forces inimical to the well being of the community. When the missionaries accept the offer and start building in earnest, their act of supreme folly is met with consternation by the people of Mbanta:

> The next morning the crazy men actually began to clear a part of the forest and to build their house. The inhabitants of Mbanta expected them all to be dead within four days. The first day passed and the second and the third and the fourth, and none of them died. Everyone was puzzled. And then it came to be known that the white man's fetish had unbelievable power. It was said that he wore glasses on his eyes so that he could see and talk to evil spirits. Not long after, he won his first three converts (1958:108).

This incident, narrated with such subtlety and irony, depicts the manner in which the colonial presence, by way of the missionaries and the Christian church, subverts the physical, metaphysical and cultural geography of the people of Mbanta. The physical space defined as evil within their conceptual mapping of space into good and evil places in the culture unravels. Achebe, however, does not pursue this issue of contested geographies much further in this novel, except to integrate it within the

novel's symbolic structure of reversals and its dense texture of ironies. For what could be more ironic than ceding possession of your own evil forest to your enemies when you had merely intended to do away with them by allowing them to build on the tabooed piece of land. By giving away this piece of land, they have unknowingly given away the authority and control over the evil forest which is needed to keep its dangers at bay. Thereafter, they become its victims rather than its guardians.

Unlike the muted significance accorded the land issue in *Things Fall Apart*, in *Arrow of God*, a territorial dispute between two communities brings to the foreground the issue of contested geographies and the mapping of land, body and subject in colonial and postcolonial narratives. We may briefly recall the dispute over ownership of a piece of farmland which leads to fighting between the villages of Umuaro and Okperi in the novel. Even though the details of what led to the demand for more rigorous demarcation of boundaries and establishment of property and ownership rights are not finely spelt out in the novel, it does not take great and imagination to deduce the immediate cause of the dispute. On the mission to Okperi, one of the two companions tells Akukalia that all he need do is ask the people of Okperi one simple question which he believes will resolve the dispute and put an end to the conflict.

> 'What you should ask them', said the companion who had spoken very little since they set out, 'what they should tell us is why, if the land was indeed theirs, why they let us farm it and cut thatch from it for generation after generation, until the white man came and reminded them' (1964:20).

This statement implies that the white man must have played a role in setting the conflict in motion by 'reminding' the people of Okperi that the land belonged to them. If we accept this, the question to ask is: 'why was the white man interested in who owned the land over which there had been no ownership dispute for generations?' And the answer that immediately suggests itself is that the colonial desire to map and demarcate its territories accurately must have been responsible. But then this colonial desire meant introducing new conceptions of land, property and ownership that were basically alien to the communities. The fluidity and ambiguity of native notions of land ownership and property had to be replaced with the fixity and certainty of European concepts. To put it in another way, the dynamic orality of traditional concepts of land and ownership must be replaced by the stasis of the written document; and this, not because the old ideas have failed but because a new discursive regime is being put in place. This is the larger context of what on the surface looks like a minor dispute over a piece of land and it is this context that gives it the resonance it acquires in the novel.

The two communities seemingly engaged in a land dispute are in reality engaged in a much larger struggle of which they are not fully aware. Beneath all the rhetoric and the marshalling of 'evidence' displayed at the council of Umuaro elders, the people do not notice that they are being force-marched into a different discursive order in which all their evidentiary procedures and debates will be undervalued if not completely invalidated. (On evidentiary procedures and colonialism, see Lalu 2000:45-68). In the first instance, all the evidence they invoke can be easily dismissed as hearsay. We must remember that this kind of hearsay evidence is undervalued within what Martin Jay (1992:178-195) calls the 'scopic regime of modernity' and that the higher valuation of eye-witness accounts in the absence of written documents undermines the very basis on which these communities build their claims. And, indeed, the white man Winterbottom, who is later to preside over the inquiry set up by the colonial administration, summarises this by saying that all the witnesses who testify at the hearing perjure themselves. He explains to Tony Clarke, his new Assistant District Officer:

> I went into the question of the ownership of the piece of land which was the remote cause of all the unrest and found without any shade of doubt that it belonged to Okperi. I should mention that every witness who testified before me—from both sides without exception—perjured themselves. One thing you must remember in dealing with natives is that like children they are great liars. They don't lie simply to get out of trouble. Sometimes they would spoil a good case by a pointless lie. Only one man—a kind of priest-king from Umuaro—witnessed against his own people (1964:38).

Again it is easy to see Winterbottom's colonialist arrogance—'I know *my natives*'—and spot all of the colonial stereotypes in his statement; but what is more difficult to detect because it is embedded beneath this surface is the discursive incomensurability of the world of the natives and that of Winterbottom. And the classic example that brings this to light is the 'good case', to use Winterbottom's own expression. Winterbottom does not just say that all the natives are liars, he also claims that even when they have a good case they throw it away by introducing a pointless lie. Surely no one wants to throw a good case away just like that. But then what if the defendant or plaintiff and judge have different criteria for measuring a good case? Is it possible that one of the parties does not recognise that he/she has a good case when he/she sees one, because the procedures for producing a good case differ from culture to culture? Perhaps Jean-Francois Lyotard's (1988:9) concept of the *differend* will help shed some light on this.

I would like to call a *differend* the case where the plaintiff is divested of the means to argue and becomes for that reason a victim .... A case of *differend* between two parties takes place when the 'regulation' of the conflict that opposes them is done in the idiom of one of the parties while the wrong suffered by the other is not signified in that idiom.

In her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', Gayatri Spivak (1988:300) explains the *differend* as 'the inaccessibility of, or untranslatability from, one mode of discourse in dispute to another'. If we read Winterbottom's conception of 'a good case' as radically, untranslatably different from what the natives consider a good case, then we may understand his statement a little better. While the natives build their good case on the highly valued, almost sacred, oral evidence received by the son from the case father, whose evidentiary authority is unquestioned within the culture, this evidence is not much use to Winterbottom. Among the Igbo when a man says 'my father told me', his evidence is given much weight because within this culture it is known that a man never tells his son a lie. Eyewitness accounts do not command as much weight as this because the culture recognises that sight can be deceptive. In many proverbs and idioms the unreliability of sight as final arbiter of truth is repeated over and over. But for Winterbottom and the discourse he represents, truth claims made in the name of the father do not carry that authority. Does this not divest the communities of the means to argue their case? Does it not silence them or, at the very least, render them inarticulate within the evidentiary structures and judicial process over which Winterbottom presides?

Besides, since he finds that they are all liars, the fathers would in any case also have been liars. Therefore, he has to devise his own criteria for evaluating the evidence presented before him. There is, of course, his own bias, which may pre-incline him to favour the people of Okperi who have opened their borders to Christianity and commerce. But any judgement based on this can hardly be said to be objective and fair. Winterbottom has consequently to latch on to Ezeulu's testimony because Ezeulu provides him with the opportunity to appear disinterested by testifying against his own people. In testifying thus, Ezeulu believes that he is telling the truth as he has heard it from his own father, but that is not the basis of Winterbottom's acceptance of his testimony. In fact, Winterbottom's endorsement of the truth of Ezeulu's evidence presents problems for his own conception of all natives as liars. One native's truth telling becomes a paradox that must be explained, because it militates against the discursive stability of the colonialist text and its production of the native as innately a liar. Winterbottom tries to explain Ezeulu's difference by speculating about his origins:

I have not found out what it was, but I think he must have had some pretty fierce tabu working on him. He was very light in complexion, almost red. One finds people like that now and again among the Ibos. I have a theory that the Ibos in the distant past assimilated a small non-negroid tribe of the same complexion as the Red Indians (1964:38).

So, ironically, the basis of Winterbottom's acceptance of Ezeulu's testimony is that Ezeulu has undermined the authority and solidarity of the clan and thus the basis of his own identity. According to Kellner's statement quoted earlier, Ezeulu's action also undermines the whole structure of anthropological lore about pre-modern societies and identity. And this is only possible, as Winterbottom speculates, because the 'Ibos' had in the past assimilated some non-negroid blood. By such speculative sleights of hand, it is possible to maintain the stability of the colonialist script and contain the challenges that threaten to undermine its certainties. Ezeulu's 'identity crisis'—something alien to the native—is seen as a result of racial mixing. To Winterbottom, this makes him eminently suitable for co-optation into the colonial system of indirect rule. And it is not long before the offer of a warrant chieftaincy is made to him.

Ezeulu, however, sees himself as simply telling the truth. What he does not realise is that truth-claims can be made only within specific discursive structures which give them meaning and value. His 'truth' is highly valued by Winterbottom but not within the same structure from which Ezeulu is operating. The 'truth' within the cultural discourse of land ownership, private property, land tenure rights, and trespass of the Igbo does not translate into *the truth* within the European discourse of ownership within which Winterbottom is operating. This disjuncture between 'truths', occluded by mutual interest at the beginning, is later ripped open. Joined for the moment by mutual interest, they do not see the discursive disjuncture until Winterbottom, so impressed by this man's action, boasts that he has found a chief for Umuaro. He does not for a moment doubt that Ezeulu will accept his offer, even jump at it, and goes to great lengths to explain this to Clarke:

Well, I have now decided to appoint him Paramount Chief for Umuaro. I've gone through the records of the case again and found that the man's title is Eze Ulu. The prefix *eze* in Ibo means king. So the man is a kind of priest-king (1964:107).

He displays his knowledge without equivocation because he realises that more than mere force of arms, this knowledge is the ultimate power. He then sends for Ezeulu and offers to make him Paramount Chief of Umuaro. When Tony Clarke later makes

the offer to Ezeulu in person, his reply is as curt and definitive as the white man's reaction is uncomprehending:

> 'Tell the white man that Ezeulu will not be anybody's chief except Ulu'.
> 'What!' shouted Clarke, 'is the fellow mad?'
> 'I think so sah', said the interpreter.
> 'In that case he goes back to prison'. Clarke was now really angry.
> 'What cheek! A witch-doctor making a fool of the British Administrator in public!' (1964:175).

The recourse to the tropes of madness and prison, I believe, is familiar enough to students of colonial discourse. But what is significant here is that these tropes were not invoked in the first instance when Ezeulu broke the discursive rules and structures for defining the native by telling the truth and testifying against his own people. Winterbottom had found an explanation for that but here, where the transgression is not in the coloniser's interest, the disjuncture which had been previously masked is unveiled. Insanity is said to be the problem and the solution is incarceration. Foucault's *Madness and Civilisation* (1988) immediately comes to mind here in Clarke's invocation of madness and his recourse to carceral procedures for its 'treatment'.

To return to Lyotard's notion of the *differend* once again, what Ezeulu does not know—and cannot know—is that his 'truth' has galvanised an entire discursive chain of signifiers which effectively erase the ground on which his statement is based. Because truth claims can be made only within specific discursive structures, these structures then regulate and define what once integrated into these structures, these structures then regulate and define what can be enunciated within them. In these circumstances, Ezeulu is bound to lose out because the new discourse 'divests' him of that other ground from which his claim is made. The truth of the 'ownership' of the land within the histories of the two communities and their historical and cultural discourse of 'ownership' does not translate into the 'truth' within the European concept of ownership. Thus Ezeulu's attempt to articulate this 'truth' within another discourse becomes an instance of aporia, the moment when the truth lies. For the question to ask is not where the truth lies amid the conflicting testimonies of the various parties. The more appropriate question should be what 'ownership' means to these communities which recognise and acknowledge their own intricate and dynamic histories of migration and settlement, their fluid rather than fixed orientation to space, boundaries and demarcations, and their oral/aural modes of claims, evidence and validation. Once this context is taken away, it means that the conflict has been re-written into another code from which they are excluded. The idiom deployed is also inaccessible to them.

In this contest, therefore, in which the rules as written by the arbiter are alien to both contestants, only the arbiter can be the winner.

Like the people of Mbanta in *Things Fall Apart*, Ezeulu unwittingly cedes discursive control of the mapping of land/body/subject to the coloniser. For the people of Umuaro, this is clear enough: Ezeulu has become the white man's friend. Ezeulu himself accepts this and has no problems with being called the white man's friend for taking a principled position. This friendship, as far as he is concerned, is contingent, not fixed and unchanging. In the context of what we may refer to as the epistemology of his own culture, this self-positioning presents him with no contradictions. As he sees it, it can only be beneficial. The foundational logic of his culture speaks of the world as mobile, shifting and continually changing and in similar manner location and positionality have to be equally mobile. Ezeulu has no qualms about this; in fact, he summons the appropriate proverbs to anchor his position within his culture and its epistemology:

> I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a Mask dancing. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying *had we known* tomorrow (1964:45-6).

The idea of a singular, fixed position is anathema to this conception of the world as a dancing mask.

So Ezeulu quite justifiably believes that he can exploit the plurality of possible subject locations and positions which his culture enjoins him to adopt. But here he comes against the exclusivist, hierarchical and binarist structure of colonial discourse. Being a friend to Winterbottom cannot be achieved in isolation; it means activating and occupying the signs that make up *that* side of this structure and excluding the other. Stated in the language of the plot of Ezeulu's personal experiences, being Winterbottom's friend means sending Oduche to school, it means imprisoning the sacred python, it means becoming the white man's chief, it means refusing to name the date of the New Yam festival. Within the cultural economy of colonial discourse, his freedom to pick and choose, to retain and discard, is limited by this structure of discourse and power. His physical and positional mobility as 'body' and 'subject' is circumscribed and constantly under surveillance. And the more he struggles to escape the grids of colonialist representation the more he gets locked into them.

Ezeulu first realises the implications of this new space he occupies when he is summoned by the white man and again later when he is detained. All the same,

within this new space, he struggles to retrieve agency—to refuse to be the white man's chief and to remain Ulu's chief. For the first, he suffers incarceration and, for the second, he descends into madness. His detention is easy to understand, but his madness in the end is a little more complex and deserves some exploration. There are the usual explanations that focus on his psychological motivations, his selfish goals, his inability to separate his own interests from those of the god, his lust for power, and so on. These explanations which the narrative highlights mask the major issue which, I believe, is Ezeulu's cultural capture and imprisonment within a new discourse.

Although he may not know it at the time of his appearance before the inquiry, his testimony represents a deference to the unalterability of the written 'letter' rather than the reconstitutive potential of the spoken word. Having chosen the fixed 'letter' over the orality of the spoken wor(l)d, he loses the presiding spirit of his own culture. The split between the 'letter' and the 'spirit' in his wor(l)ding of the world, so to speak, was to return to haunt him in the end when he takes refuge in all kinds of legalisms in his refusal to name the day of the New Yam festival. Even when his six assistants and, later, the elders of the villages come to remind him of his duty to abide by the spirit of the law, he rejects their advice and sticks to the 'written' letter. In spite of the depth of his hatred for his adversaries and the strength of his other psychological motivations and hidden motives, the enabling space for this act of refusal is provided by his new positioning within a discourse in which the 'letter' is supreme and the evidence of sight takes precedence over every other. And Ezeulu takes full advantage of the evidence of sight by continually pointing at the uneaten yams which are there for every one to see. The visual evidence of the yams becomes the ground on which Ezeulu acts even when his assistants and the elders insist that this piece of evidence should not be overvalued. His insistence on the visual is just one other indication of his imprisonment within the visual regime of colonialism and European modernity. Seen from this perspective, it is easy to recognise that Ezeulu has lost the freedom of those 'wandering tribesmen' and has become fully incorporated into the colonial map. In his struggle to stay out of it, he continually slips back into it. Given Ezeulu's usual prescience, he may also be the only one who is fully aware of the catastrophic consequences of his actions and keenly feels the outcome:

> Because no one came near enough to him to see his anguish—and if they had seen it they would not have understood—they imagined that [Ezeulu] sat in his hut gloating over the distress of Umuaro. But although he would not for any reason now see the present trend reversed he carried more punishment and more suffering than all his fellows. What troubled him

most—and he alone seemed to be aware of it at present—was that the punishment was not for now alone but for all time. It would afflict Umuaro like an *agulu-aro* disease which counts one year and returns to its victim (1964:219).

There can be no going back because the epistemic *coup d'etat*, so to speak, has been accomplished and Ezeulu has unintentionally found himself a tool in its accomplishment. It is interesting that Tony Clarke has already declared him insane before he actually goes mad in the novel. When and where he finally does go mad is the point at which the local map collapses into the colonial and a new order emerges, its new mode of figuring land/body/subject becoming dominant, if not yet hegemonic.

IV

To master the threat that Ezeulu as a truth-telling native poses to the colonialist map of the African native, Winterbottom has to 're-inscribe' his body with some non-negroid blood from some distant past to secure the stability of its discursive mapping of bodies and subjects. Winterbottom's effort to give Ezeulu a discursively manageable identity leads to his being bodily re-marked and thus racially reclassified. But this kind of re-categorisation of bodies is not an invention of colonialism. Indeed, colonialism's obsession with bodies is anchored to the fact that the body is the ultimate sign upon which racist and sexist discourses are founded. Since the body 'presents itself' as a natural category, complete and united by its own boundaries, it is often made to function within these discourses as the model of a naturalised form of self and identity formation. Transferred thus to the colonialist context, the land is figured as a body and vice versa and they become the 'ground' on which identity 'grows'. Figures of woman as landscape and landscape as woman fill the works of travel and adventure writers of the age of exploration and colonisation and the rhetoric of nationalism has always depended on the deployment of the trope of nation as woman and woman as nation. (See Cobham 1991:83-98; 1992:52-59; Boehmer 1991:3-23).

But as land is never just transparently there but is culturally constituted, so also is the body never just naturally there. Perhaps even more than land, the body is always already contaminated by signification. The body as a visual sign has often functioned as a site for the cultural coding of a multitude of ideas, of beauty and ugliness, the normal and abnormal, self and other, the familiar and the exotic, and so on. In racist and sexist discourses, it has mainly served as the site for the visual coding of naturalised difference. In 'Mapping the Subject', Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (1995:13) suggest that:

... power—whether organised through knowledge, class, 'race', gender, sexuality and so on—is (at least partly) about mapping the subject; where particular sites—for example, the body, the self, and so on—become 'points of capture' for power.

As we have seen, colonialism as a regime of power was obsessively concerned with mapping land and subject, and the body was one specific site which became a point of capture for colonial power. The centrality of bodies as sites of naturalised difference from the constitution of colonialist discourse cannot be overemphasised. There are bewilderingly numerous ways in which bodies were mapped for colonialist 'consumption', but it is beyond the scope of this study to go into many of these. In the rest of this article, I will only briefly explore some of them by reading Nuruddin Farah's *Maps* as a postcolonial narrative which problematises colonialism's and, by extension, nationalism's mapping of the body. In my reading of this novel, my debt to the literature on the body in psychoanalysis and colonial and postcolonial discourses will be more than apparent in the concepts and terms which ground my analysis, and Freud, Lacan, Fanon and Bhabha present the entry points.

In the essay 'Somali Powerscapes: Mapping Farah's Fiction', Derek Wright (1990:33) asserts:

> In *Maps* Farah has written the first African novel of the body. It has a mass of body-literature behind it, some acknowledged in the epigraphs and Hilaal's monologue, and some not: Freud, Wilhelm Reich, Otto Rank, the body-poetesses Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton, the body novelists Gunter Grass and D.M. Thomas. Askar knows his adoptive mother Misra wholly through the body, which has a logic of its own and operates according to its own intuitive wisdom, making autonomous decisions that override the abstract intellectual hatreds of creed and country.

It can hardly be doubted that *Maps* focuses with relentless vision on the body; images of bodies, body functions and body parts take up a significant space in the novel. Blood and body fluids, menstruation, abortions, circumcision, mutilations, and semen are referred to again and again. These images so generously present in the narrative are not gratuitously deployed. Since colonial alterity was mapped on land and subject using the body as the site of its mapping, Farah, in this novel, chooses the body as the site from which to begin his interrogation of this mapping. Colonialist constructions of the land and the body functioned as figurations of culture and nation and anti-colonial nationalist discourses tend to take over these tropes and refigure them to fit the nationalist project. The object, of course, is to change the defiled image of colonialist thought and imbue it with positive qualities, to make it more noble and dignified. The body as the predominant sign in the text is thus used as a site for reading and interrogating colonialist and nationalist/patriarchal geographies and their naturalisation of identity through the body.

But, as several critics have observed, anti-colonial nationalism has become complicit with colonialism in its construction of woman (Boehmer 1991:3-23; Cobham 199:83-98; 1992:42-59; Radhakrishnan 1992:77-95). The patriarchal turn in anti-colonial texts of cultural nationalism has been critiqued by female writers who have objected to the portrayal and troping of women in these texts as mother/motherland/mother-of-the-nation, and so on. There is objection to the biologism of such portrayals which see identity as pre-given and organic, flowing seamlessly from its origin in a body and a land in which are also enwombed a nation and a culture. These essentialisms of female body, land, nation and culture are the object of exploration in Farah's narrative. The focus on the body is thus a consequence of these discourses and by deploying the metaphor of maps and mapping, the author draws together the literal and figurative dimensions of his subject.

The subject of *Maps* is thus the nationalist subject of the maps of land/body/subject bequeathed by colonialism. The novel is set in the post-independence period when the colonial map with its narrative of identity has become the normative one. Its conceptions of land/body/subject have been consolidated and hegemonised, albeit unwittingly aided by nationalist re-figurations. This map, taken over at independence by the new nationalist elites, has been seen as masking at its core a gap, a blank space on which should be inscribed the 'truth' of origins suppressed by colonialism. Disturbed by the ruptures of colonialism, the yearning for ontological wholeness and certainty in the midst of what is seen as colonial fragmentation and alienation becomes the driving force of the early post-independence era. Lost origins have to be rediscovered through a recuperative journey back to the true sources of the self and the nation. Narratives of cultural identity premised on pre-colonial wholeness become the favoured genre of writing and the search for origins, authenticity, unity and coherence, its dominant themes.

As noted earlier, the privileged site of exploration is the body and the body as sign is usually deployed as iconic representation of a unitary, homogeneous, bounded self. Based on the model of the bourgeois subject, the body becomes the natural instantiation of the pure, uncontaminated essence. The Somali nationalist project in *Maps* appears predicated upon this denial of the heterogeneity that continually threatens its self-constitution. Somalis, we should bear in mind, are 'a people' spread across several countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti, and the Greater Somalia project of the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) was to

bring together the 'scattered' parts of the national body to make a singular Somali whole. As Hilaal says in *Maps*, 'Truth is body' (1986:236) and the pursuit of this pre-ordained body-truth in the map of Somalia is at the core of this narrative. In his essay 'Nationalism, Irony and Commitment', Terry Eagleton (1990:28) captures this dynamic of nationalist thought:

> The metaphysics of nationalism speak of the entry into full self-realization of a unitary subject known as the people. As with all such philosophies of the subject from Hegel to the present, this monadic subject must somehow curiously pre-exist its own process of materialization—must be equipped, even now, with certain highly determinate needs and desires, on the model of the autonomous human personality.

The protagonist of *Maps*, Askar, is a Somali born in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia. His father dies before his birth and his mother dies soon after he is born. Orphaned at birth in an area outside the national boundaries of the republic of Somalia, Askar enters into the world deprived of his natural parents and also orphaned by geography. In the novel Askar asks his uncle Hilaal:

> 'How would you describe the differences that have been made to exist between the Somali in the Somali Republic and the Somali in either Kenya or in the Ethiopia-administered Ogadan?' I said, again feeling that I had expressed myself poorly.
> He answered, 'The Somali in the Ogaden, the Somali in Kenya both, because they lack what makes the self strong and whole, are *unpersons*'.
> Silence. Something made me not ask, 'But what is an unperson, Uncle?' Now, years later, I wish I had told him I didn't understand the concept. Years later, I find it appropriate to ask, 'Is Misra a Somali?' 'Am I a refugee?' 'Am I an unperson?' 'Is or will Misra be an unperson—if she comes to Mogadiscio?' (1986:175).

Denied the illusion of origins on which nationalism thrives, Askar begins a struggle to secure the unstable map of his identity. His foster mother, Misra, is also a woman of scrambled identities. An Ethiopian woman of the Oromo ethnic group who lives in the Ogaden among a Somali-speaking populace, she speaks Amharic and an accented Somali. The linguistic 'impurities' which define her are mapped unto her body in successive abortions and her final inability to bear her own child. Rather than accept this heterogeneity as Misra apparently does, Askar seeks to shore up his sense of self by recourse to nationalist discourses of a unitary nation and subject. In his search for a culturally uncontaminated self and nation, Askar, like the soldiers of the WSLF, becomes obsessed with literal and metaphoric maps.

In the language of psychoanalytic theory, Askar may be said to have tumbled straight from birth into the Symbolic order of language and signification. As the novel tells us, he was born 'adulted' (1986:11). And Misra explains this somewhat more flamboyantly:

> To have met death when not quite a being, perhaps this explains why he exists primarily in the look in his eyes. Perhaps his stars have conferred upon him the fortune of holding simultaneously multiple citizenships of different kingdoms: that of the living and that of the dead; not to mention that of being an infant and an adult at the same time (1986:11f).

In the acknowledgements that preface the novel, Farah mentions Isidore Okpewho's *The Epic in Africa* (1979) as one of the texts to which he is indebted. It is easy to see why this is so, because the idea of the 'adulted' child aligns the novel structurally with the African epic in which extraordinary births and abnormal childhoods are regular fare. Askar's struggle is thus figured as a kind of epic struggle for the recovery of self and nation, though the author continually undercuts him by problematising the origins he seeks at every point. At the border, on the journey to Mogadiscio, all the male passengers in the bus get down, strip naked and dip themselves in the Somali end of the Shebelle River in a kind of symbolic cleansing and reunification with the 'homeland'. Askar is frightened because he wonders where this return to origins will lead him. And as he goes into the river at the border, his origins metaphorically materialise before him in the figure of Misra: 'there she was, real as the border; there she was, talking about how self-conscious he was on the day he was born, how he wore a mask of dried blood, how he appeared, or rather behaved, as though he had made himself' (1986:133). The 'loss' of origins symbolised in his birth haunts him and it is only by the erasure of this historical and material specificity of his own body and the suppression of its lived experiences that he can reinvent himself as part of the national(ist) narrative.

It is worth noting that the investment in this border is similar to the investment in the border in Greene's *Journey Without Maps*. In 'Diaspora, Border and Transnational Identities', Avatar Brah (1996:198) elaborates on the meaning and significance of borders:

> Borders: arbitrary dividing lines that are simultaneously social, cultural and psychic: territories to be patrolled against those whom they construct as

outsiders, aliens, the Others; forms of demarcation where the very act of prohibition inscribes transgression; zones where fear of the Other is fear of the self; places where claims to ownership—claims of 'mine', 'yours' and 'theirs'— are staked out, contested, defended, and fought over.

The ritual of cleansing undertaken at the border in Farah's novel is both one of recognition and non-recognition: a recognition that they have crossed over to the 'homeland' (the republic of Somalia) and a non-recognition because they believe the Ethiopian Ogaden should be part of this homeland. The paradoxical narrative which this border encodes should lead us to question what borders—or this border—mean to nomadic peoples. Even more than in Achebe's *Arrow of God*, where the contesting communities acknowledge their histories of migration and settlement, the Somali are a nomadic people. The manner in which their different and differentiated histories are collectivised through narrative is beyond the scope of this paper. It is important to note however that notions of a unitary Somali identity and Somali-ness cannot be divorced from the concepts of identity that underwrote the construction of the native in colonial discourse. The concepts of diaspora and migrancy and their effects on identity have received a fair amount of analytical and theoretical attention in recent times, due largely to the huge displacements occasioned by the dynamics of late capitalism. But nomadic identities which pre-date these modern diasporas and continue to impact upon identities in some parts of the world have not been as massively theorised. The impact of colonialism and its maps of identity on these identities needs to be more carefully studied. In my opinion, it is unlikely that borders performed for nomadic peoples the same functions they perform in colonialist and nationalist discourses.

This may perhaps be the reason why Farah's narrative techniques continually foreground these questions. Although the colonial native—together with notions of singularity, fixity and place—remains the structure and thematic of Askar's desire as played out in the novel, the narrative itself emphasises the uncertainties and instabilities of all such categories. From the ambivalences and instabilities of the 'founding' moment of Askar's birth, Farah continually fractures the unitary narrative of Somali nationalism and its maps of land/body/subject. Just as the land is dispersed among several countries so also is Askar, the subject, dispersed at the point of his own enunciation. Askar is split between three narrative voices— the 'I' of the self, the 'you' of alienation, and the 'he' of the Other. Each of these subject positions presents its own map which leads to a destabilisation of the unitary subject, a blurring of boundaries, and an unravelling of the binaries of colonialist and nationalist maps. With the discursive map of the novel pulling in one direction and the protagonist's in another, Askar, like Ezeulu in *Arrow of God*, descends into

madness. It is as if the main character remains firmly within an older map while the author assiduously sketches the contours of a new one—an outline map for truly emancipatory, postcolonial geographies.

V

On the evidence of the texts examined above, it would appear that colonial and postcolonial geographies (of the nationalist type) as presented in African narratives have not been particularly liberatory. It is understandable—given the objectives of colonialism—that colonial mapping tended to emphasise containment and surveillance, but the failures of nationalist mapping of land, body and subject require a little more understanding. Since nationalism has taken such a bashing in contemporary theory, it is often necessary to remind ourselves of its practical uses in the struggle against colonialism. With the end of official colonisation, we can say with the benefit of hindsight, as Mahmood Mamdani (1996:24) does in *Citizen and Subject*, that 'every movement of resistance was shaped by the very structure of power against which it rebelled'. The imbrication of anti-colonial nationalist thought in the structures of the colonial regime of power was perhaps inevitable and its consequences have not been completely unsalutory.

In 'Where Have All the Natives Gone?', Rey Chow (1993:29) highlights the 'problematic of *the image as a bad thing to be replaced*', which continues to haunt postcolonial discourses on the native:

> I want to highlight the native—nowadays a synonym for the oppressed, the marginalized, the wronged—because I think the space occupied by the native in postcolonial discourses is also the space of error, illusion, and filth. How would one write this space in such a way as to refuse the facile turn of sanctifying the defiled image with pieties and thus enriching ourselves precisely with the surplus value of the oppressed, a surplus value that results from *exchanging* the defiled image for something more noble? (Chow 1993:30).

Throughout this paper, I have relied on the metaphor of maps and mapping to ground my analysis. But mapping is itself a problematic concept when applied to the human subject. As Pile and Thrift (1995:1) remark:

> The human subject is difficult to map for numerous reasons. There is the difficulty of mapping something that does not have precise boundaries. There is the difficulty of mapping something that cannot be counted as

singular but only as a mass of different and sometimes conflicting subject positions. There is the difficulty of mapping something that is always on the move, culturally, and in fact. There is the difficulty of mapping something that is only partially locatable in time-space. Then, finally, there is the difficulty of deploying the representational metaphor of mapping with its history of subordination to an Enlightenment logic in which everything can be survey and pinned down.

There is, however, another way of thinking of mapping, as wayfinding.

These many difficulties and the patriarchal and colonialist ideologies which further compound these in the colonial and postcolonial space caution us to be more tentative than definitive in concluding. For, as the map seeks to enclose, so also do its subjects seek to transgress its borders and boundaries. Farah's attempts to sketch the contours of a new map signal a refusal of closure and the conception of mapping as wayfinding endorsed by Pile and Thrift. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987:12) state it in this manner:

> The map is open and connectable in all its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual group or social formation.

Such a conception of mapping is what this paper gestures towards in its emphasis on the denial of heterogeneity and multiplicity which characterised colonial and nationalist maps of land/body/subject and the struggles to escape their discursive containment and closure in African narrative.

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Mistakes in the Contact Zone

Gillian Gane

I

All human communication is beset by hazards. In the transfer of messages encoded in the fragile medium of language, there may be 'misses' all along the line: mispronunciations, misprints, misstatements, mistranslations, misreadings, misunderstandings—a never-ending proliferation of mistakes of one kind or another. In contact zones where people communicate across barriers of race, language and culture, not only do mistakes multiply, but they become at the same time more freighted with significance and more potentially dangerous.

To be sure, mistakes can have grievous consequences. A mistranslation in a court of law may be a matter of life and death and there are innumerable daily dealings where misunderstandings cause at the least inconvenience. In a large number of cases, however, errors do not impede the transmission of the desired message. After all, once you can talk about mistakes you are out of the woods: a mistake is only apparent as such when the message is understood. The most acute communication problems arise at a level prior to this, when all or part of a message is simply unintelligible; once we can identify mistakes, communication is taking place. Yet in the eyes of those who perceive themselves as beleaguered defenders of a threatened standard language, particularly in contexts where there are troubled relations between linguistic insiders and outsiders, what stands out is not the message itself, but the mistake—the verb that doesn't agree, the mispronounced word, the omitted article, the spelling error. Form supplants content; the error threatens to supersede the message.

My hope here is to offer a reconceptualisation of mistakes, a new way of looking at them that recognises their kinship with other modes of linguistic creativity and their potential for regenerating the language. Drawing on both literary sources and real-life examples of language in the world, I address both the generativity of mistakes and the harm that follows from an obsession with their wrongness; finally, I question the very definition of error in relation to standards that are necessarily local, timebound, profoundly implicated in structures of power, and mutable.

To start with, we should recognise that mistakes are inevitable and ubiquitous. We tend to focus on the linguistic errors of those we already perceive as alien or inferior, yet mistakes are to be found in the most elevated and sacrosanct linguistic preserves—in published texts as well as in speech, in the discourse of linguistic preserves—in published texts as well as in speech, in the discourse of native speakers as well as that of second-language learners, in the language even of the most esteemed scholars. On the spine of a scholarly text in my own area of interest, for instance, two key terms have been transposed, so that the title reads not *Non-Standard Language in English Literature* (which is what appears on the flyleaf), but *Non-Standard Literature in English Language*. When I worked as a scholarly editor, I started the job with high ambitions, determined to eradicate error. The articles we published were edited, copyedited and proof-read at least twice, and yet errors crept in, persisted, evaded our most diligent scrutiny; it was embarrassing when on the spine of a journal dedicated to the teaching of English in higher education *January* was spelled 'Janaury'. In the end—though of course we continued to strive for error-free perfection—I was willing to admit our fallen state: typos and other errors, I concluded, are as inevitable and ineradicable as insects in the flour bin. This conclusion is readily confirmed by scrutiny of any number of published texts[1].

To err is indeed human, in language as in other domains. Yet linguistic mistakes can be sites of creativity and innovation, illuminating both the human mind and the nature of language. Such mistakes are products of the mind at work as it develops theories about how a language works. In perceiving mistakes, moreover, we see our language afresh; mistakes jolt us out of our unthinking and automatic processing habits and focus our attention on the substance of language itself. The creative theorising of the language learner has been amply demonstrated in the child's acquisition of a first language. The same creativity, the same seeking for rules and patterns, continues to characterise our lifelong language learning, including our learning of new languages. There are added complications, conflicts and tensions when languages are learned across significant barriers of culture and of power, but there is at the same time increased potential for generative forces that can enrich and revitalise the languages and cultures at issue. Two theorists in particular offer productive frameworks for thinking about such interactions and the 'mistakes' they engender.

The first of these is Mary Louise Pratt, a contemporary linguist and cultural critic at Stanford University. Traditionally, Pratt (1991:34) writes, linguists have imagined the typical speech community in idealised, utopian terms as a homogeneous, discrete, monolingual community whose members follow the same rules. She proposes instead that we think in terms of *contact zones*, which she defines as 'social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today'. If we foreground heterogeneity, linguistic multiplicity and conflict as the defining features of communities, we end up with a radically different vision of the world, of linguistic and cultural interactions, and even of what we call 'art'. In the contact zone, Pratt suggests, we can find a miscellany of new, mixed discourses and art forms that stretch the boundaries of our established critical paradigms.

In more narrowly linguistic terms, on the borderline between languages, new, hybrid, anomalous forms are generated. We see and hear these all the time in the classroom and in other interlingual contact zones, and as language teachers our impulse is to condemn these and work strenuously to eradicate them. We speak of 'interference', as if other languages were molesting English; we speak of the 'broken' or 'fractured' English that results. Mikhail Bakhtin, the second theorist whose thinking has influenced me, proposes a special term for such dialogic interactions between languages. Bakhtin was the great Russian proponent of dialogism, hybridity and heteroglossia in language; his term *vzaimnoosvescenie* is translated variously as *interillumination, interanimation,* or *mutual illumination.* This is defined as 'The major relativizing force in de-privileging languages'. 'When cultures are closed and deaf [*gluxoj*] to one another,' Bakhtin's translators Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist explain, 'each considers itself absolute; when one language sees itself in the light of another, "novelness" has arrived' (translators'

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[1] Recently, for instance, I discovered in the US Owl edition of Salman Rushdie's *Shame* an alarming number of typographical errors, several of which seriously distort the meaning of the text: instead of 'a fat pigmeat tub' we read bizarrely of 'a fat *pigment* tub' (1997b:104); elsewhere readers may be bewildered by 'a tongue-*typing* formality' (1997b:105) or '*peeing*-tommery' (1997b:301). At one point, the novel switches its focus from the triumphant Raza Hyder to his vanquished rival Iskander Harappa languishing in a prison cell, the shift indicated in other editions of the novel by the blank line that marks a section break: the Owl edition, however, does not even include a paragraph break, so that readers are bewildered as they move from a sentence about Raza at a funeral to a sentence in which 'he' (a pronoun the reader can only read as referring to Raza) hallucinates about the walls of 'water-stained concrete' that enclose him (1997b:241).

I checked the text of the Owl edition against the British Picador edition. 'Tongue-typing' should of course read 'tongue-tying' and 'peeing-tommery' should be 'peeping-tommery'. Owl evidently used a spell-checker, which only makes the problem worse in that in place of a meaningless sequence of letters, which might alert the reader to a typographical error, a real word is substituted.

glossary, Bakhtin 1981:429f). I'd like to see us starting to think in terms of such interanimation of languages; that is, in the hybrid forms that purists and prescriptivists consider 'mistakes', I propose that we seek interillumination.

One example of a literary work that imaginatively engages the interanimation of languages in a multilingual contact zone is David Edgar's play *Pentecost*. A painting with an uncanny resemblance to the Giotto Lamentation in the Arena Chapel at Padua has been discovered under layers of brick in a disused church in an imaginary Eastern European country; this painting might have been painted before Giotto's, which would make it the earliest known instance of the use of perspective. As art experts and functionaries with various political agendas debate the future of the painting, a troop of refugees from all over the world invades the church, demanding sanctuary. Communication sometimes requires several layers of translation—for instance, the Palestinian Yasmin translates English into Arabic for the Afghan Abdul, who relays the message in Turkish to the Azeri Raif—and throughout the play there are allusions to the interrelations among languages, including the odd conjunctions across languages of similar word forms with different meanings ('the Finnish word for "fart" is the Swedish for "speed" and the like'; see Edgar 1995:28). In the end, the mystery of the painting is solved on the basis of linguistic clues. First, the fact that Old Nagolitic, the long-banned ancestral language of the country in question, used the same word for both *from* and *to* requires some radical readjustments of direction and locality. Second, it appears that Giotto understood a couple of Old Nagolitic words as their Italian equivalents; for instance, he took *gobbyo*, meaning 'rock', as the Italian *gobbo*, meaning 'hunchback', and so his painting features a huddled woman where the original has a rock. Giotto's masterpiece and the tradition of Western art it initiated—so the play argues—was not only derivative, based on this long-lost original, but was the product of a mistranslation[2].

As teachers and critics, we can deplore mistakes and lament the degeneration of our language—or we can celebrate the creativity of new forms and the regeneration of English they promise. Another possible response that neither Pratt nor Bakhtin addresses directly is laughter. There's always a strong impulse to find disruptions of our language funny; often mistakes rupture the fragile bond between signifier and signified, opening up new, incongruous, potentially hilarious

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[2] The play further disrupts our sense of the Western tradition by proposing that the painting in the church was painted by a Muslim traveller from the east; Oliver Davenport, the British art historian, explains: 'We have this mindset, still, about the mediaeval period. That everybody knows their places, no-one travels, no-one moves .... Whereas actually mediaeval Europe was a chaos of diaspora' (Edgar 1995:98).

possibilities of meaning. On the whole I believe such laughter is a good thing, though a great deal depends on the spirit behind it. It's possible to laugh mean-spiritedly, mocking the stupidity of those who make such crass mistakes—but it's also possible to laugh in genuine delight at the re-vision a mistake makes possible, recognising perhaps the way it subverts standard English and our notions of correctness. One test would be whether the joke can be shared with the person who made the mistake: if it's possible to explain what was funny and why and to laugh together, then the joke also becomes a learning opportunity.

The joke, the mistake, and the poetic are close kin. In all three, the rules are violated, opening up new possibilities of meaning, jolting us into a fresh awareness of the substance of language. The inverted 'hoppergrass' of the language learner startles and delights in much the same way as James Joyce's metamorphosis of the same insect into a 'gracehoper'. Salman Rushdie's (2000:59) illiterate Padma asks about 'hankying and pankying' and injects new life into a fixed expression. Nabokov's (1963:59) Pnin in his Russian accent demands 'viscous and sawdust'—which we ultimately decipher as 'whisky and soda'. A black man in the southern US speaks wonderfully, mysteriously, of a 'blue dollar hawk' and prompts Walker Percy (1975) to write an essay on 'Metaphor as Mistake'.

The particular subset of mistakes I have been working on consists of those errors in spelling or pronunciation that reconfigure words. Often the effect of such reconfigurations is irreverent and subversive: they cut their referents down to size. Huck Finn's 'sivilize', for instance, seems to be a different word from 'civilize', denuded of its etymological associations, diminishing and derisive. A speaker may deliberately malform a word in a debunking spirit of mockery, as when the Anglicised Sufyan girls in Rushdie's (1997a:267) *The Satanic Verses* call their parents' homeland 'Bungleditch' or when, in much the same spirit, Alan Helms (1996:25) calls his native town of Indianapolis 'Indian-no-place'. Such 'manglings' are more troubling when hostile outsiders mock the pronunciations of others by respelling them to make them look stupid, funny, or obscene—as we shall shortly see.

However, reconfigured words don't necessarily entail debunking and the decay of meaning, but may also engender new meanings. Consider, for instance, the song 'Sarvering Gallack Seas' that the people sing in the post-nuclear holocaust world of Russell Hoban's (1998:22) *Riddley Walker*:

Pas the sarvering gallack seas and flaming nebyul eye
Power us beyont the farthes reaches of the sky
Thine the han what shapit the black
Guyd us there and guyd us back.

Only faint traces are here preserved of what must once have been 'Sovereign Galaxies', and their former glory seems considerably diminished. Yet at the same time, those 'sarvering gallack seas' evoke a new set of associations. In the glossary included in the revised version of this novel, Hoban (1998:234) explains that:

> Gallack Seas would suggests to Riddley's people sky-seas that might be crossed by boats in the air. Readers might think of galleons, carracks. 'Sarvering' is the participle of 'sarver', which hints at severing, cutting off something for oneself, saving it for one's people, claiming a territory'.

As teachers know, not all student misprisions of words are simplifications; instead of reducing words to rudimentary forms, stripped of etymological associations, language-learners sometimes complicate them: a ten-year-old I once taught would write 'sordive' instead of 'sort of'—elevating the fuzzy filler of the inarticulate to a impressive Latinate-looking adjective. In some cases, reconfigured words may evoke new meanings that are richer or truer than their 'correct' versions. Consider the Chinese-accented 'so-so security' for *Social Security* in Amy Tan's (1989:275) *The Joy Luck Club*, or the Yorkshire dialect-speaking hedgehog in T.H. White's (1966:187) *The Sword in the Stone* who speaks of the badger's nose as its weak spot: 'A killee's heel they neame un on ter scriptures', he says; 'Hit one of they girt trollops on ter noase ... and the sharp life is fair outer him'. The Greek Achilles—a name that in itself demands knowledge of both Greek mythology and the special conventions for pronouncing Greek words—is displaced by a reimagining of the proverbial site of vulnerability entirely appropriate to the context: if a blow to the weak spot causes death, the victim may certainly be said to be a 'killee'.

My favourite example of a mistake that reconfigures a word and its meaning is from Rushdie's short story 'The Courter'[3]. Certainly-Mary is an elderly ayah from Goa who has come with her employers to London—and whose English is marked by the phonology of her native Konkani:

> English was hard for Certainly-Mary .... The letter p was a particular problem, often turning into an f or a c; when she proceeded through the lobby with a wheeled shopping basket, she would say, 'Going shocking,' and when, on her return, [the porter] offered to help lift the basket up the

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[3] I discuss the linguistic dimensions of this short story more fully in my article 'Jumble-Aya, Mixed-Up, and English: *"how newness enters the world"* in Salman Rushdie's "The Courter"'.

front ghats, she would answer, 'Yes, fleas.' As the elevator lifted her away, she called through the grille: 'Oé, courter! Thank you, courter. O, yes, certainly' (Rushdie 1994:176). (In Hindi and Konkani, however, her p's knew their place.)

The story in fact hinges on the transformation of the porter into a 'courter': the elderly Polish emigré porter seizes on the word—'thanks to her unexpected, somehow stomach-churning magic, he was no longer porter, but courter .... this name, this courter, this he would try to be' (Rushdie 1994:177)—and romance blossoms between the two elderly people.

There are clearly differences in the locus and conditions of these reconceptualizations. Sometimes the speaker knows the correct form and deliberately misshapes it (as in 'Bungleditch'); sometimes the speaker evidently does not know the standard form, or the concept it denotes, and has imaginatively constructed a new form and meaning, as we would guess to be the case for T.H. White's hedgehog. The same is probably true of Ying-ying St. Clair's 'so-so security', given that this appears not in her speech but in a portion of the text that she narrates. In other cases the speaker is evidently unaware of the reconceptualisation, and it is the listener who hears a word afresh and generates a new image in response. Again, the listener may or may not be aware of what the speaker intended to say (the 'correct' form); Saladin Chamcha in Rushdie's (1997a:76) *The Satanic Verses* hears the Reverend Eugene Dumsday say that he serves 'the Christian guard' and it takes a while for him to understand that Dumsday means not 'guard' but 'God' (Chamcha must figure out the correspondence between his own upper-class British speech, where post-vocalic r is realised as a lengthening of the vowel, and Dumsday's American English vowel system). And beyond this, for whatever constellation of factors, the listener may be disposed to hear, or impose, various shapes and meanings on what she or he hears, from the comical to the deeply serious. When Shekhar in V.S. Naipaul's (1984:549) *A House for Mr. Biswas* is said to refer to 'Somerset Morgue-Hum', the narrator who reports this understands the reference, knows moreover that the writer's last name is generally pronounced 'Mawm', and chooses to present Shekhar's disyllabic pronunciation in such a way as to make it seem as comical as possible. In 'The Courter', by contrast, the porter receives Certainly-Mary's mispronunciation with open-minded and thoughtful respect; he might have perceived it as a meaningless sequence, or perhaps as the word 'quarter', but instead he hears it as the non-existent but plausible word 'courter'—and re-imagines himself accordingly.

'How does newness enter the world? How is it born? Of what fusions, translations, conjoinings is it made?' Rushdie (1997a:8) asks elsewhere. One way,

evidently, is through the 'conjoining' of English with the phonemic system of Certainly-Mary's native tongue and the way in which this translates a porter into a courter. Newness, that is, may enter the world through the different forms spoken English may take in dialectal or foreign-inflected speech and the changes in meaning these may bring into being. A positive perspective on mispronunciations and other mistakes would look hopefully on such subversions and reconfigurations, on the 'newness' emerging from the interillumination of languages.

Let me hasten to add that I do not imagine classrooms where we welcome and celebrate all aberrations for their transformative newness. Most of us, I am sure, will continue to censure and correct mistakes as we always have. But if we respect the creative intelligence of our students and if we are alert to the innovative and transformative potential of their language, at the least our jobs will be much more bearable. I think of a colleague who responded with mingled horror and amusement to the student who wrote about taking something 'for granite'; in fact, this student had invented a metaphor far more vivid and compelling than the formulaic 'take for granted,' a metaphor that I think should delight teachers rather than horrify them[4]. Certainly there are differences between literature and real life. In literature writers can carefully preserve—or, indeed, construct—well-chosen specimens of interestingly anomalous language, presented in the cold fixity of print as in the glass case of a museum. In real life all is chaos and confusion as we struggle for intelligibility amidst noise and the strangeness of the language of others. Yet I urge those of us in the business of monitoring language as teachers, editors and critics to develop a double vision that allows us, while doing our jobs, to look at real-world mistakes with a literary eye, alert to their creative potential.

Consider two sharply opposed perspectives—one literary, one not—on misspellings and mispronunciations of the kind I have been discussing specifically within Black South African English. One perspective is presented in a one-page document that I picked up here in 1995; it is headed 'The "New South African" Dictionary: A Survivor's Guide to the New South African English'. Here are some sample entries from it:

Errors-	Districts - e.g. ebbon errors[5]
Get-	A hinged device in a fence
Gaddin-	Where you grow Kebbi-jess
Hair-	as opposed to him
Hiss-	Masculine form of hairs
Itch-	As in 'itch and aviary'
Phlegm-	The banning tip of a Kendal
Piss-	Symbolised by white doves
Sheep-	Big boat
Ship-	Provider of wool
So Then-	Pertains to the South—e.g. So Then Africa
Spitch-	What politicians make at a rally
Suffa Ring-	As in 'the peep pull ah suffa ring'
Teksi-	Kah for hire—sometimes Parrot Teksi (i.e. not a mamba of the teksi association)
Tocks-	Negotiations
Tipic ally-	Characteristic (Gordon 1995).

This is an attempt to ridicule the speech of black South Africans by making it look as alien and as unintelligent as possible. The respellings are chosen to arouse ludicrous associations—e.g. 'phlegm'—besides being crude and inconsistent. Some cases are pure eye dialect (that is, changes in the visual representations of words that do not in fact reflect any actual sound change but are simply respellings of their standard pronunciation): 'kah' is exactly how white South Africans pronounce the word 'car', for instance, and it is hard to imagine what 'tipic ally' might represent other than the standard pronunciation of 'typically'. The main purpose of the quotation 'the peep pull ah suffa ring' is evidently to mock the rhetoric of the freedom movement: there is no 'mispronunciation' at issue here, just a respelling and resegmentation that fractures and reshapes words to make them look silly. One might note, moreover, that the pronunciations identified here as deviant are defined as such in relation to a particular dialect, the speech of white South Africans. (There is after all no vantage point outside particular dialects from which to judge a language.) This emerges clearly in the choice of the word 'hair' as an equivalent of black South African 'her', implying a pronunciation of 'hair' with a long monopthong—a pronunciation which is 'substandard' not only in relation to both British and American English, but even in relation to South African Received Pronunciation.

A very different perspective is presented in Peter Anderson's 1993 'The Flame Tree of Freedom: Poetry and Apartheid', part of a special section of the *Boston Review* on 'The New South African Poetry'. Included in the article is a poem, reproduced exactly as it came into the author's hands, we are told, except that the original was hand-written; here is its first stanza:

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[4] This inventive respelling reflects a US pronunciation of 'granted': the /t/ is lost and the first vowel is the same as that in 'granite'. (Similarly, the spelling 'sordive' for 'sort of' reflects the US voicing of /t/ between vowels.)

[5] In ludic mood, one might be tempted to play further with the equivalences posited here: 'ebbon errors' might itself be a title for the listing, 'ebbon' evoking the 'Ebonics' controversy in the United States.

Virsil for an Urchin

laugter
achoing from farmished
lips stumbles from its
pedestal
Where flies discreately
consumate their sodomy
(Zachariah Rapola quoted in Anderson 1993).

Anderson wonders whether the spelling of this poem should be standardised—but then considers the losses this would entail; he points to 'the ache in the echo' that can be detected in 'achoing' and asks of 'discreately', 'is the undoing of what is created, discreated?'' .... '[W]riters as diverse as the Nigerian Amos Tutuola and the Irish James Joyce', Anderson reminds us, 'have prepared us to recognise [such misspellings] as resonant distortions'; editors who 'corrected' these spellings, he charges, would function as 'agents of the dominant culture'. 'It is one thing to tinker with your own culture', he asserts; 'To tinker with another, to "correct" it, may amount to imperialism'.

I have reservations about Anderson's argument. High-handed editing may indeed be imperialist, but a refusal to edit could be a form of condescension, reminiscent of what has in another context been called 'the zoo theory', a hands-off policy where those in power justify neglect on the grounds of wishing to preserve unchanged the 'quaint and primitive' innocence of the powerless (Kluge 1991:108). In my own experience as assistant editor of a scholarly journal I came to question a double standard I observed in editing practices. We copyedited the articles we published for accuracy and correctness, fixing errors in grammar or mechanics to conform with the standard scholarly language, making sure that our scholarly authors looked good. There was a select subset of texts, however, where the criterion was authenticity rather than correctness. In this second set were two kinds of texts, typically quoted within the scholarly articles we published: on the one hand, published texts of established stature (we did not correct the spelling of Milton or Chaucer), and, on the other hand—most interestingly—specimens of student writing, where the practice was to lovingly preserve all errors, whether they were relevant to the purpose of the article or not. The scholarly articles we published benefited from our editing (so we hoped), and their authors learned from the editing process to be even better writers than they had been to start with; student writing, by contrast, was fixed forever in its original, authentic, unimproved condition. Peter Anderson wants to treat Zachariah Rapola as we treated student writers and presumably would expect

him to continue writing as in the specimen we have here. Of course Anderson has valid points about the difficulty of editing across cultures, but surely the solution is not to renounce the very possibility of editing in such cases. Ideally editing should always be a collaborative venture where the editor consults the author about her or his intentions; where any significant gap divides author and editor there is all the more potential for both to learn from the collaboration.

Anderson's reverence is infinitely preferable to the dictionary-maker's malevolence, but it strikes me as patronising, and I can't see that his tolerance for anomalous spellings furthers the project of defining the English of the New South Africa. There has to be a middle ground between these two extremes.

II

Outside the South African context, mistakes, or what have been perceived as mistakes, have sometimes had dire consequences. In the Old Testament Book of Judges, we learn of the battle between the Gileadites and the Ephraimites and how the Gileadites identified their enemies:

> 6 Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand[6].

More recently, in 1937, between 15,000 and 35,000 Haitians were murdered in the Dominican Republic on the orders of dictator Rafael Trujillo—and again a test word was used to identify those who would be slaughtered. The episode has recently figured in a poem by Rita Dove and a novel by Edwige Danticat, but this account is a historical one, written by a journalist called Michele Wucker.

> Since Haitians are considerably darker than most Dominicans, soldiers would accost a man or woman with dark skin. Holding up sprigs of parsley, Trujillo's men queried their prospective victims: 'Como se llama ésto?' 'What is this thing called?' The terrified victim's fate lay in his pronunciation of the answer. For Haitians, whose Kreyol language uses a wide, flat 'R', it is difficult to pronounce the trilled 'R' in the Spanish word for parsley, 'perejil.' If the word came out as the Haitian 'pe'sil,' or a

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[6] Who now knows the original meaning of the word 'shibboleth'? This is a classic case of the error displacing the message.

bastardized Spanish 'pewehí' the victim was condemned to die (Wucker 1999).

These stories show the imbrication of language and identity—specifically ethnic or racial identity. The mispronunciation in each case serves as a sign of racial otherness, identifying the speaker as member of the despised enemy tribe and thus as the target of genocide or 'ethnic cleansing'.

South Africa has surely moved beyond the stage of genocidal race hatred. I do note, however, that there are a lot of complaints about the supposed degeneration of the English language in South Africa—almost as if language has come to be a token standing in for race.

If we were teaching Hebrew to the Ephraimites or Spanish to Haitians in the Dominican Republic, would our job be to teach the pronunciation of 'shibboleth' or 'perejil' preferred by their enemies? We might well see that as part of our job; isn't that what language teachers do—teach the 'correct' standard form of the language, the form favoured by the educated and powerful? But there are troubling consequences to seeing our jobs only in those terms. The problem in these two stories of lethal mistakes is hardly in the trivial mispronunciations of the victims; it's in the mindset and the actions of the genocidal Gileadites and Dominicans. Is our purpose as teachers to enable a privileged few to join the ranks of the linguistic elite and thereby to reinforce a rigid standard that has been used in oppressive and discriminatory ways? Or should we consider the social context within which language operates, accept the fact that languages and standards change, and work towards greater tolerance of linguistic diversity? More important than insisting on the pronunciation favoured by the powerful, we might want to suggest that it's not such a terrible thing to say 'sibboleth' and to work against the hatred and contempt of the dominant groups. We might even argue that 'sibboleth' should not be considered a mistake but part of an emerging new standard.

It is in the nature of language to change and grow. Standards too are mutable. Since I moved to the US, my own definitions of standards and mistakes have shifted; there are still some US forms that I find jarring—for instance, when I hear about someone's hair being 'plated' or worn in two 'plates', it still seems to me ridiculous, outrageous, just plain wrong. But US dictionaries accept this spelling pronunciation of the word 'plait', and rationally I have to concede that my own preference for the pronunciation 'plat' casts me as an outsider and the proponent of an irrational Anglophile antiquarianism.

In South Africa, as in the world at large, native speakers of English are now outnumbered by those for whom English is a second language (or a third, or fourth, or fifth ...). Linguists have for some time been talking about the New Englishes or World Englishes on the global scene—distinctive regional and national varieties of English heard increasingly on the airwaves and in the media, figuring too in written form in the literatures emerging from many parts of the world. Rodrik Wade at the University of Natal has written interestingly on Black South African English as a 'New English' and about the prospects of 'restandardisation' in South Africa. The fact of the matter is that the English language no longer belongs to those who consider themselves English by blood; it is a world language, and it will inevitably be spoken and written in many different ways in different parts of the world. There can be no doubt that some of the mistakes we stigmatise today will constitute the standard of tomorrow.

A final note on the role of literature. One of the joys, and one of the defining qualities, of certain Indian, West African, and Caribbean novels is the distinctiveness of the dialogue—represented not as flat, 'correct' English by metropolitan standards, but as a lively local vernacular. I would hope that South African writers too will find imaginative ways of capturing the way South Africans really talk and that literature will work toward defining and validating a new standard for South African English.

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White Masculinity and the African Other: *Die werfbobbejaan* by Alexander Strachan

Andries Visagie

Introduction

The vast discourse on the Self and the Other is no doubt one of the central fields of enquiry in intercultural studies. Despite its more utilitarian focus on face-to-face interactions between people of diverse cultures (Jandt 2001:38), the field of intercultural communication has also incorporated insights from the more philosophical discourse on the Self and the Other. And, of course, research on intercultural interaction goes beyond race and ethnicity. Increasingly, researchers are becoming aware of the need to investigate the role of gender in intercultural studies (Jandt 2000; Kaschula & Anthonissen 1995; Scollon & Scollon 1995).

Scholars who take an interest in the involvement of gender in intercultural communication cannot escape a thorough reflection on the relation between the gendered Self and the gendered Other. Indeed, there is a growing interest in the entanglement of gender stereotypes in the construction of new cultural formations. Claire Alexander (2000:124) argues that the recent emergence of the 'Asian gang' in the United Kingdom draws upon 'dominant discourses (both popular and academic) of black masculinity, constructed through images of deviance and violence, to legitimate this reinvention'.

In an article in the *Mail and Guardian*, Tania Branigan (2001:27) gives expression to the new awareness of the use of gender stereotypes, normally employed to belittle men in their masculine identity, to emasculate—and at the same time to 'other'—entire cultures or civilisations. In the wake of Osama bin Laden and Al Quaida's attacks on New York and Washington, Branigan points out that popular racist mythology in the west, on the one hand, has created stereotypes of Arab and Asian men as weak, effeminate and unmanly. On the other hand, black men are deemed to be aggressively and uncontrollably male. Race is entwined with sexual identity in the west's inability 'to comprehend that other people can be differently, not less, male' (Branigan 2001:27).

In this article I will restrict myself to Afrikaans literature and examine the representations by white male authors of Afrikaner men in their engagement with African culture since the transitional period to democratic rule in South Africa. Alexander Strachan's novel, *Die werfbobbejaan* (1994), will be discussed as an expression of white men's often tortuous attempts to re-place their masculinity in a time which inaugurated the ascendance of a black ruling class.

The opinion of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989:173) that the dialetic of Self and Other is the matrix of post-colonial literatures also holds true for Afrikaans literature. Africa continues to haunt white writers and it is noticeable that these writers are more and more frequently drawn to those parts of Africa (and South Africa) where the white man has not completely overrun nature and traditional society. There is a fascination with San culture, with Namibia, with Zululand and, not least of all, with the hunting fields and nature reserves where the illusion of a pristine world can be recovered (Visagie 2000).

The role of politics in the intensified interest of white male writers in Africa, its peoples and its wildlife is of particular importance and I will try to elucidate some of the political implications of this new engagement with Africa. Trying to cope with the fact that they have lost political power in South Africa after decades of white rule, Afrikaner men have to rethink and reinvent a male identity that is not intimately connected to power and domination. A rediscovery of nature and a reengagement with the peoples of Africa seem to offer a way out of the impasse. I will return to this issue but would first like to focus briefly on the representations of the African Other in the history of Afrikaans literature.

Afrikaans Colonial Literature: The African 'Barbarian' and the 'Jolly Hottentot'

Representations of the African Other have never been absent from Afrikaans literary works. In the first decades of the twentieth century, two images of the African Other predominated in Afrikaans literature. Jakes Gerwel (1988:21f) identifies the image of the 'Jolly Hottentot' ('Jollie Hotnot') as a frequent stereotype to describe so-called Cape coloured men. According to this stereotype Cape coloured men were unreliable workers with a predilection for jokes and mirth. Very often they would be portrayed as a banal echo of the activities of the white Self. The fiction of Melt Brink, G.R. von Wielligh and D.F. Malherbe demonstrates how the 'Otherness' of the Self is inscribed in the body and colonial identity of the coloured man (see Bhabha 1986:xv–xvi; Roos 1998:42f).

In portrayals of black people in Afrikaans fiction from 1930 to 1960, the image of the 'Jolly Hottentot' was extended to black African men. White rule was easier to justify if the rhetoric of fiction could be manipulated so as to represent the colonial Other as an irresponsible joker, unfit for political office. Historical novels dealing with the rise of the Afrikaner nation employed the stereotypical image of the black man as a barbarian. In the work of Mikro, G.H. Franz and P.J. Schoeman, this stereotype was replaced by more nuanced representations of black people (van Rensburg 1971:31f). By the 1930s, Afrikaans novelists such as Jochem van Bruggen had also started to explore the effects of urbanisation on Africans (see Botha 1999:649-651). However, up to the literary renewal brought about by the Sestiger movement, blacks would continue to be portrayed as workers showing respect for the white ruler and a readiness to serve him in humble submission (Van Rensburg 1971:34).

It was only from the 1960s that black and so-called coloured writers and poets started to write Afrikaans fiction with a voice of their own, without emulating the literary discourse of white writers. In the recent work of Matthews Phosa, A.H.M. Scholtz, E.K.M. Dido and S.P. Benjamin, the issue of a black or coloured identity becomes a focal point. Dido's (2000) *'n Stringetjie blou krale* (*A String of Blue Beads*) is a critical reflection on the racial taboos that have contributed to the formation of identity among the so-called coloureds in the Western Cape. In Dido's novel, Nancy Karelse faces the rejection of her own family and community when she embarks upon a voyage to rediscover her Xhosa ancestry. The contemporary works of black and coloured writers are very often attempts to consolidate a sense of selfhood that may eventually reach a point beyond the racialised post-colonial dialectic between Self and Other.

Die werfbobbejaan by Alexander Strachan

In my account of the manifestations of white masculinity in relation to the African Other in contemporary Afrikaans fiction, I would first like to concentrate on Alexander Strachan's novel, *Die werfbobbejaan* (which can be translated as *The Yard Baboon* or *The Home Baboon*), which was published in 1993. It is the story of a woman, Khera, who spends a year in a hotel in Zululand in order to write the biography of a mysterious man, referred to as 'the game catcher', who is later revealed as her former husband. On the hotel property an aggressive baboon is kept on a chain as some sort of pet.

When the baboon escapes, a hunter is called in to track it down and to kill it. This hunter turns out to be the game catcher, Khera's former husband, to whom she is still attracted. The game catcher follows the spoor of the baboon and in a first confrontation it bites him in the shoulder blade. After some days of tracking, he eventually finds the baboon entangled in the bushes. He lifts his rifle to shoot it but a

visionary experience and nausea prevent him from killing the animal. Cold and wounded, he returns to the hotel, where he makes passionate love to Khera, who is instructed to dig her fingers into his wound. Then he leaves Khera for an unknown destination in the 'north' and dies a solitary death in a sod house, having been weakened by his wound and finally torn apart by his own dogs. The description of his death overlaps with the narration of the death of the baboon that is also attacked by dogs. The death of the game catcher is mourned by a community of African people who bury him in an elaborate ceremony. After the burial, his body is exhumed from its grave by the sorcerer of death, uMthakathi, who resurrects him as uMkhovu, a zombie and sinister consort of uMthakathi.

Strachan has been described as an Afrikaans Hemingway due to his preference for a tormented and enigmatic male protagonist who is simultaneously a writer, hunter, soldier, womaniser and sensitive artist (De Lange 1990:4; Van Coller 1999:621). In *Die werfbobbejaan*, which can be read as the third part of Strachan's trilogy comprising as well *A World Without Borders* (*'n Wêreld sonder grense*) and *The Jackal Hunter* (*Die jakkalsjagter*), the same protagonist emerges as a dominating presence in the novel even though Khera is the main focaliser in the narrative. The game catcher makes an occasional appearance in the novel but it is only in the description of the hunt that the narrator awards him a central position in the telling of events. However, in the writings of Khera, the explicit references to the enactment of a 'male myth' (1994:76) leave little doubt that the novel is ultimately concerned with male identity.

The dominance of the male character in *Die werfbobbejaan* is most apparent in the extension of his identity, with the effect of assimilating a number of other characters into the realm of the male enigma. The young singer who visits the hotel, the newly circumcised young worker and the baboon are all associated with the game catcher. Towards the end of the novel, Khera asks herself in what form the game catcher will return in future. She considers the young worker and the singer as two possible re-embodiments (1994:161). Significantly, both the worker and the singer are in some way involved in the initiation rites of masculinity. The circumcised worker, bearing the fresh signs of his recent admission to manhood by his community, is challenged by the rest of the workers to prove his masculinity one more time by confronting the baboon which had snatched away the blanket that covered his body. Khera is tempted to initiate the young singer sexually. She consciously links the singer and the worker to a 'male myth' which is reminiscent of Jung's theory on the archetypal constitution of a collective unconscious (Jung 1969 and Klopper 1996). According to Khera, the male myth reaffirms itself time after time: 'It becomes impossible to escape from it—an ancient pattern too deeply entrenched in the subconscious of the community' (1994:76).

The baboon is also represented as a male animal. Furthermore, it shares the game catcher's desire for Khera. This becomes apparent when it gets hold of her panties and gets an erection (1994:103), whereupon the narrator dwells on the baboon's desire to mate with her (1994:106). The identification between the baboon and the game catcher is not only striking in the simultaneous narration of identical deaths. During the hunt it is stated that hunter and prey 'exchange their roles in their thoughts: the one imagines himself in the place of the other, trying to determine what his opponent would do, which route he would follow and what places he would rather avoid' (1994:134). This statement is affirmed when the baboon puts itself in the shoes of his pursuer by leading him astray to the lair of a poisonous snake. In his turn, the hunter settles down to rest on the same spot where the baboon had been resting earlier during the hunt.

The male subject as an omnipresent being is manifested in the moments when Khera senses a supernatural presence. During a fishing trip, she has an eerie feeling that the game catcher is spying on her from the thicket (1994:31,34). When she works on her writing she sometimes senses his presence, 'as if he wants to emerge from the words, to take possession of the room' (1994:14). At other times Khera is haunted by the impression that he is manipulating her in her writing, as if 'the course of the plot had been determined in advance, [her] role only instrumental, the writing up of a story that had already been written' (1994:18). Van Coller (1999:627) regards the game catcher as a Zeus-like figure who can hide his true identity by adopting many different guises, thus confusing his wife Hera (read: Khera).

In my view, the imposition of the game catcher as an all-encompassing and appropriating presence is a concerted attempt to stress the power of male subjectivity, as an always recurring mythical presence inscribed in the collective unconscious, and to colonise the Other (young men, black men, women, even animals). In the light of the psychoanalytic insight that the formation of identity is an 'ever problematic process of access to an image of totality' (Bhabha 1986:xvii), one sees in *Die werfbobbejaan* an extreme example of the totalising force of the male subject. In fact, the novel corroborates Luce Irigaray's contention that subjectivity as such is a male creation that strives towards the attainment of its totalising objectives by consistently denying women access to subjectivity. According to Irigaray (1996:61-63; Butler 1993:9), both the subject and the Other are essentially masculine and form the foundations of a closed phallocentric discourse that attains its totalising objectives by the exclusion of the feminine.

Any totalising impulse in the male subject could be seen as an attempt to construct an illusion of wholeness so as to conjure away the lack of being that underlies the subject. According to Lacan, the subconscious cannot be seen in

isolation from language with its multiplicity and dispersing effects that deny the subject any claim to wholeness. Lack is therefore the fundamental condition of the subject (cited in Silverman 1992:4). As a result of the confrontation with language and signification, the subject experiences an unavoidable castration, its entry into a regime of lack or symbolic castration. Subsequently, the subject musters the ego and fantasy to cover up the lack or void. Human identity, which comes into being through fantasy and imagination, finally compensates for the lack that underlies the subject. However, there are times when the illusion of wholeness collapses, confronting the adult individual with the fundamental void or lack that informs his or her subjectivity (Silverman 1992:35). Usually, this leads to an existential crisis. A similar experience seems to befall the game catcher when he takes aim to shoot the baboon.

The recovery of a basic and more physical masculinity during the hunt is one of the most common topoi in hunting literature (Schwenger 1984:102), but the game catcher is in fact confronted with a visionary experience on the hunting field that undermines his male identity. As he takes aim with his rifle, the baboon opens its mouth, whereupon the game catcher is flooded with visionary images from his childhood past, images about sexuality as well as more enigmatic images about nature and death (Visagie 1996/1997:139). He is apparently confronted with the images that have played a role in the construction of his subjectivity. However, it becomes clear that all the images are tainted by a certain cloudiness and a consistent deathly quality that overwhelm him with dizziness, nausea and finally a fit of vomiting (1994:145).

The images that form the basis of the game catcher's male identity are revealed as severely tainted by destruction and impurity. In my opinion, the game catcher is brought to the edge by the images precisely as pointers to his own death and destruction. The values and memories from his past that formed the basis for the construction of his male identity have been exposed as insufficient to cover up the resurgent lack that underlies his subjectivity. This visionary experience is apparently one of the reasons for his failure to complete the hunting ritual with the killing of the prey.

The game catcher's failure on the hunting grounds does not prevent him from returning to the hotel to demand sexual fulfilment from Khera, the woman who is 'the prize' (1994:76) that awaits the victor in the ritual of masculine supremacy. However, at the moment of sexual penetration the male subject is once again overwhelmed by the images that emerged from the mouth of the baboon (1994:152). None of the motions that traditionally reinforce male identity seem to provide satisfaction as the protagonist is repeatedly beleaguered by the lack at the base of his subjectivity.

Even on his deathbed, the game catcher is still driven to follow the motions that are dictated by the male myth. He awaits his solitary death in a sod house (1994:166) just like the jackal hunter, the symbolic father of the game catcher in *Die jakkalsjagter*, which is the second part of Strachan's trilogy. At this stage of the novel, the narrator refers to the male protagonist simply as 'the man' and no longer as 'the game catcher'. This suggests that he is not primarily a character bound to a specific context. The game catcher is merely one manifestation among many of the male myth lodged in the collective 'subconscious of society' (1994:76) which must be re-enacted continuously.

In one of the many forward-looking passages in the writings of the game catcher that Khera studies in her biographical research, it is suggested that no fewer than nine oxen (1994:157) are slaughtered by the African community that takes care of his funeral. Within this community he is described as '[t]he wanderer with hunting rifles and books, the one that carried a restlessness with him, one who has captured the imagination of the young men, caused them to start talking of leaving' (1994:157). The circumcised worker is another young man who, after his contact with the game catcher, considers abandoning the 'superstitions of Zululand' (1994:161) to find a new life as a student in Johannesburg.

A system of cultural reciprocity, with the masculine as a focal point, seems to develop towards the end of the novel. The young black men yearn for a life that will take them away from traditional society, whereas the white wanderer receives an African funeral and becomes part of a sinister exhumation ritual involving uMthakathi, the evil witch of death in traditional Zulu culture, and her or his familiar, uMkhovu (Berglund 1974:266,279). The hierarchy that privileged the white male Self in relation to the African Other in colonial literature seems to get blurred. Strachan seems to aim at an erasure of this hierarchical relation in order to establish a transcultural myth of masculinity. Masculinity emerges as a phenomenon which has an unchanging integrity and definition despite its various cultural manifestations. Strachan represents these cultural forms of masculinity as, at most, fleeting projections on the surface of a phenomenon that fundamentally does not accommodate difference and that possesses a consolidated transhistorical and transcultural shape and purpose.

Although witches in traditional Zulu culture are mostly women, Strachan chooses a male figure, referred to as a sorcerer, to embody *ubuthakathi*. (According to Berglund (1976:266) *ubuthakathi* 'refers to an incarnate power geared towards harm and destruction which manifests itself through humans'.) This may be interpreted as part of the imposition of a gendered economy in the novel that is devoted to the masculine. Zululand itself is described as a predominantly male environment where hunting, drinking, fishing and rugby seem to be the main

interests of the community (1994:63). It is also an environment where even the white farmers experience Zulu folklore as a reality (1994:17,55): the myths of *imbulo*, the big lizard or Cape monitor that is always looking for milk to drink and that can only be killed with boiling water (1994:91) and, of course, the beliefs about uMthakathi, the evil witch who rides a baboon facing backwards with his finger lodged in the anus of the animal (1994:19,122).

The game catcher's association with the baboon leads to sinister tales among the hotel staff during his pursuit of the baboon. They describe him as uMthakathi (1994:107,113) or as uMkhovu (1994:146), uMthakathi's familiar. Early in the novel it is also suggested that he spies on Khera from the bushes like impaka, the wild cat (1994:34-36), another familiar of uMtakathi (Berglund 1976:279). But the passages describing his dying provide the most explicit links between him and the evil forces of death (1994:19f,158f).

The scenes in which the game catcher is reborn as the zombie, uMkhovu, 'the one who is known as iMfakambili—he who will have two lives, who will appear again, who will die a second death' (1994:159)—are of particular significance. On the one hand, the reappearance of the male character (as anticipated by Khera in 1994:161) may seem like a further extension of the omnipresence and permanence of the man as bearer of the male myth. In this interpretation, the masculine emerges as a supreme presence, a logical consequence of the systematic projection of the masculine onto the Other, whether black or white, male or female, human or animal. According to this view, masculinity is represented as a totalising force in the novel without a hint of irony or critical intent from the author.

This said, one should not forget that *Die werfbobbejaan* was published at a time when postmodernism was the dominant literary trend in Afrikaans writing. It is a novel that gives great prominence to textuality and it displays an intense and self-conscious preoccupation with subjectivity. *Die jakkalsjagter*, Strachan's first novel, published in 1990, is regarded as one of the most significant postmodernist texts in Afrikaans (Du Plooy 1993; Lombard 1991; Smuts 1993). The claim of the postmodernist theorist, Linda Hutcheon (1988:20), about the 'paradox of postmodernism', seems to be a suitable approach to the passages relating the reappearance of the male character after his death. According to Hutcheon (1988:3, 20), postmodernist writers install a fictional illusion and then proceed to subvert the very illusion that they had so carefully constructed. The object is ultimately to problematise rather than to take a definitive stand on any specific issue.

In my opinion, Strachan generates the illusion of a totalising male subjectivity which systematically projects itself onto the Other, whereupon he cleverly undermines this 'unshakeable' male myth by raising the male character from the dead in the form of a zombie, the abject and evil familiar of a witch. In addition he systematically reveals the lack that underlies the subjectivity of the male protagonist. When the already fragmented and destabilised male subject reappears as a manifestation of the deathly and evil pair, uMkovu and uMthakathi, one struggles to see this as an enhancement of the male myth in any positive way. Masculine supremacy as elaborated in the first part of the novel is exposed as fundamentally suspect and undesirable upon its resuscitation in such a perverted form (see also Van Coller 1999:628). The association between the male subject and the undesirable figures, uMkhovu and uMthakathi, leaves one with the impression that *Die werfbobbejaan* aims towards a critique of masculinity. Notably, no proposals are made for the construction of an alternative male identity that will separate itself from the discourse of totality that seems to have death and destruction as its logical consequence. Strachan's association of the protagonist, the embodiment of the male myth, with deathly and destructive figures seems to suggest that he has a very pessimistic view of contemporary masculinity, a view which excludes any prospect of redeeming masculinity from its dark impasse.

It is interesting that Strachan returns to the more ancient Zulu myths that have lost some of their relevance in contemporary African culture, particularly urban culture. The engagement with these older myths may be indicative of a conservative nostalgia for the 'original' truths of Africa, apparently untainted by Western influences. The hybridity which characterises contemporary cultural forms in Africa may be too volatile for a clear cut, unfettered interrogation of the African Other by white writers. This may explain Strachan's preference for the myths of precolonial Africa. The result of this engagement with ancient myths is the representation of African culture as exotic and as radically Other. To a certain extent, Strachan reduces the exoticism in his positing of the transcultural male myth which blends together white and black masculinity. However, the totalising nature of this strategy brings about the othering of the feminine.

Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to return to the question of why Afrikaans male writers such as Alexander Strachan, Piet van Rooyen, Johann Botha, Chris Barnard and Christiaan Bakkes show such intense interest in Africa and the African Other in their more recent work. *Die werfbobbejaan* bears the signs of the time when it was written, namely the transitional period just before the first democratic elections in South Africa with its '[s]ocial and political turbulence, a transition to a new dispensation' (1994:138). The death knell for white male supremacy in South Africa was becoming a reality. A new definition of Afrikaner masculinity had to take shape to compensate for the severing of the bond between white masculinity and political

power. Many older Afrikaans writers reacted to this challenge by returning to history in their work, but a significant number of male novelists embarked upon a new exploration of Africa and its peoples in what seems to be an attempt to find a new sense of place in the changing circumstances.

These explorations are hesitant and are more often than not accompanied by many of the stereotypes that characterised representations of the African Other throughout the history of Afrikaans literature. It is noticeable, however, that the male writers reflect self-consciously on their condition as white men in Africa. The politics of being a white man in South Africa very often takes a central position in their reflections. The anxieties of a new and uncertain future as an increasingly disempowered minority receive great scrutiny in their attempts to find a home within African society.

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The Politics of Belonging:
Socialisation and Identity among Children of Indian Origin in Secondary Schools in Durban

Anand Singh

Introduction
As the era of racial and ethnic separateness (apartheid) in South Africa moves further into the annals of history, the new era of integration is being steadily entrenched. While apartheid was internationally condemned and popularly opposed inside the country, a *laissez faire* type of integration is gradually replacing this system of social rigidity. Apartheid was an exaggerated form of political, economic and social insulation that forbade racial intermingling and sanctioned the existence of separate amenities and living spaces through legislation (Group Areas Act of 1950). However abhorrent apartheid was, it should not be construed that the majority of people had a natural aversion for maintaining social boundaries and a natural inclination to intermingle. In reality, people in all kinds of heterogeneous situations have a proclivity towards demonstrating bonds that emerge out of a sense of 'sameness', as documented in a wide range of literature (Enloe 1973; Levine & Campbell 1972; Eriksen 1993; Miall 1994; Alcock 1994; Pajic 1994; Pries 2000; Saporito & Lareau 1999; Westwood & Phizacklea 2000). Among these references Saporito and Lareau's (1999) work shows the closest relationship to the data that this paper presents. Their fieldwork, carried out in a densely populated urban school district in the north-eastern United States, supplied them with compelling evidence that race, particularly among Whites, is a powerful force in guiding family choices for school selection. While their paper addresses conceptual and theoretical issues, the evidence is not presented within a theoretical framework—an issue upon which this paper places emphasis.

Two respected authorities on migration and nationhood, Westwood and Phizacklea, focus on the disorienting effects of space and time which migration creates, on how migration affects our understanding of national affiliations and the nation state and on the impact of cross national economic relations on everyday life.

The nexus of their contribution lies in their attempt to show how people who cross borders and live increasingly diasporic lives still seek to recreate semblances of their places of origin in order to engender a 'politics of belonging'. Although not covering transnational issues, this paper follows in the spirit of Westwood and Phizacklea's theory of the politics of belonging, in an exercise that illustrates how the end of South Africa's era of apartheid does not necessarily imply the end of insular boundaries based on race. The paper is produced out of interviews, particularly with standard sixes (Grade eights) from what used to be exclusively Indian and White schools during apartheid. The choice of grade is deliberate in that it is from this stage onwards that children begin to determine their career paths and become more conscious of their sense of belonging. Through interviews, observations and conversational analysis, this paper presents data that reflect upon the mindsets of middle class standard six Indian pupils and the values that they imbibe and play out in their lives at school and at home. Conventional categories of race—White, Indian, Coloured and African—are also used here for similar reasons to those of Fedderke and de Kadt (2000:260) who said:

> We consider it important to record the information under these contrived rubrics since the system of racial estates and statutory race classification had profound implications for the administration of educational matters and for the distribution of educational resources and opportunities.

Fedderke and de Kadt's paper illustrates, through history and statistical analysis, how the educational process was strongly affected by racial factors. But their paper does not focus on contemporary social factors in schools, nor does it illustrate how this history has influenced contemporary patterns of socialisation and how it will impact on the future.

Expectations and Parental Control
The transition from primary to secondary school among middle class Indian families in Durban is often accompanied by a carefully thought out process that is guided by opinions and advice from family and friends. Embedded in these initiatives are conscious efforts to selectively choose environments that are consistent with middle class norms of school character, reputation, performance in student pass rates and—very importantly—the dominant racial category in the school. Very often such class preferences are closely linked to racial preferences as well. It has become state policy that parents should send their children to the schools that are closest to their places of residence. However, this policy has not been followed since its inception—

particularly by White and to a lesser extent by Indian parents. While White parents ignored the policy and insisted that their children be admitted to traditionally White schools, many Indian parents have also made concerted efforts to avoid sending their children to schools where there has been evidence of increasing numbers of African pupils. In formerly White dominated Group Areas that were close to Indian dominated suburbs, which had schools with mainly Indian pupils, White parents refused to enrol their children there. This situation offers an important challenge to anthropologists and other social scientists that seek to understand how the racial identities of the past are reproduced by patterns of socialisation among teenage school going children.

Expectations of children by middle class Indian parents in Durban are entrenched through generally strict forms of social control that place emphasis on various issues. The common issues are the type of schools that are attended, the subjects that are chosen and the levels at which they are taken (higher or standard grades), the choice of the children's friends and their patterns of socialisation after school hours, as well as during weekends and holidays. In the first three issues emphasis is on gaining control of children in the hope that they will make careful choices for entry into tertiary education. High school life is widely dominated by vigilant parental management of children's time, especially with respect to school homework and extra tuition in subjects relevant to children's tertiary career choices. At least five subjects appeared most frequently in responses to questions about current performance and future goals with career opportunities in mind. Mathematics, physics, technical drawing, computer science, economics and accountancy were the most widely taken subjects—which are effectively building blocks towards high earning careers. The types of infrastructural development in many middle class areas do not cater for reasonable access to public transport between homes and schools. For this reason parents' motor vehicles or lift clubs are the means by which children are ferried to their schools. This dependency relationship in transport has two advantages for parents who monitor their children's movements closely. First, it is an important control mechanism that ensures that children attend school and return home within expected times and, second, it allows parents to monitor homework and provide their children with personal attention.

The choice of companionship is also closely monitored and structured, largely around gender and age groups. Cross gender relationships are encouraged to remain at the level of acquaintanceships and children are expected to socialise with friends of their age groups. Friends are often from within the neighbourhoods and the same schools, although contact after school hours is minimal and mostly non-existent. Attendance at birthday parties and sports events, though infrequent, comprised the most widely cited situations that permit a measure of casual socialising. These events, shared with school and district friends, occurred no more than five times in the year, usually during weekends, and chaperoned by parents.

School Choices and Mind Sets
There are three types of schools, where the primary determinant for entry is the fees, from which South Africans have to choose:

- private schools that may or may not require boarding and are priced at levels that are only attainable by families with upper-middle/upper class incomes;
- previously all-white schools that converted to Model C (commonly referred to as 'fee paying schools'), where fees were substantially raised and state subsidy is reduced to 75% of the schools' requirements—thereby curbing the pupil intake and restricting class sizes; and
- totally state subsidised schools that have significantly reduced school fees.

The options for most South Africans, including people of Indian origin, are therefore restricted. However, there is a point of convergence generally in the types of subjects that are taught in schools. While students have choices to make from the subjects that are offered and in which they may choose to complete their schooling, the choices are generally standardised throughout the country. In the cases where pupils aim for tertiary education it is usually in universities, technikons or technical colleges. The point of divergence, however, emerges in several factors, *viz.* the resources in schools—especially computers, laboratories and sports facilities, commitment by school managements and teachers to their daily work and the environments within which the schools are located. Complaints of varying magnitudes have surfaced several times during the course of this research, which were counter-checked in varying ways to establish their veracity. The common complaint about Indian dominated schools was that teacher morale and commitment has been eroding ever since transformation of education began in 1994, when Indian teachers were made to feel insecure about their jobs in urban areas—threatened by the state to be relocated in distant rural areas. While there was a general upholding of the fabric of norms and responsibilities in education, the commitment was restricted to academic responsibilities only. But the perception of behaviour of pupils and the quality of education did not rank as high as those of White dominated schools. Sport in Indian schools, largely through the lack of facilities and reduced school fees, is not taken as seriously as in White dominated schools. The comparatively exorbitant school fees in these White dominated schools permits the hiring of coaches for certain codes of sports on a part time basis, thereby relieving the pressure on

teachers to carry out these tasks. In Indian dominated schools, teachers are apathetic towards spending more time in schools than is required for classroom work, especially if they are not getting paid for it. Their justification for minimal interest in sport is also influenced by the political environment in which they function. In response, an Indian principal believed that Indian parents' decisions in education are reflective of the situation that Indians in general find themselves in in South Africa:

> The Indian in this country must first fight for survival—and his survival lies in his/her ability to focus on the best possible education he can get to enter the job market at an advantage over the other race groups. Giving equal weight to sport and education is a luxury we cannot afford in this climate of affirmative action. The Whites are in control economically, so they are creating space for their own kind, and the Africans are getting the best positions whether they qualify for it or not. So for our children to make it in the world they must excel in their academic work and just give sport a secondary position (Interview with principal, 13 February 2001).

Distinct differences between the standard sixes in predominantly White schools and predominantly Indian schools emerge when their knowledge about sports and sports stars is discussed. Pupils of the former category of schools better knew the details and dynamics of games such as cricket, rugby, hockey and swimming—a tradition that was established during apartheid. Much of this is attributed to the fact that sports in these schools are taken with a similar level of seriousness to academia. At least three out of the five school days in the week are dedicated to sport after the regular six-hour classroom work—either in practice or in competition with neighbouring schools. Pupils' interests and competitiveness in their chosen codes of sport were substantially higher than in the Indian dominated schools. The orientation they receive in former White schools contributes towards a significantly broader range of experiences and preparedness for life's challenges. With Olympic size swimming pools and a minimum of three well maintained sports fields and equipment, pupils are provided with a conducive atmosphere to engage in their sport preferences. On the contrary, Indian dominated schools have minimal space and equipment for sports in their fields. Neither principals nor teachers have the same level of enthusiasm to encourage their pupils to indulge in sport on a regular basis. Most if not all pupils leave the school premises once lessons are over.

However, one common point of convergence among the pupils from both sets of schools was the way in which international cricket was followed. Most pupils, like the adults at international matches, tended to support teams in a complex manner. Support for South Africa's international team was conditional upon which country they played at particular times. For instance, a match between India and South Africa inevitably splits support along racial lines. People of Indian origin tend to support India, particularly Hindus, while Muslims often to tend remain ambivalent about the match. The reverse is the situation in a match between Pakistan and South Africa. South Africa's history of White privilege and exclusion of Africans, Indians and Coloureds from competitive sports is still a point of reference and a factor that continues to feed into the inclination towards ethnic and racial exclusiveness. It is around such mindsets that the issues of ethnic and racial boundaries are overtly and emotively articulated.

Adaptation and Integration

Exploring the characteristics that determine standard sixes' adaptation and integration into high school life requires an intimate understanding of family values—determined largely by religious, linguistic and class status, minority fears in South Africa and the history of the racially based politics of exclusion. These factors require insider based participant observation that is also based on covert methods of extracting information that would otherwise not be revealed. Although highly contested and controversial, the covert method of extracting information tends to produce information in a spontaneous and uninhibited manner. However, the covert method was initially often unintended in that the groups of people among whom I often found myself took me to be of similar orientation to them. It was through silent participation in conversations and witnessing actions at an intimate level as part of a group that I ascertained how children were advised and prepared to enter into high school. Their orientation from their domestic domains is a complex mental preparation that converges towards creating a symbiotic relationship among recognising their individuality, meeting family obligations, keeping up the family tradition of hard work or commendable scholarship and taking these further through educational achievements. These are generally lessons of oral communication, frequently repeated and meant to inspire children, instil in them a sense of ethnic and racial identity and history and prepare them for schooling in mixed racial environments. References to the hardships of grandparents, parents and Indians as indentured labourers, the nobility of their religious practices and their frequent encounters with racial prejudice—past and present—are intended to sustain their social insularity, levels of determination and achievement.

The mindset that is created in this type of process is carefully manufactured through the interaction with friends, relatives and other Indian pupils, in order to adapt to and integrate into junior high school, but also to do so with cautious and selective minds. Their preparation for integration into a mixed schooling

environment is not to enter into a racial melting pot, dissolving their ethnic or racial identities, but to help them adapt to competitive situations, which is necessary in a country where post-apartheid transformation is still based on racially determined criteria. While Whites were politically and economically privileged for more than three hundred years, Africans have done so now and in turn aspire to economic domination. This leaves minorities such as people of Indian origin and Coloureds (people of mixed descent) in a perpetual state of uncertainty. The situation with affirmative action is that although in law it caters for the three previously disadvantaged groups *viz.* Africans, Coloureds and Indians, preference for jobs and entry into rewarding medical fields of study is given mainly to Africans—thereby recreating another sense of racial exclusivity in the era of post-apartheid transformation.

From Junior High to Senior High School: Prospects for Interracial Friendships

Collection of data for this aspect of pupil relationships was first based upon observation over two week periods in 2000 and 2001 at five schools during the two breaks that pupils are given during a normal day. While socialisation during these periods was relaxed and casual, the clusters and groups of pupils were distinctly racially based. In the three predominantly White schools where there was a smaller population of Indian pupils that was however bigger than that of African pupils, short periods of jocular interaction occurred between White and Indian or African pupils. But this was restricted to an exchange of a few words rather than a prolonged period of casual interaction. There was more frequent interaction between African and Indian pupils than between White pupils and either of the two other groups. In the two predominantly Indian schools, where there was a complete absence of White pupils but a small number of African pupils, the pattern of socialisation was similar in that African and Indian pupils also socialised separately. Here too the atmosphere presented an outward sense of the congeniality expected of school environments. But after more frequent contact and through more intensive interviewing, pupils tended to speak more openly about their reservations about freer racial intermingling and the social distance they still tended to feel from their White and African counterparts. Their predominant exposure to life was still entrenched in family based values, adherence to their respective religions (Hinduism, Christianity and Islam) and acquired tastes that had a particularly strong ethnic basis. Food was often a point of reference to the kind of company they kept. While Hindu and Muslim children were being brought up on mainly oriental cuisine, Christian children—particularly White, were being brought up differently. Not having lunch with White children for instance was also a deliberate avoidance relation in that many swapped and shared lunches. To Hindu and Muslim children doing so with Christian/White children meant being exposed to eating beef, pork and food that is not halal, a warning that most children claimed to heed from their parents.

It was after acquiring these preliminary data that more extensive and intensive interviewing took place. Although students from standard six (Grade eights) were the main focus, some discussion took place with pupils from the higher grades to cross check information and test for inconsistencies and variations. Socialisation among pupils was generally age based—with most of them drawing their companionship from within their classes or standards. They mostly entered into high school with friends from primary schools or from their neighbourhoods. In a sense this reinforced the pattern of socialisation among them—they stuck to whom they knew best. However, the pattern of racially based clusters of friends was evident throughout the standards/age groups in the schools. It was apparent that pupils were not inclined to move out of their social groups or to ignore race as a factor in their relationships. They were making conscious decisions about whom they socialised with and when they might ignore boundaries. For instance, the greatest amount of inter-racial contact occurred in an effortless and spontaneous manner. A number of children conceded that they befriended many people across the colour lines and that sport had been one of the areas in which a reasonable amount of camaraderie had been able to develop.

The notion of difference and 'us and them' is often reinforced by the way in which teaching staff and school governing bodies are constituted. In the predominantly White schools staff were still predominantly White, while in the predominantly Indian schools staff were still predominantly Indian. The absence of mixed staff perpetuated the racially based perceptions of schools as either Indian or White. One way of ascertaining when these perceptions rise to the fore among the pupils was to analyse their reactions in times of disappointment with their teachers. Indian pupils from the former White schools still referred to their teachers as 'those White teachers' when they showed dissatisfaction over personal grievances. In the former Indian schools, however, the Indian pupils did not use such racial tags in times of their disappointment, although the descriptions of their disliked teachers were no less aggressive, especially when a teacher was characterised as lazy, uncaring and/or incompetent. While Indian pupils in the former White schools were either unsure or ambivalent about having Indian teachers to teach them, Indian parents were still generally adamant that the approach of the Indian teachers to teaching was preferable. Most parents drew from their own experiences in their childhood days and recalled with nostalgia the quality of education they had received. But this was often coupled with their awareness of the deteriorating conditions and low morale in state sponsored schools, of which Indian dominated

schools were a part. Their attraction to the White dominated schools lay in the discipline, resources and positive publicity that they received. But it was also clear that it was a status issue to send their children to these schools, although none admitted it. In the Indian schools, however, despite disappointments expressed about teachers, the pupils were generally happy with the *status quo* and more ambivalent about changing their teacher composition than their Indian counterparts in the previously White schools. Complaints about teachers were sometimes strong and consistent from a range of interviews that were carried out independently between individuals or groups. At other times pupils' criticisms of teachers were found to be unfounded and often lay in their own apathetic attitudes towards work in school. Their pride and sense of belonging to their schools emerged when pupils from former Indian schools compared their matric results (Grade twelve) with those of more prestigious White dominated schools. Apart from the pupils of some private schools, who write an independent international matric examination, all South African matric pupils write the same public examination in all the provinces. Although one of the Indian dominated schools had only one matric pupil with outstanding results (6 distinctions) for the year 2000, and the neighbouring Indian dominated school had five such pupils, they felt an equal sense of pride of belonging to their schools. These students immediately assumed the position of role models and provided a basis for comparison with the White dominated schools where the fees were significantly higher and the facilities in greater abundance and of significantly better quality. They provided a platform from which academic achievements could be measured, advertised and touted for future enrolments. Performance in academia and discipline are the two issues that have risen to the point of respectability in Indian schools.

Conclusion: Implications for Future Patterns of Socialising and Non-racialism in South Africa

The increased racial integration in schools since the general election in 1994 marked the end of an era of White privilege and segregation in all aspects of South Africa's political, economic, social and cultural lifestyles. Through the more than forty years of institutionalised and legislated forms of separate existence, the country's four major racial groups lived and mainly accepted the boundaries imposed upon them, notwithstanding their own boundaries spawned out of their own religious, cultural and domestic preferences. The choices of schools by parents and the patterns of companionship in schools, after school hours and during weekends and holidays provide a strong symbolic message about the sense of belonging among children in schools. The information reflects consistency with Saporito and Lareau's (1999)

account of the multiple dimensions of race in framing educational choice in a densely populated multiracial suburb in the north-eastern USA. It simultaneously fits into Westwood's and Phizacklea's paradigm of the 'politics of belonging', though the circumstances of our respective researches are different. While the focus has been restricted to children of Indian origin, the exclusiveness they portrayed was symptomatic of the broader pattern of socialisation by children of other racial categories. Collectively, their patterns of socialisation were symbolic of the inclination by people of similar orientations to remain distinct. It resonates with Gellner's (1983) point about the situation in Turkey—that the attempt by the Ottoman Empire at nation building did not lead to a common consciousness. The seven major groups, viz. the Turk, Greek, Slav, Arab, Armenian, Syrian and Kurd, are as distinct today as they were when nation building first began in Turkey. Likewise, the Chicago School's research into state sponsored programs for racial equality showed that race was as strong in the 1990s as it had been in the early 1900s (Eriksen 1993). People of African origin in the USA still maintain an identity that is intended to demonstrate racial differences between themselves and other racial and ethnic populations, despite the fact that reference to them changed over the years from Negro, to Black, to African American.

The new era of fair and equal access to state resources is actually meant to erode racial and ethnic biases and confront them with the apparent intention of destroying them. However, out of sheer necessity, transformation in South Africa has to continue to address the issue of race by allocating more resources to those deemed to be the most disadvantaged segment in the country *viz.* Africans. Herein lies the contradiction in the processes accompanying transformation, where contestations for resources emerge also from the rank and file of those classified Indian and Coloured who have arguably been equally marginalised and whose residential areas and facilities have been equally deficient in resources. While this situation applies mainly to the working and underclasses, it draws solidarity from the middle and upper classes of the previously designated race groups, reinforcing the proclivity towards a sense of belonging. So while affordability and proximity to schools have theoretically become the new points of access, they are vitiated by tendencies towards in-group sentiments. The end of the old order not only implies the death of the repressive past, but also the birth of new fears and anxieties about protecting ethnic and racial boundaries. Increased integration is one of the biggest threats to the survival of such boundaries and it therefore generates new forms of adaptation to maintain a sense of belonging among people of common origin—as grade eight pupils exhibit in their patterns of socialisation.

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Critical Reflections on Language Curriculum Design in South Africa

Robert Balfour

Introduction

As a field worthy of academic interest and research, English language curriculum development is under-recognised in South African critical literature because of its perceived remedial and 'lower order' status (Wright 1990:8; Lanham 1995:37). It falls comfortably within neither applied linguistics nor education, since it contains elements of both. Language curriculum design, and I am simplifying here, is concerned with developing suitable pedagogic modes and learning programmes which allow for accelerated language learning in institutions where English is the medium of instruction; hardly inspiring stuff.

I hope to demonstrate, however, that language curriculum design can become more interesting if it is properly contextualised to demonstrate some awareness of two critical research areas. Within the limits of this paper I wish, first, to discuss some English language research pertaining to the particular academic and learner needs of an educational institution: the University of Natal, Durban (UND). Second, I intend raising awareness of similar language curriculum research developments in South Africa and abroad which seek to render English a more accessible and useful tool for intercultural communication. Finally, I devote the body of this paper to a description of how the process of critical reflection led to the development and trial of an English language course at UND. Critical reflection in the context of language curriculum development is a necessarily informed *process* which seeks to critique, but also to draw constructively from, a variety of expertise in order to develop capacity and expertise of its own. In my own case, this process took the form of a research project (2000-2001), which had as one of its components the design of an English language course for first-year university students.

This said, establishing the possibilities and perimeters for this paper presents difficulties. For example, an attempt to compare the results/products of one

initiative with others is fruitless, since time lapse, sample selection, student demographics and socio-economic as well as geographical situation would render this kind of study problematic. Though comparison on the basis of examination or assignment results is not possible, it is possible to compare projects in terms of principles used for design, methodology and aims. It is for these reasons that I have decided to use the development of the English Language Course at UND as a fixed standard of comparison against which related projects may be examined, to determine the ways in which they are similar or different in principle and approach. This not only provides the research context necessary to theorise language curriculum development in South Africa, but also enables the reader to obtain insight into the process in which informed theorisation occurs.

Constructing a Context: Language Curriculum Research in South Africa

This section comprises two areas of focus: research at tertiary level which deals with the language curriculum and/or language acquisition; and research conducted at secondary level which has the same broad foci. I have chosen both secondary and tertiary settings because these do not exist in isolation from one another, especially in terms of English language curriculum research. Most, though not all, of the work referred to in this section has not yet been published as it comprises mainly MA and PhD research.

It is crucial that language *and* literary curricula research be examined, since both, with respect to English at least, rely on and profess to develop proficiency and increased competence in the language. This is a fact hitherto ignored by many linguists in their research, and omitted by literary critics in discussions on the teaching of literature (see, for example, van Wyk 2000:27). Survey-oriented research, such as that conducted by Doherty in his MA thesis (1989), for example, examines the development of South African English literary syllabuses, tracing the influence of theoretical developments from metropolitan cultures. This research shows that a focus on language in terms of aspects of textual production—genre, register, discourse, and ideology (discussed by Fairclough 1995:83; and demonstrated in Reddy 1995:6)—was not then perceived as relevant[1]. Nowadays it is precisely previously neglected concerns which present opportunities for different

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[1] Fowler (1987:490) suggests that ideology be defined as society's implicit theory of what types of objects exist in the world (categorisation); of the way in which the world works (causation); and of the values to be assigned to objects and processes (general proposition).

social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds to be valued. Any new language curriculum would thus need to demonstrate a degree of awareness and sensitivity in a multilingual setting.

Sensitivity towards the demands of the multicultural setting motivated my survey study (Balfour 1995) of a tertiary English literary curriculum. Of relevance to any future curriculum development must surely be the realisation that it is no longer possible to teach English as if literature alone were what students needed. With a new 'multicultural' literary curriculum in place, designers at UND found, contrary to their expectations, that students' standard of English did not improve, despite increased exposure to English through communicative activities[2]. Such research shows that language learning requires intervention which is sensitive to learners' language needs as well their cultural-ethnic and social backgrounds[3]. Other types of study reveal possibilities for language extension sometimes overlooked in curriculum design.

A number of (quasi-)experimental studies are worth noting here because they show what might be gained from research which seeks to make an intervention into conventional pedagogic practices. For example, Court (1988:152f) at the University of Durban-Westville finds that language tests and examinations (at secondary and tertiary level) at that university are not accurate predictors of language ability because South Africa's erstwhile racially divided education system still affects access to quality instruction. Luckett's (1997:19-124) (quasi-) experimental case study of the uses of critical discourse analysis for history students at the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg) embodies both applied linguistic and pedagogic emphasis. She demonstrates, through her work with history students and historical texts, that a focus on language study (using critical linguistics and discourse analysis) is compatible with discourse strategies used to interpret texts:

> Texts realise, that is, give material form to, discourses; and the meanings of texts are always in part the meaning of discourses; texts are never the unique creations of individuals (Luckett 1997:83).

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[2] This assumption was founded on the established principle of language acquisition derived from communicative language theory (CLT Krashen 1989:456; Hymes 1972:281) which suggests that sufficient exposure to the target language encourages better learning.

[3] Mgqwashu's (1999) survey of language support classes at UND shows how little account was taken of previous learner experience, or fossilisation, as discussed by Brown (1998:43-45). Nathanson's (1998) survey study in the Western Cape showed how negative attitudes to language learning retards further development.

Sensitivity to language needs and awareness of diversity and the pitfalls of untrialled assumptions also influence further research conducted in KwaZulu-Natal (Balfour 1999:104-203) with an experimental language curriculum at secondary level. By means of this research, I am able show how learner errors and attitudes to language learning are often teacher-engendered (1999:269). This finding is substantiated in work conducted by Makalela (1998:60-68) among second-language teachers of English in the Northern Province of South Africa and points to the need for educators to become competent language practitioners themselves. This is a factor that must surely influence the development of a new language curriculum[4].

Most of the research discussed above indicates that black South African university entrants from so-called English medium schools are not adequately prepared for the language and writing demands of tertiary education. While many of the studies cited examine the nature and development of curriculum, few determine the effects of curriculum on long-term learning development, nor do they make evident the links between theory and practice[5]. Yet little research examines 'whole' approaches to English teaching (language and content, sequencing, pedagogy and assessment) in educational settings generally[6].

Obviously it has not been possible to cover all language and/or curriculum related research in South Africa; e.g. the work by MacDonald and van Rooyen (1990) in the Threshold Project has been omitted. If my focus has been selective, this has been only in order to provide the reader with a sense of the range addressed, from language testing and the broad issues of curriculum design, to experimentation with linguistic techniques and surveys of teacher/learner attitudes to language learning.

Localising the Context

The purpose of the previous section was to provide a critical context in which to locate a language curriculum project (the English Language Course, or ELC). The next suggests ways in which a new language curriculum can draw from related studies. Such a curriculum research process should not be developed in isolation from the international context of language curriculum research as documented by Brumfit (1980), Prabhu (1983), Cummins (1984), Crombie (1985); Gass and Madden (1985), Wong-Fillmore (1985), Arizpe (1994), Aitkenson and Ramanathan (1995)[7]. The work of Cummins (1984) on 'Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency' (CALP), for example, is particularly useful since the ELC is concerned to develop precisely this type of proficiency given its academic context within the University[8]. The aim of the ELC is to demonstrate that certain text types, or genres, deploy and make different demands upon English usage. The primary assumption is that exposure, both implicit (via genres) and explicit (via attention to the features of language use), encourages better understanding among learners of how language works.

In order to link research and development and to revitalise the former and enliven the latter, curriculum development may be transformed into a research initiative. This point is made somewhat differently by Fairclough (1992:6): 'a language education focused on training in language skills, without a critical component, would seem to be failing in its responsibility to learners'. I have taken Fairclough's identification of 'critical responsibility to learners' and extended it, in the case of language pedagogy and curriculum design, to include responsibility to 'practitioners'. With the support of a National Research Foundation (NRF) research grant for the critical and reflexive development of an English Language Course (ELC), the design team began to explore the pedagogic implications of this responsibility in terms of learners' and teachers' language needs.

The ELC, designed in 2000, was trialled in 2001. There were four phases involved in this project: consultation, development, implementation, and assessment. As part of the 'consultation phase', and to draw from other fields, a number of language educationalists and researchers from institutions in KwaZulu-Natal were invited to participate in a seminar series (March-June, 2000). The series focused on problematising notions of 'proficiency and competence', alerting staff to new or alternative approaches to language teaching, presenting local research, and retraining and updating members of the Programme of English Studies at UND.

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[4] For another experimental study, this time comparing a 'grammatical approach' based on sociolinguistics, to a 'communicative approach' to composition writing in black secondary schools in Qwa-Qwa, please consult Setiloane (1998).

[5] There are other notable exceptions to this trend: for example studies by Dreyer (1999:10-22), Kamwangamalu and Virasamy (1999:60-79), and work of the English Language Educational Trust in KwaZulu-Natal schools.

[6] The lack has been pointed out before in various reports such as *The Harvard-UCT Literacy and Numeracy Report,* Fuller *et al* (1995); *The School Register of Needs Survey:* NED (1997); *ECC Report* (1998), and in theses by Jiya (1993); Christie (1993); Lickendorff (1990).

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[7] Crombie (1985:12-13) is associated with 'a notional-functional syllabus'; the 'interactional model' is associated with Widdowson (1979:254) (United Kingdom), and the 'task-based syllabus' with Prabhu (1983:4) (Malaysia).

[8] Cummins (1984:136) defines CALP as 'the manipulation of language in decontextualised academic situations' and BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills) as 'the manifestation of language proficiency in everyday communicative contexts'.

It was not possible to present the entire range of research developments in ELT/ESL, but the sample presented did have a marked influence on the subsequent development of the ELC. The seminar series alerted curriculum designers to the problems of fossilisation and learner attitudes as discussed by Makalela (1998:68) for example. (Fossilisation occurs when the linguistic input internalised by learners is grafted onto the rule-system of the speaker's own language and not the target language rule system.) The burden of expectation on such a semester course (the ELC) would thus be great and might be unrealistic.

Nonetheless, the challenge identified by Luckett in 1997, and affirmed by the ELC design team in 2000, was how to teach English as effectively as possible, given the tertiary requirement for students to display a range of sophisticated analytical and interpretative skills in reading and writing[9]. Meeting this challenge involved designing a structure that could simultaneously equip students with a degree of language knowledge which could be consolidated later. After some discussion it was agreed that such a course would not include the decontextualised teaching of grammar or what Ivanic terms the 'grammar grind' (Ivanic 1987:2). It would, however, need to offer grammatical *awareness* in such a way as to assist the learner to use English reflectively and independently.

Given the time constraint of a single semester, and the aims already mentioned, the team proposed that the ELC adopt a 'structural discourse model within a communicative context'[10]. The decision to adopt this theoretical approach was informed by the reading and discussion described above. But in order for acquisition to be effective as suggested by Wong-Fillmore (1985:37), for example, it needs monitoring not only by the teacher, but also by the learner. This justifies a specially developed pedagogy understood and used for face-to-face teaching by the ELC tutors, and the use of language structure as a 'meta-language' for the teaching of the conventions of English usage. Theoretical developments were explored in a number of linguistics-related fields such as discourse analysis, communicative

[9] The design team consists of Illeana Dimitriu (Translation Studies, UND), Elaine Young, Matthew Shum, Emmanuel Mgqwashu (all English, UND), and Robert Balfour (English 2001, Education 2002, UND).
[10] 'Structure' in this sense refers to the analysis of language by its parts (parts of speech). However, it has long been recognised that structure devoid of context, as an approach to learning, is not only ineffective but also potentially harmful, because the learner is unable to apply what s/he has learnt in the independent production of text. The term 'discourse' derives from Discourse Analysis where language usage is seen not only as the sum of the parts, but also as the sum of the relationships, as Yule and Brown (1983:x) and Luckett (1997:70-73) argue.

language theory, genre theory and reader response theory, each of which focuses upon language in the construction of meaning for communicative purposes in texts[11].

In designing the ELC, the team assumed that South African students (unlike many foreign language speakers) already possessed some awareness of English as a communicative tool, since English is the medium of instruction in most schools (Sarinjeive 1994:295-305; Balfour 1995:86-89). However, most non-native speakers of English at UND possess a basic communicative competence characterised by the fossilisation of errors, mother tongue interference, and little awareness of how to modify the production of their own texts in English.

The first part of the ELC begins with lexical and morphological development, the aim being to extend learners' vocabularies and their awareness of the parts of speech (nouns and adjectives, verbs and adverbs, tenses and all aspects of local coherence) (Figure 1)[12]. This emphasis on vocabulary development and morphology is justified in terms of recent research (Kilfoil 1988:36; McKeown & Omanson 1997:148; Bull & Anstey 1995), which indicates that learners with extended vocabularies are able to write more cogently than are learners with limited lexicons. Understanding aspects of syntax (that is, subject-verb-object relations, the use of connectives and punctuation and all aspects of local/micro coherence), again within relevant texts, forms the second part of the ELC.

Figure 1: Structural Discourse Model (English Language Course)

Critical Reflection	Morphology and Vocabulary	Parts of speech (verbs, nouns, prefixes, suffixes), tenses, vocabulary, spelling, etc.	MICRO COHERENCE
Critical Reflection	Syntax	Subject-verb-object, clausal relations, co-ordination and subordination, cohesion	

[11] Yule & Brown (1988) (Discourse Analysis); Krashen (1988) (the Natural approach); Brumfit (1986) (Communicative language theory); Corcoran & Evans (1987) (Reader response theory); Kress (1995); Cope and Kalantzis (1993) (Genre theory); and Christie (1995) (Functional linguistics).
[12] Atwell (1981) defined 'local coherence' as the relationship between the parts of a sentence in relation to the parts of other sentences in the same text. 'Global coherence', according to Atwell (1981), is preoccupied with the relationships between sentences within paragraphs and between paragraphs. In this respect Atwell's definition is akin to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) definition of 'coherence' within a text.

Critical Reflection	Semantics	Context, register, genre, modality etc.	MACRO COHERENCE
Critical Reflection ⇓ TEST	Macro expression and argument	Macro coherence, structure, presentation, referencing etc.	

The third part of the ELC focuses upon the semantics within texts (idiomatic expression, metaphors, similes, symbolism, irony). Here the emphasis is on the attainment of internal coherence (an aspect of global/macro coherence) within sentences, with the aim of developing a fluent and relevant paragraph. The fourth part of the ELC explores more explicitly the conventions of expression and main and subordinate clause control in relation to writing genres, drawing in this respect on strategies already demonstrated by Luckett (1997:100-124) in South Africa, and Perera (1984:205) in the UK.

This structure in place, the team began in May 2000 to design the first of a series of worksheets for the ELC, using what came to be termed 'inductive learning' as an approach to exploring the 'conventions of language usage', with the aim of what Ellis (1994:643) terms 'consciousness raising'. 'Inductive' here meant the following: learners were encouraged by way of weekly worksheets to explore the particular language feature being dealt with and the 'convention of usage'. Only once this awareness emerged were learners provided with conventions for usage or, to put it more crudely, the rules governing aspects of grammar. Activities, drawing on a broad range of texts, would have to be designed to guide the learner in writing about texts analytically without mimicking their registers (see Balfour 1999:333-335).

Developing a Pedagogic Approach

The development of language pedagogy is as important as the curriculum itself, because pedagogy mediates aims and outcomes. Pedagogy, as Prabhu (1983:4) argues, is more than personal teaching style; it permeates curriculum design in, for example, the sequencing of knowledge, the choice of content, and the ideas behind structure. An appropriately theorised pedagogy also influences the ways in which knowledge is formally assessed, what counts as knowledge, and what value is accorded to learner-knowledge and institutional knowledge (Kress 1995:62). Within the ELC, this meant that knowledge was to be perceived and conveyed, not as a package of facts about language, but rather as an induction to understanding how conventions of language use operate.

The team agreed that each worksheet for the ELC should embody a similar format, though activities might differ each week in accordance with findings emerging from Wong-Fillmore (1985:21-35), Swain and Lapkin (nd:16-69), Long (1991 discussed in Ellis 1994:639) and Cope and Kalantzis (1993:65-88). The work of genre theorists Cope and Kalantzis (1993:65-88) and Kress (1995:62,64), in developing critical pedagogy for English, was deployed in the form of three pedagogic principles which are listed in the following paragraphs.

Kress notes that 'the acceptance of a need for the development of a new national identity is predicated on a realisation of significant cultural differences' (1995:64). Affirming difference, as the first pedagogic principle, in the multi-cultural classroom implies an explicit awareness of how difference is constructed in terms of social background, dominant literacies and rhetorical structures, as argued by Scollon and Scollon (1983:4,16-19). This principle is recognised in the ELC by ensuring that texts chosen for the curriculum are broadly representative of the cultural and ethnic composition of the classroom, and by ensuring that teachers are vigilant regarding different language needs.

Affirming difference and regulating relations between learners and teacher implies a degree of classroom management that is both explicit and self-reflexive. As a means of creating security for the learner and the teacher, Cope and Kalantzis (and others cited above) suggest as a second principle that 'lesson scaffolds need to be explicit, accessible to students and patterned in predictable ways' (1993:80). Features to be kept in mind when teaching include systematic provision of opportunities for each learner, explicit paralinguistic cues, and the reduction of 'foreigner speak' which could lead to learner error ossification (Wong-Fillmore 1985:34).

The third pedagogic principle for a language syllabus identified by Cope and Kalantzis is 'social access without prejudice'. The aim of the syllabus is to *enable* language learners by encouraging access to the dominant form of English in writing, without under-valuing students' home languages or other varieties of English.

All three principles, derived from critical pedagogy, are congruent with the approach taken to the ELC and influence the language of instruction used in the worksheet, as well as the type of activity designed. The format is provided below; note how late the section on 'conventions of use' occurs (Part III):

Figure 2: The format of each week followed the basic structure provided here

Part I:	Activity 1:	Communicative introduction (drawing on learners' experience)
	Activity 2:	Communicative introduction to the text (context, features content)
Part II:	Activity 3:	Identify the language feature (explicit **or** inductive approach)
	Activity 4:	Identify features of, and practise using the language
	Activity 5:	Cloze Exercise (drawing also on previous weeks' emphases)
	Activity 6:	Practice language feature (short imaginative **or** pattern practice)
Part III:	Activity 7:	Conventions of use (explanatory notes with examples)
Part IV:	Activity 8:	Independent writing activity with use of language feature
	Activity 9:	Brief introduction to language feature of next week

(Please consult Appendix 1 for an idea of what the ELC comprises in terms of its language and textual content since it is not possible to provide a more detailed description of the curriculum here.)

Assessment

The final part of this paper concerns data describing students' performance after the first trial semester of the project. Two aspects of performance require elaboration. The first is qualitative, that is, its purpose is discovering how useful learners found the ELC, in terms of how prepared their lecturers and tutorial assistants were, the degree to which weekly homework assignments were useful in developing language awareness, and greater accuracy and fluency of writing. The second aspect of performance is quantitative, as it describes learners' academic achievement in tests. It is to this latter aspect that I wish to devote the last part of the paper. I am not suggesting that the qualitative aspect is unimportant; indeed it is equally important in determining the efficacy of the ELC, but not the focus here. It would be the focus of another paper.

Since UND has no formal language requirement or entrance test other than the Matriculation Certificate for South African students seeking access to study, it fell to the design team to determine what other forms of assessment might be useful. We were aware of entrance tests for literacy in English designed by the University of

Cape Town (UCT) and used at Natal Technikon (see Starkey Report 1998:1-14). It emerged that the UCT tests were not appropriate for specifically English language assessment purposes. On the other hand, an established international measure of competence in academic English, as developed by the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) might provide a useful comparison with the ELC June examination. Such a comparison might assist the team in its investigations regarding the influence of variables (pedagogy, content, sequencing, etc.) on students' language needs, writing performance, and existing language proficiency in English. Thus the British Council was requested in May 2000 to run tests for all the students who had enrolled for the ELC. At the outset it needs to be made clear that any results attributable to the usefulness of the ELC have to be balanced against the English language exposure which students would have had in their other academic courses and social interaction on the campus. However, the ELC is not only an academic course; it is also an explicit language course, which makes it reasonable to assume that students' linguistic progress would bear some relation to the findings of the IELTS examinations.
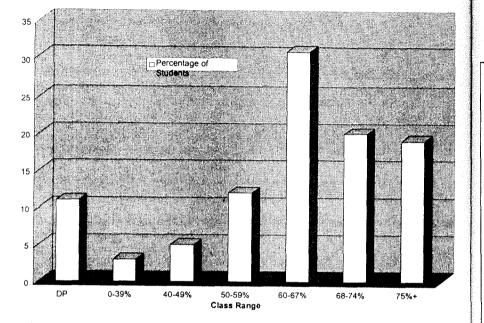
The discussion and figures which follow provide a partial account of students' academic achievement in the ELC. The account is partial because one area of focus, language awareness and comprehension, was selected for comparison after a semester of language work in the ELC. We have not yet been able to run 'before' and 'after' tests with the same student sample. Nevertheless, findings from the first phase of the research are worth reporting, since they enable the team to reflect on its curriculum design assumptions and aims, and also provide a useful database for researchers involved in similar initiatives in South Africa.

Figure 3 depicts students' performance within the six bands (excluding 'duly performed' or DP dropouts) used commonly by the University to award students their grades or 'class' of pass.

Figure 3: Students' Performance in the ELC June Examination

Semester Performance of ELC Students in the ELC Examination (June 2001) (n=110)

From these results it is apparent that most students (91%) passed. More students wrote the ELC examination in June than wrote the IELTS tests, which were held on a Saturday (late May 2001). Only 89 of the 110 students wrote the IELTS exams with funding secured through the NRF. The ELC examination was a purely written examination that required students to identify language features and to demonstrate how to use them.

While the 'class of pass' system is probably familiar to most readers, the IELTS examinations and bands do require explanation. The IELTS exam covers four parts: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The reading and writing sections are chosen specifically for the audience (either academic or non-academic) and level of difficulty (post-secondary, formal clerical employment, tertiary, etc.). IELTS is used as a language requirement for entry into many tertiary institutions abroad. The IELTS grading system consists of ten bands, from Band 0 at the lowest level to Band 9 at the highest level. The key of bands below displays the value assigned to each band. In order to achieve an approximate comparison between ELC results and those

obtained through IELTS, the British Council was asked to provide a table which gave percentage equivalents for IELTS bands. The ELC team could not have simply taken band scores and interpreted them without the assistance of IELTS in this respect. The correlations of IELTS to ELC are provided in Figure 4 below:

Figure 4: IELTS writing bands correlated to University of Natal percentage scores
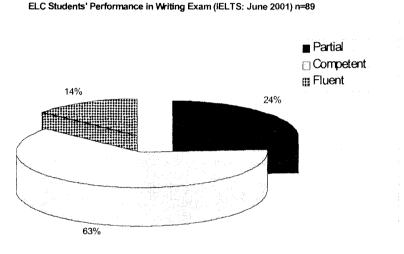
Band	Correlated %	Brief description (from IELTS band descriptors)
9	95 – 100%	'Completely satisfactory ... accurate at all times'.
8	84 – 94%	'No significant errors ... wide range of structures, flexibly used ...'.
7	70 – 83%	'Both simple and complex sentences are used, occasional minor flaws'.
6	56 – 69%	'Control achieved by use of a restricted range of structure and vocabulary ... errors frequently occur in complex structures, [but] rarely impeded communication'.
5	42 – 55%	'Sometimes causes strain for the reader ... accuracy achieved in short simple sentences only'.
4	28 – 41%	'Can produce basic sentence forms [but] errors ... cause severe strain for the reader'.
3	14 – 27%	'Errors predominate...except in apparently memorized utterances'.
2	1 – 13%	'No ability to communicate ... no evidence of basic sentence forms'.
1	0%	'No assessable strings of English'.
0	---	'Absent'.

The large range of IELTS bands made it difficult to determine learner's overall competencies in the four examinations. Rather than provide a bar chart as in Figure 3, I have, in consultation with the British Council, divided the IELTS bands into four broad values, reflecting the competency of students who achieved a particular band. Bands 0 to 3 were given the value 'weak', bands 4 to 5 were given the value 'partial', bands 6 and 7 the value 'competent', and bands 8 and 9 the value 'fluent.' Any half grade was downgraded to a whole value (for example, band 5.5 became band 5). In order to make the values easier to compare, the number of students achieving each band value was converted to a percentage. The number of students in each category was then divided by the total number of students who participated (eighty-eight for each of the four exams; one student was recorded as 'incomplete').

This gave us a Percentage Value. The percentages were rounded off to make their reading clearer. The figures below show the distribution of weak and strong students, providing an idea of where further attention might be needed in future versions of the ELC.

Figure 5: ELC students' performance in the writing exam

ELC Students' Performance in Writing Exam (IELTS: June 2001) n=89

Figure 5.1: Elaboration of students' performance in the writing exam

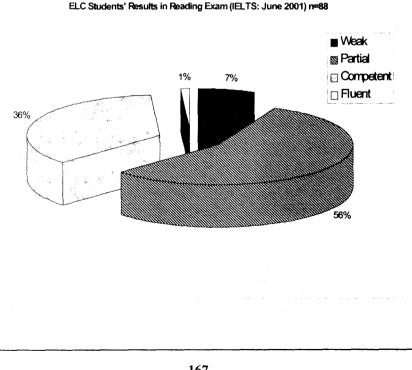| Band	4	5	6	7	8	Absent
Number of students	3	18	30	25	12	1

In the IELTS writing exam (Figure 5) most students (55 = 63%) were 'competent', while a relatively high number of students (21 = 24%) were 'partial'. Twelve (12 = 14%) students were 'fluent' and no (0) student was 'weak'. It would be possible to assess the extent to which this result is a reflection of the benefits gained as a result of UND's ELC only if the students had taken a similar exam before entering the ELC. The relatively high number of students who were 'partial' users of written

English indicates that the teaching of writing is a priority for the ELC and that many students require sustained tutoring in writing after the completion of the ELC.

Figure 5.1 indicates in more detail that 75% of students passed the IELTS writing examination; this percentage is significantly lower than the 91% who passed the ELC examination as recorded in Figure 3. This suggests that the ELC examination was less difficult and therefore not an accurate reflection either of the complexity of the ELC, or a realistic measure of students' ability. In this respect it is useful to recall that the IELTS examination is often used as a pre-tertiary examination and one would thus expect a tertiary examination of English proficiency to be more rigorous. Since reading affects writing development, and because the ELC written exam depended to a large degree on students' reading comprehension as well as language awareness, I have included the scores taken from the IELTS reading exam.

In the IELTS reading examination (Figure 6) most students (49 = 56%) were 'partial', while 36% (32= 36%) were 'competent'. Only one (1) was 'fluent', while 7% (6 students) were 'weak.'

Figure 6: ELC students' performance in the IELTS reading exam

ELC Students' Results in Reading Exam (IELTS: June 2001) n=88

Since the majority of students (55 = 63%) are 'weak' or 'partial' readers of English, this area must be considered a general area of concern, even more so than the 'listening' section (where 'weak' or 'partial' students represented only 38 % of the student results). This is why a special focus on reading skills will be necessary in a future version of ELC. The results here show that students have a serious problem with comprehension of written material in English. Such a problem is serious because this skill is vital for processing information at university level. It is for this reason that a greater focus on reading skills should be included in future English language courses at the University.

Figure 7: ELC students' performance in the IELTS speaking exam

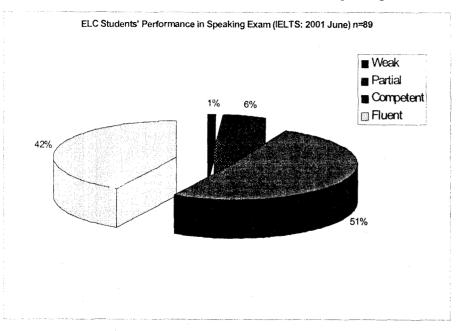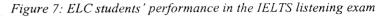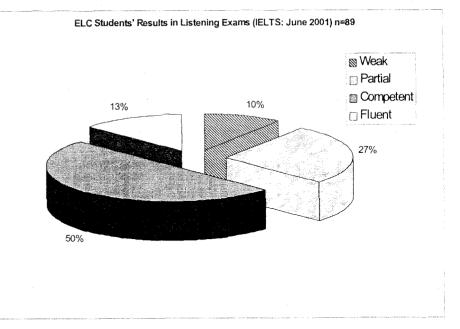ELC Students' Performance in Speaking Exam (IELTS: 2001 June) n=89

Figure 7 shows that most students (45 = 51%) were 'competent' in speaking, while a large number of students (37 = 42%) were 'fluent'. Only 5 students (6%) were 'partial' and one (1) student was 'weak'. These results indicate that speaking skills do not require great emphasis in future versions of the ELC. Nevertheless, students may not feel competent in speaking in professional situations like a job interview, for example. It may be informative to investigate whether they require instruction and practice in specific, context-based speaking situations.

Figure 7: ELC students' performance in the IELTS listening exam

ELC Students' Results in Listening Exams (IELTS: June 2001) n=89

With regard to the IELTS listening examination (Figure 8), most students (44 = 50%) were 'competent', while a relatively high percentage of students (24 = 27%) were 'partial'. 11 students (13%) were 'fluent', while 10% (9 students) were 'weak'. This examination revealed that the range of students' listening competencies (from 'weak' to 'fluent') is wide. While not all students require instruction in listening skills, over one third of all students do require it. Some provision should be made within future versions of the ELC for these students. It might be possible to combine listening exercises with other skills (grammatical competence and/or writing skills), so that some students could concentrate on 'listening' while more competent students focus on other skills as part of the same exercise.

The data that emerged from the process of IELTS and ELC testing highlighted several areas of concern which might otherwise have been overlooked in our envisioned re-planning of the ELC. First, reading skills were found to be weakest in most students taking the IELTS tests, and this suggested the need for more attention to developing such skills within the already implicit focus of a range of text genres, and within the broader framework of other language work. It was consequently decided that the mode and form of ELC assessment should be

rethought, to move from language-feature recognition and explication, to an even more explicit and meaningful link between pedagogy and content.

Second, listening skills were weaker than writing skills, a fact not anticipated from our own 'common sense' knowledge of students' needs, and suggesting the need for audio skills' development. Audio skills might be developed by means of listening exercises along the lines developed by IELTS (video and cassette recordings of conversations, reports, etc.).

Conclusion

This article began by examining a portion of the literature on language curriculum development in South Africa with the intention of contextualising and critiquing a new initiative called the English Language Course at the University of Natal.

Two related processes were involved in this critical reflection. The first of these is the process of contextualisation. New language curriculum development ought ordinarily to be located explicitly within a broader national and international framework of other related research. Consequently, the process of designing an English language course ought to make reference to research emerging from language pedagogy, linguistics, and curriculum studies. While I have not been able to contrast findings emerging from students' academic achievement in the ELC with similar initiatives elsewhere, I have been able to demonstrate how research from such initiatives might be strategically employed in the design and formulation of a language curriculum.

The second is the process of comparative testing by reporting on students' IELTS and ELC test results. The team hopes to have established an informative data base which, in addition to the qualitative data on students' writing and perceptions of the ELC, can be accessed by other institutions. This data base will be informative in the sense that critical reflection is an enabling process which arises out of a need for knowledge of how to respond better to all students' language needs in English.

School of Education
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Appendix 1:   Contents for ELC (2000-2001)

Week 1	Introduction to *Our Family* by Hettie Adams (1988) **Time: Simple Present/Past**
Week 2	Introduction to *The Transmission of Sound* by E.H. Glendinning (1980) **Time: Present Perfect/Future Perfect**
Week 3	Introduction to *English in Education* by Robert J. Balfour (1998) **Time: Continuous Aspect and Verbs**
Week 4	Introduction to *Horoscopes and Travel* by Matthew Shum (2000) **Modals and Register**
Week 5	Introduction to *Violence* by Ahmed Essop (1990) **Modals and the Future Aspect**
Week 6	Introduction to *The Bill of Rights* in *The Constitution* (1995) **Modals and Active and Passive**
Week 7	Introduction to *The Institutional and* in *Financial Report: University of Natal* (1996-1997) **Complex and Compound Sentences**
Week 8	Introduction to *Chickenpox* by Don R. Powell (1999) **Nominal Groups and Clauses**
Week 9	Introduction to *The Advertisement* in *The South African Auto Trader* (2000) **Clauses and Conjunctions**
Week 10	Introduction to *The Sisters* by Pauline Smith (1990) **Clauses and Conjunctions**
Week 11	Introduction to *An Interview with Breytenbach* by Illeana Dimitriu (1997) **Direct and Indirect Speech**
Week 12	Introduction to *Africa's Urban Past* by Anderson & Rathbone (2000) **Articles/Prepositions**

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National Education's Research Benchmarks: Realistic Targets or Pie in the Sky?

Thandwa Mthembu &
Prem Naidoo

Introduction

In a wide-ranging review of successful drivers for socio-economic development, the World Bank (1999) concluded that knowledge is central. In the new knowledge economy, information and its use are primary commodities (Castells 2001). Generation of new knowledge, its application, storage and manipulation are therefore important to socio-economic development (Muller *et al.* 2001). New knowledge and the skills to manipulate and process this new knowledge are acquired when undertaking research (Mouton *et al.* 2001). Thus, having a sustainable research capacity and capability is important, at both systems and institutional levels.

In South Africa, as in any other developing country, higher education is an important sector that produces new knowledge through research. In addition, appropriately designed postgraduate programs are the chief trainers of a new generation of researchers (Lundall *et al.* 1997; Naidoo & Lange 1999). The approach to, and quality of, research and research training at higher education institutions will be crucial for sustainable production of new knowledge (Mouton *et al.* 2001).

International research findings suggest that one way to assure sustainable production of new knowledge is to encourage regular measurement of research performance so as to enable targeted development of the underperforming parts of the research system (Stanley *et al.* 1995; Geuna *et al.* 2001). Some institutions in the United Kingdom and Australia report that development of a monitoring system plays a crucial role in identifying problems associated with research performance, while others report that it helps to improve research performance (Kemp 1999; Tognolini et al. 1994; Kingsley 1993).

Research performance at higher education institutions in South Africa has been erratic. There have been notable decreases in some cases and increases in others. There are several reasons for these trends. We argue that they partly emanate from a lack of proactive monitoring and improvement of research performance at the institutional level, and ill-designed postgraduate programmes. The new proposal by the Department of Education's National Working Group of a benchmark of 1 and 0.5 SAPSE publication units per full-time academic for universities and technikons, respectively, will help to stimulate proactive monitoring of research performance.

In this article we examine whether the proposed benchmarks are realistic and appropriate for measuring and monitoring research performance. This we do based on the information and data from the SAPSE system, which we also examine critically. Research evaluation systems from other countries are also examined with a view to proposing a more appropriate system for South Africa. Lastly, we propose a new research evaluation system and some research performance indicators. We hope that the proposed performance indicators will help institutions to improve their own research evaluation systems, and thereby make advances towards attaining the proposed DoE's research output benchmark.

SAPSE Targets: Realistic or Pie in the Sky?
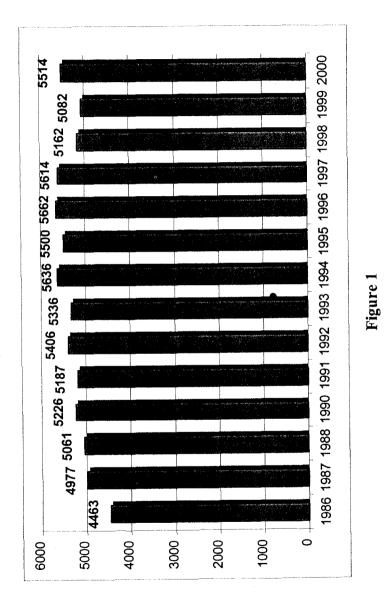
In 1985 the then Department of Education (DoE) introduced the South African Post-secondary Education (SAPSE) system, a new funding system and formula to stimulate research output at universities. At that time technikons were not expected to undertake research as a core function. Research outputs were encouraged through financially rewarding institutions for the number of scientific articles published. Only articles in refereed journals accredited by the DoE qualified for this reward (subsidy). At a later stage, books (excluding textbooks), chapters in refereed anthologies, refereed conference papers and patents were included for subsidy purposes. Only in 1992 were technikons included in the system and allowed to receive subsidy for SAPSE research outputs. Below is a table of the total SAPSE output for all higher education institutions for 1986 - 2000.

Figure 1

Years (bottom to top): 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000

Values: 5514, 5082, 5162, 5614, 5662, 5500, 5636, 5336, 5406, 5187, 5226, 5061, 4977, 4463

Y-axis: 6000 5000 4000 3000 2000 1000 0

Higher education accounts for 85% of the published research output in South Africa (Mouton *et al.* 2001). A single SAPSE journal article is allocated one SAPSE unit while a book is allocated a maximum of five units (1 unit for every sixty pages) and a patent is allocated two units. Of the total SAPSE output, less than one percent is accounted for by patent outputs, with journal articles accounting for 87%. Since 1986 the SAPSE output grew by 25% and seems to have levelled off in 1994. Output dropped from its 1994 peak, picked up again in 1996, and dropped again by about 10% in 1998. But, as of 2000, it has increased to its former levels of the mid-1990s. Mouton *et al.* (2001) argue that the decline was not an indication of decreased research activity, but that researchers were more involved in contract research where scientific publications are not a priority, and where contracts embargoed journal publications. In addition, since the advent of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act and White Paper 3 on Higher Education, many researchers have been busy with institutional restructuring, and not with research (Mignnone 2001). Only those researchers with well-established research teams and supporting postgraduate programmes have been able to keep pace.

Research performance and output, as indicated above, have been variable, but display a disturbing tendency towards remaining constant or decreasing. In 1985 South Africa accounted for 0.7% of the world's research output and this figure has declined to 0.4% by the mid-1990s (Pouris 1995). The data suggests that the higher education sector has reached its optimal research output as the SAPSE output seems to stabilise around 5500 SAPSE units. In the long term such a trend could have disastrous consequences for technological and socio-economic development and the sustainability of the research system in South Africa. According to the World Competitiveness Report (1999), there is a strong correlation of research and development expenditure with economic development. Yet there is a steady decline in Research and Development (R&D) expenditure in South Africa from 1.04% in 1987 to 0.68% in 1995. In terms of global competitiveness this R&D investment has failed to inspire confidence in South Africa's future performance. We need to attend to this problem immediately, before we reach crisis levels in research performance and output.

On the other hand, five out of the thirty-seven higher education institutions in South Africa account for sixty percent (60%) of the SAPSE output and have remained relatively stable over the last 10 years. These are the University of Cape Town (UCT), the University of Natal (UN), the University of Stellenbosch (US), the University of Pretoria (UP), and the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS). This output is not self-evidently optimal, especially since these are the institutions that industry prefers for contract research. This notwithstanding, the level of their collective output suggests that the other institutions are under-performing and that
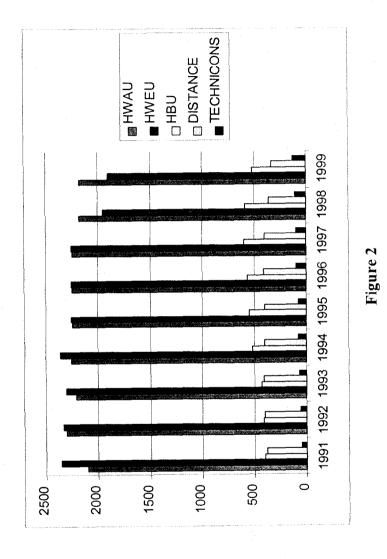
they need to increase their output. Their improvement will impact on an increase in the general research output of the country.

The historical legacies of underfunding of Historically Black Universities (HBUs) and technikons—which were mainly seen as teaching and training institutions—did not allow much time and space for research. The potential to increase research output from these sectors is enormous, provided there is strategic financial redress. The National Research Foundation (NRF), through its Institutional Research Development Programme (IRDP) earmarked funding, has stimulated increased outputs in these sectors.

Given the history of higher education in South Africa, institutions were loosely grouped into Historically White Afrikaans medium Universities—the US, UP, Rand Afrikaaans University (RAU), the University of Port Elizabeth (UPE), and the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PUCHE); Historically White English medium Universities—UN, WITS, UCT, Rhodes University (RU); HBUs—the University of Durban-Westville (UDW), the University of the Western Cape (UWC); the University of Forte Hare (UFH), the University of Zululand (UZ), the University of Venda (UV); the University of Transkei (Unitra); the University of the North (Unin), the University of North-West (UNW); Historically Advantaged Technikons—the Cape, Free State, Pretoria, Wits, and Natal Technikons; and Historically Disadvantaged Technikons—Mangosuthu, M.L. Sultan, Peninsula Technikon, Technikon Northern Gauteng, Border, Eastern Cape, North-West, and the Vaal Technikon; and Distance Education—the University of South Africa (UNISA), Vista University and Technikon S.A. Below is a graph that illustrates the SAPSE output per institutional grouping for the period 1991–1999.

Figure 2

Figure 2 shows that the relative contribution by the Afrikaans universities has increased moderately from 37.2 % in 1986 to 41.5% in 1999. The proportion of the outputs from English medium universities has declined substantially from 53.5% in 1986 to 37.9% in 1999. The overall output from the HBU sector doubled from a low base of 5.1% in 1986 to 10.7% in 1999. The output in the technikon sector increased substantially from 23.52 units in 1991 (0.4% of the total) to 174 units in 1999 (3.1% of the total). Over eighty percent (80%) of the technikon output is produced by the historically advantaged sector of technikons. The distance education institutions decreased their output from 2.57% in 1986 to 2.2% in 1999. Over 95% of the output from this sector is produced by UNISA.

With the exception of Natal and Rhodes Universities, research outputs of most English medium universities have decreased dramatically. In the case of UCT, considered one of the best universities in the country, outputs have declined by as much as 20%. Within the historically Afrikaans universities, research outputs have increased, notably at RAU and UP. To some extent, HBUs and technikons have also increased their research output. Among the HBUs, UDW and UWC account for approximately 45% of the research output with UDW being the top performer among them. On the other hand, the overall increase of research output from these institutions does not balance out the overall decrease within the larger universities such as UCT and WITS.

SA Knowledge Base is a database being constructed by the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies under the leadership of Professor Mouton at the University of Stellenbosch. Its aim is to produce a comprehensive, accurate and effective database of South African scientific production. A study by Mouton *et al.* (2001) of the database revealed the following:

- The biggest proportion of scientific articles from 1990 - 1998 was authored by white academics (93.5%), followed by Indian (3.2%), African (2.1%) and Coloured (1.0%) authors.

- Males dominated the scientific production—87% were produced by males and 17% were produced by females.

- In 1990, 36% of all the articles were produced by the 30 - 39 age group and the comparable proportion for 1998 has dropped to 17%. At this date, the majority of the articles were produced by the 45 years and older group. This trend is disturbing as it indicates that our current knowledge production is dependent on an ageing group of academics and that we are not producing young researchers or encouraging them into being active researchers.

We should read race- and gender-based research statistics above, in the context of the number of academics in each race and gender group, and the total number of equally qualified and experienced academics in the country. Given this context the race and gender groups that appear to be under-performing might actually have a reasonable per-capita performance. Nevertheless, there is an acute need to create a sustainable critical mass of women and black researchers. Hence, the training of these groups is crucial to the improvement of our total research outputs as a country.

The low total SAPSE output from the HBU and Technikon sector is unsurprising. As alluded to above, these institutions were mainly established as teaching and training institutions, and in the main, offered undergraduate degrees and three year diploma courses (Lundall *et al.* 1997). There were hardly any dedicated facilities and equipment for research, with poor infrastructure and staff capacities to undertake research. Technikons were not expected to perform research whilst HBUs were, despite their appalling circumstances. For these reasons, these institutions lacked a research culture and capacity. It is therefore unfair to compare these institutions, particularly technikons, with other higher education institutions. The majority of staff in technikons still have first degree qualifications and there are only a few with postgraduate training. It would seem, therefore, that the DoE's attempt to differentiate between the technikons and universities by setting different research benchmarks is justified. But are these benchmarks realistic?

Although not all technikons were encouraged to undertake research, they were resourced according to apartheid policies. The Historically White technikons were better resourced than the Historically Black Technikons, hence the differential research performance—i.e. advantaged white technikons accounting for 80% of SAPSE output within the technikon sector. Therefore, having a single SAPSE output benchmark for both these sectors is unfair and discriminatory given the privileged resourcing of one over the other. But is the 0.5 SAPSE output per full-time academic attainable—even within the historically advantaged technikons? The table below suggests that this target is almost impossible in the short-to-medium term.

Top Performing Technikons	Average SAPSE Output per Full-time Academic for 1998 - 2000
Cape Technikon	0.08
Free State Technikon	0.1
Natal Technikon	0.07

The SAPSE output must increase between 5 to 8 times in order to attain the DoE's benchmark. In the short-term, this is an impossible task for these technikons and a dream for the disadvantaged technikons which average 0.02. Research cultures and

performance develop over long periods of time and can take decades. As an example, UCT is 83 years old (formally established as a university in 1918) and produces a 0.65 SAPSE output per full-time academic. Makarere University, once a premier research institution on the continent developed a strong research culture over a 40 year period but was destroyed overnight by the Amin regime and has not regained its former research performance levels twenty-five years later (Naidoo 1998).

Is the benchmark of 1 unit per full-time academic at universities justified? As at the technikons, there was severe discrimination among the universities by the apartheid government. Moreover, since 1994 these institutions find themselves in a situation which is much worse. As their financial resources continue to decline, good academics have left for government, private sector and advantaged universities. They cater almost exclusively for students that are financially needy and academically under-prepared (Breier 2001; Mthembu *et al.* 2001). Catering for such students is labour- and cost-intensive. And yet, government agencies and industry would follow historically advantaged white institutions for contract research that could generate third-stream funding. We advance this argument fully aware that it has become unfashionable. Yet, the historically white institutions that have swelled their black student ranks cannot claim not to be taking the better academically prepared and performing ones, because of their more stringent admissions criteria.

As an example of the challenges of admitting the poorest of the poor, at UDW, full-time academic staff posts dropped from 452 to 335 as of 2001, and students that cannot pay fees readily increased from 15% to 60%. Obviously, more time has to be spent on these students by fewer academics, alas, with debilitating effects on research output. Hence, it is unjustified to set the same benchmarks for HBUs and HWUs. A differentiated benchmark should have been set for these two sectors, with the benchmark of 1 unit per full-time academic only realisable incrementally from whatever sectoral base. The table below suggests that most universities, even the historically advantaged, will not make this target in the short-term.

Top Performing Universities	Average SAPSE Output per Full-time Academic for 1998 - 2000
Pretoria	0.5
Wits	0.58
Stellenbosch	0.55
UCT	0.65
Rhodes	0.85

On average, all need to double their SAPSE output to make the benchmark. The data over the fourteen year period for these institutions show changes and in the case of increases, it took time, while for UCT, it seems to have stabilised, having reached its maximum SAPSE output. Remarkably, the larger universities like US, UP and UCT have shifted their focus to the commercialising of their research findings and the undertaking of commissioned research. Approximately 70% of the research undertaken by these universities is commissioned. Over 85% percent of the research expenditure comes from non-governmental sources. This is understandable, given government's dwindling subsidies, and very limited funds from its research agencies like the National Research Foundation. The stringency of the processes of peer review and ratings used by some agencies in order for researchers to have access to a limited pool of money, might not always be worthwhile to engage in, when more resources are available elsewhere.

The commissioning and commercialisation of research mitigate against the focus on the SAPSE output system (in the form of journal articles) as the only reliable measure of research performance in the country (Mouton 1998). Intellectual property rights and patenting are key considerations in this type of research (Kemp 1999). And there are phenomenal pay-offs for institutions that take advantage of such opportunities. The larger universities would be irresponsible if they were to forego such pay-offs and produce more SAPSE output to reach the DoE's target. Hence, there will be circumstantial resistance from these universities to conforming to the DoE's benchmark, and rightly so, as the White Paper for Science and Technology (1995) encourages innovation for economic growth through commercialisation of research findings.

The proliferation of ill-designed coursework Masters' and Doctoral programmes could further hamper SAPSE research outputs (Naidoo & Lange 1999). Our institutions have not yet taken full advantage of postgraduate research by turning students' dissertations and theses into SAPSE publications. Coursework programmes at this level will further stunt postgraduate research, the generation of new researchers, and, as argued above, potential SAPSE publications. We further argue that, should the DoE not introduce a differentiated funding mechanism for coursework and research-based postgraduate programmes, with the latter accorded higher funding, it must inevitably expect a deterioration in research outputs.

Among the HBUs, UDW has the highest SAPSE output per full-time academic. It averaged 0.35 units per full-time academic between 1998 and 2000. It took ten years to improve this rate from 0.2 to 0.35. In the short-to-medium term, it will be virtually impossible to move the rate to 1 unless there is a dramatic injection of resources, and unless top-performing researchers, academics and senior management prioritise research as a key core function of the university. Alternatively, one could argue UDW's output on the basis of return of investment, and, on that basis, conclude that the SAPSE output for UDW is better than UCT's.

On average, R8 000 000 is spent annually on research at UDW, whilst UCT spends R180 000 000. Yet, the SAPSE output differential between the two institutions is double, while the resource input differential is 25 times between these institutions. In this inequality, we exclude the cost of available infrastructure and equipment that facilitate research at UCT. It would be reasonable to argue that, despite UDW's institutionalised problems over the years, it produces better return on investment than UCT. In a nutshell, the cohort of productive researchers at UDW is more productive than its counterpart at UCT.

Another interesting observation is that smaller institutions like Rhodes have a higher SAPSE output per full-time academic than the bigger institutions like UCT and UP. A similar pattern is observed in the technikons. Free State Technikon, which is smaller than Cape and Natal Technikons, has a much higher SAPSE output per full-time academic. This suggests that the size of an institution influences research production. Quite clearly, there is a minimum threshold beyond which student:staff ratios become detrimental to the research project. If this is true, then the proposed merger of institutions into larger units could result in severe research output decreases. It would be informative to conduct studies and analyse the influence of shape, size and student:staff ratios on research performance.

Is SAPSE an Appropriate System?

With a few exceptions, most higher education institutions do not monitor their research performance (Mouton 2001) in any comprehensive manner. Most institutions use SAPSE output as a measure of research output. At the individual researcher level, the National Research Foundation too, uses, in the main, SAPSE research output to rate researchers. Both the NRF and the DoE use research outputs as a measure of research quality and performance, and, because of the influence of these organisations, such measurement systems have become 'the order of the day' for those institutions that monitor research performance. However, to equate measures of quantity with quality and performance is inappropriate. In a multi-disciplinary team research environment, and in a problem-oriented, development-based approach through which we expect to improve the quality of life and the standard of living of our masses, these measures are unacceptable and should be subjected to critical scrutiny. However, it appears that the DoE system will continue to be influential, since it will determine the future postgraduate programme mixes for institutions and provide the bulk of the start-up funds for research. It is for this reason that the focus of this paper is on the SAPSE system and the proposed new benchmarks.

Ever since the introduction of the SAPSE system many researchers have raised objections. These include the following:

- Many academics from the HBUs and some from the English liberal universities refused, for political reasons, to publish in SAPSE accredited journals during the apartheid era. The politics of publishing would only help later to slacken their re-introduction to the networks developed without them during their self-exile from the journals.

- Some researchers describe the system as a 'black box'. That is, they do not know the basis on which journals become SAPSE accredited, and who takes such decisions, with what competence. Some claim that journals from Afrikaans medium universities are easily accredited as opposed to those based at other institutions. The lack of transparency, clear criteria and credible peers within the SAPSE system is a continuous source of contention.

- The SAPSE system only accredits journals, books and refereed proceedings, with journal publications taking precedence. Many researchers contest the narrowness of the set of these outputs. Policy briefs and documents that ushered in profound changes in national and provincial directions during the dawn of our new democracy are not counted. Outputs from creative, performing and visual arts are not included. Other outputs that are central to sustaining a quality research system, such as annotated bibliographies, indices, academic reviews, user reviews and popular reviews for the mass media, are not considered by the SAPSE system. Other important items not included are short works by literature scholars, editorships of conference proceedings, commissioned research reports and reports for policy analysis purposes.

- There is an over-emphasis on paper publications, and an under-valuing of electronic publications. Yet, and rightly so, during the era of information and communications technology, the electronic publications industry is growing at an incredible rate.

- There is an under-valuing of student research training and production of trained postgraduate research students. Given that our current research output, as alluded to earlier, is produced mainly by ageing white males, it raises concerns for both our demographic research profile and the sustainability of our research system. Our current research profile is unsustainable and we need to produce more young researchers who are black and women. Through the sheer numbers of blacks and women, there is greater potential to produce a critical mass of researchers from amongst their ranks. Hence, postgraduate student output should be a key measure for the national system to monitor. As argued above, that postgraduate output should be more research-based, as opposed to coursework-based. And appropriate resources must be made available. In this way, we can

address the past imbalances and ensure the sustainability of research production by producing a new generation of researchers for the system.

- The system is ahistorical, and as a result, discriminates against HBUs. For some strange reason, it has become unfashionable to talk about redress. It is often argued that redress should not be institutional, but individualised, because HWUs now have double the number of black students enrolled at HBUs: a classical liberal argument. And yet, if you revisit our earlier argument about return on investment between UDW and UCT, some HBUs may have performed better. Academics at HBUs work in comparably poorer research conditions than their counterparts at HWUs. This is a problem of investment versus return on investment. And yet research performance in both sectors of institutions is measured equally on the sole basis of output, although it is much more difficult to produce that output at HBUs. At almost all HWUs computers and good libraries are considered standard features for good teaching and research, while in most HBUs these are luxuries. For example, at UDW, over 85% of the academics in the Humanities Faculty do not have computers in their offices as part of standard office furniture. They have to purchase them from their own funds or research grants. At the University of Venda there are no funds available to renew their journal subscriptions.

- There are sub-optimal considerations of the quality and impact of research. One could argue that the SAPSE system enforces quality control indirectly by only accrediting publications that satisfy a minimum quality assurance standard as set by peers. Yet, in reality we know that journals have different quality standards, based on what constitutes quality (Garfield 1996). Because of its quality demands it is much harder to publish in *Nature* as opposed to the *South African Journal of Science*. On the other hand, *Nature* is interested in publishing articles that have global significance (normally basic research) to the natural scientific community while the *South African Journal of Science* encourages the publication of research with an impact on local development (normally applied research). A researcher-engineer who does development-oriented research in partnership with ESKOM, for instance, might not produce earth-shattering research deserving of publication in an international journal. But the impact of that research in raising the standards of living and the quality of life of the rural poor might be high. In the current system, the quality of research and the quality of its impact cannot be equated. Our country needs both quality basic and applied (development-oriented) research in order to meet our development challenges.

- It takes a year before research output is processed by the DoE, and there could be further delays in releasing subsidy funds. It takes even longer to accredit new journals for SAPSE purposes, and in recent times, the accreditation of new journals has been suspended. The latter point is worth emphasising. Given that we have unique problems in Africa—issues that countries of the North might have less interest in—to what extent do we recognise journals from Africa and other third world countries? Would we expect a top American journal to concern itself with problems of cholera and malaria in Africa, for example?

- There are cumbersome administrative requirements and burdens placed on institutions in processing publications before sending them to the DoE for evaluation and accreditation. This has placed incredible demands on HBUs in particular, as their administrative systems regarding research are often poorly developed.

Some Commonly Used Research Evaluation Systems

The promotion and monitoring of research performance and quality is central to enabling the development of vibrant and relevant knowledge production systems for the country (Verleij 1999). There are many ways to evaluate research performance (Link 1993). These range from output-quantitative measures such as SAPSE output and bibliometrics to more comprehensive systems that capture both qualitative and quantitative measures of input, process, outputs and impact of research evaluated by peers (Mouton *et al.* 2001). In the United Kingdom, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) research evaluation of University departments takes the latter format.

Currently, in most developed countries, bibliometrics is the most popular measure of research (Narin et al. 1994). Bibliometrics uses counts of publications, patents, and citations to develop science and technology performance indicators (Narin 1976; Narin et al. 1977). Bibliometrics is used:

- As a count of publications and patents to indicate the level of activity in a cognate area or at an individual, departmental, institutional or country level.
- As a measure of impact by counting the number of times these patents or articles are cited by subsequent researchers.
- As a linkage measurement from articles to articles, from patents to patents, and from patents to articles that provide intellectual linkages between organisations and researchers.

Since the origin of bibliometrics, citations have played a very important role in measuring research quality and impact. Citation analysis is historically a by-product of citation indices developed by Eugene Garfield, founder of the Institute for

Scientific Information (ISI) with Science Citation Index (SCI) as its main measure of research production, quality and impact (Harriet 1998). First, its citation counts were used to indicate the importance and the quality of journals. Nowadays, SCIs are used to indicate the quality and impact of research within the scientific community (Garfield 1997). The assumption is that the more often a paper is cited, the greater is its significance in that field of study. This would then be interpreted to imply the importance and the standing of a researcher within the research community. More recently, a Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) and an Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) have been developed to measure research in related disciplines.

Although citation indices are widely used, they have limitations and have not survived without criticism (Narin *et al.* 1994; Magri *et al.* 1996). These include the following.

- Citation indices assume that only relevant, important and high-quality research will be cited, and that all citations are of equal importance to research advancement.
- Many researchers self-cite and distort the importance of their past research work.
- If multiple authors are accredited, how would one determine if the co-authors contributed equally to a piece of research, and importantly, the quality of the contributions of each of them?
- Many scientists have the same surnames and initials. How does one distinguish in such cases?
- Large differences in citation counts may exist from one year to another, which causes citation data to be restricted in time.
- Citation rates vary from field to field. In disciplines with a smaller number of researchers, authors are cited less often compared to larger disciplines.
- The ISI database only captures English language publications, hence favouring research appearing in English.
- The ISI is USA-biased. Most of the US publications are captured on the ISI database, hence privileging US research.
- The current ISI database is incomplete and not all publications are captured. In the case of South Africa, approximately 300 SAPSE journals are not captured.
- Approximately 10% of the South African journals that deal mainly with natural science are in the ISI database. It is not representative of all domains of science, does not capture all research in South Africa, and, therefore, cannot be an accurate measure of research quality in South Africa. It would be a disaster for

any South African agency to adopt ISI as the measure of research quality and impact in South Africa.
- ISI privileges research of global significance or basic research as opposed to local problem-solving research. Although basic research is important, equally important is applied research geared towards the problem ridden development context of South Africa and Africa generally.

Given the development challenges and the urgent need to solve some of these problems, it is important to use a research evaluation system that will not counteract the practice of applied research. Hence, the exclusive use of SCI and other indices used by ISI to measure research quality would be inappropriate for South Africa.

Qualitative approaches using evaluative case studies undertaken by peers represent another extreme of quantitative measures. A version of this is the research assessment exercise for university departments, used by HEFCE for funding purposes in the UK. Peer panels are used to evaluate the research performance by departmental staff on site. The evaluation is ex-post and normally focuses on disciplines. These panels assess the publication quality and other data that is made available to the panels from the departments. In 1996 each department that wanted to be evaluated was asked to submit:

- An overall staff summary containing information on all academics staff and research support staff, whether or not they are included as active research staff;
- Details of active research staff;
- Publications and other public output (up to four) for each active member;
- An overview of research students and research studentship;
- A statement of external research income, including the amount and source of research income;
- A statement of research plans.

Although the panels ask for a variety of information, they assess mainly the quality of research output. Each department is given a score which determines its research funding level. Some of the problems with this system are:

- It encourages the 'poaching' of top researchers from one institution by another.
- Those institutions that are well-endowed can easily attract top researchers by paying them good salaries and providing optimum working conditions and research infrastructure. In the case of South Africa, the HBUs would suffer further and regress back into being teaching institutions if this situation prevails. Moreover, this would discourage research capacity development, as the majority

of black academics are in HBUs. Researchers would focus on research performance and neglect training of postgraduate students and the next generation of researchers. Redress and equity would be undermined, as few black and women researchers would be given opportunities to work and train with these good researchers.

- It is expensive. At least four to six panel evaluators are used to evaluate each department on site and this process lasts for at least two days. It requires efficient administrative back-up. It would mean that the Department of Education would have to develop a good administrative system. Yet it still has difficulty implementing its new policy outlined in 1996.
- It relies on high quality peers with integrity. Researchers with good research reputations act as peers. In the case of South Africa, the research community has been tainted by historical privilege and disadvantage. Besides having a small research community, there is suspicion among researchers, especially from a race and gender perspective and according to institutional type. The politics of publishing and research networks would also rear their ugly heads when research considered to be in opposition to that of some members of the panels could be strategically under-valued.

In Australia, the research performance of each institution is measured using the system referred to as Research Quantum for funding purposes (Geuna *et al.* 2001). Research Quantum is based on input and output indicators. Both research input and output indicators are incorporated into a composite index which determines the amount of funding an institution receives. The indicators contained in the composite index are:

Research Input Indicators
- The amount of each university's funding from other national agencies;
- Other public sector research funding;
- Industry and other research funding.

Research Output Indicators
- Number of research and scholarly publications produced by staff and students;
- Number of higher degrees (masters and doctors) completed.

The major limitation of this system is that it relies on the data received from each institution to develop the composite index. The second limitation is that it is exclusively quantitative and is unable to measure the quality and impact of the research. Lastly, it does not examine institutional support for research. Relevant questions in this regard would be: Does the institution have a well-resourced research office to support researchers; does it provide good infrastructure and a positive work climate for researchers; does it provide steering mechanisms to develop capacity for in-service training.

It might seem obvious that each institution should have the freedom to choose the nature and type of research it wishes to pursue. But, if there are national and regional goals to be met, that approach could easily defeat them. And, unless there could be strict measures and monitoring of expenditure, managements could use the available funds for purposes other than research. It is well-known in this country that the current SAPSE system includes in its formula some funding for research and postgraduate studies. Equally well-known is that institutional managements do not necessarily allocate those funds to research activities.

Hence, the monitoring and evaluating of research performance is complex and fraught with many difficulties (Adams 1993; Adams *et al.* 1994; Ball 1997). The variety of solutions to the problems we pose below would prove this assertion. Firstly, what is considered or defined as research? Secondly, the definition of research quality and performance is highly contestable. Thirdly, the criteria and mechanisms used in evaluating quality and performance are not easy to develop, and once developed they might not be applied consistently. Fourthly, whether the measuring of research performance should be used to develop incentive or punitive measures is unclear. Fifthly, how does one measure and factor the various elements that enable or retard research performance and quality? Sixthly—and an important imperative in South Africa—how should redress and equity be factored into the measuring of research performance? Lastly, probably the most important aspect concerns the fitness of the evaluation or measurement for the purposes or goals of the research system.

A Proposed System For South Africa

What system of research evaluation should we use at the institutional level for South Africa? Besides relying on SAPSE publications, most South African higher education institutions have not attempted to develop a set of comprehensive indicators to monitor research performance. Given the above discussion, we propose that the research evaluation system should be based on the following.

- Fitness for purpose, i.e. use an evaluation approach that will advance the goals of the research system (Verkleij 1999);
- Advance the goals of White Paper 3 for Higher Education and the White Paper for Science and Technology;
- Advance basic, applied, strategic and development research;

- Promote research capacity development by enabling the next generation of researchers through participating in research projects and postgraduate education led by the most illustrious and seasoned of our researchers;
- Promote redress and equity among women and black researchers;
- Optimise knowledge production among all higher education institutions in South Africa;
- Promote good support and infrastructure development at all institutions for researchers;
- Provide incentives for research outputs and impact;
- Be easy to administer;
- Be fair, just and credible.

Each institution should be asked to produce a research plan together with its three-year rolling plan. The plan should identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for research and its development (Van der Westhuizen 1998). It should outline the institution's historical performance and its proposed strategies to improve its performance. Lastly, it should outline its proposed niche areas and targets for research performance. The Department of Education should request the statutory quality assurance body of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council for Higher Education (CHE) to carry out the research evaluation. The research evaluation exercise should be conducted by HEQC peer panel mechanisms every three years for each institution. Peer panels for each institution should evaluate the quality and feasibility of the plan. The criteria for selecting peers should include:

- Researchers with good and credible track records within the research community;
- Some young and upcoming researchers so that the plight of 'underdog' researchers can be heard;
- Peers who are familiar with the contexts and histories of different institutional types, with international trends, and with the country's and the continent's development challenges;
- Peers with research management experience particularly at the senior management level of institutions, like Deputy Vice-Chancellors or Directors/Deans: Research;
- Peers who have some experience with research evaluation;
- Researchers representing a diversity of modes of knowledge production and domains of science;
- A selection of researchers that is balanced with regard to race, gender and institutional type.

The peer panels should measure research performance by considering the inputs (examples include funding and facilities available for research), processes (examples include research environment and culture) and outputs (examples include journal articles) jointly in order to establish a measure of research quality and performance. Based on the earlier discussion and a survey of literature (Averch 1993; Bauer 1990; Cave et al. 1991; Cazes 1972; Cozzens 1995; Davis 1996; Garfield 1979; Johnes 1998; Kells 1992; Kemp 1999; Kingsley 1993; Mouton *et al.* 2001; Ravjee 1999; Rip 1998; Weingart 1997; Van der Westhuizen 1998; Naidoo 1999) the following indicators are suggested as possible measures of research performance at the institutional level. The plan and evaluation should focus on the following criteria and benchmarks.

Input Measures

Post-graduate Enrolments Disaggregated by Race and Gender
* Post-graduate enrolments as percentage of total enrolments;
* Enrolments in research-based post-graduate programmes;
* Honours, Masters, and Doctoral enrolments as a percentage of total post-gaduate enrolments;
* Number of Post-doctoral candidates registered.

Postgraduate Scholarships Disaggregated by Race and Gender
* Number of applicants and recipients for internal scholarships;
* Number of applicants and recipients for external scholarships;
* Percentage success rate of applicants for external scholarships.

Percentage of Recurrent Grants Allocated
* Library;
* Research Grants;
* Scholarships;
* Computing;
* Research laboratories;
* Seminar rooms;
* Research Equipment;
* Publishing and Press.

Awarding of Competitive Grants
* University's ratio of internal/external grant income per staff member;
* Number of new grants/year from internal and external sources—differentiate between national and international.

Awarding of Commissioned Research
* Number of commissioned research projects;
* Total Rand value of commissioned research.

Process Measures

Quality of Staff Disaggregated by Age, Race, and Gender
* Percentage with doctorates;
* Percentage actively supervising post-graduates;
* Percentage actively doing research;
* Percentage currently holding research grants;
* Percentage of researchers that are international project leaders;
* Number of NRF rated scientists;
* Number of ex-CSD research units;
* Number of invitations for keynote addresses.

Research Facilities (Quality - Conditions, Access, Needs-driven, Service Orientation)
* Library;
* Computing;
* Research seminar rooms;
* Laboratories and equipment;
* Publishing and editing;
* Commissioning of Research;
* Commercialisation, Intellectual Property Rights and application of research;
* Disseminating and Marketing of research.

Support for Researchers and PGE Students
* Study facilities;
* Communication facilities (e-mail, phone, etc.);
* Access to computing facilities;
* Conference support per student;
* Methodology expertise and consultancy services;
* Training opportunities for proposal writing etc.
* Staff qualification upgrading;
* Total staff:student teaching and research ratios.

Research Management and Administration:
* Number of research management and administration staff;
* Research management and administration that is proactive and supportive;

* Established policies, procedures, practices and performance indicators;
* Information management system designed for research;
* Induction of new staff members.

Research and Post-graduate Education (PGE) Quality
* Established policies, procedures and practices to monitor research and PGE quality;
* Frequency of training workshops to promote research and PGE quality.

Research Culture
* Frequency of Seminar series;
* Number of visiting fellows;
* Frequency of research fairs and expo's;
* Presence of and functioning of a PGE student association;
* Special awards and functions that highlight postgraduate and research performance;
* Regularity of communication with researchers via newsletters, etc.
* Number of international linkages that relate to research;
* Number of international linkages that relate to PGE programs.

Output Measures

Research Outputs

Peer Evaluated (Refereed) Publications:
* Papers in refereed journals;
* Editorships of refereed journals;
* Book reviews that appeared in refereed journals;
* Responses to articles that appeared in refereed journals.

Grey Literature (Excluding Journal Articles)
* Research reports, policy analyses and conference papers, which have not yet been through an external peer review process, but have been circulated by their authors because of their perceived immediate theoretical, practical, policy or other relevance;
* Authored books;
* Edited books;
* Short works (including chapters in books, letters to journals, short papers, and official reports, review articles, monographs, entries in encyclopaedias and dictionaries, and working papers);
* Conference proceedings;

* Editorships of conference proceedings;
* Research reports including commissioned reports on policy analyses and annotated bibliographies;
* Indices and other research capacity development tools such as bibliographies or overviews of sources (papers and books) relevant to particular areas of research (with brief critical comments on the content of each if necessary).

Academic Reviews
* These focus critically on the quality of evidence and the firmness with which findings are supported by that evidence, and then endeavour to integrate findings into a coherent theory.

User Reviews
* Written with specific groups of teachers or policy-makers in mind and focus on particular findings that are credible and relevant to that audience.

Popular Reviews
* Articles that appear in newspapers or the popular press that demystify and promote the public understanding of research findings.

Output in the Performing/Visual Arts
* Original music scores, theatre scripts and paint/sculpture exhibitions.

Output in the Architectural, Engineering and Computer Sciences
* Design of databases and software programs; architectural and engineering designs; maps; and patents.

PGE Completion Times Disaggregated by Race and Gender
* Student satisfaction;
    Annual reviews;
    Exit surveys.

Examination Results
* Percentage of theses accepted without major revision;
* Examiner's comments;
* Awards/Prizes won by postgraduate.

Publications by Postgraduates
* Conference presentations;

* Refereed publications.

Graduate Destinations
* Postdoctoral placement;
* Employment in appropriate jobs;
* Employer surveys.

In line with the HEQC's mission, the first round of evaluation should be strongly developmental in that it should assist institutions to improve research performance. At the end of a three-year cycle, each institution should be evaluated based on the above criteria and benchmarks to determine the levels of success attained and the amount of financial support that National Education will provide. Incentives should be given to institutions that attain their goals. Those that do not attain their goals should provide explanations and develop remedial measures. If these institutions fail to produce these explanations and remedial measures, these institutions should be penalised.

If the existing software programmes cannot be adapted to take all the variables listed above into account, some software might have to be developed in such a way that departments could complete and report in some of the fields, whilst research offices and information management units fill in the rest.

Conclusion

Evaluation of research performance is fast gaining currency in the world. The recent establishment of the HEQC, recent proposals by the DoE on research funding and research output benchmarks engender greater accountability for spending taxpayer money. These systems would accelerate this global development within South Africa, in respect of research performance. As illustrated, there are many approaches and systems for evaluating research performance. Clearly, from our arguments above, the current SAPSE system is deficient, and the proposal for 1 SAPSE unit per full-time academic is unrealistic and inappropriate as a measure of research quality and impact. We propose an evaluation system based on a variety of performance indicators.

This system is relevant and will be mutually beneficial to the DoE and individual institutions. For institutions, the benefits in developing performance indicators would be to improve and monitor research performance, quality and impact, not only based on output measures, but on input and process measures. For the DoE, there will be better co-ordination with and among institutions, and the system would produce more efficient, accountable and effective mechanisms to

assess how research funding allocations are utilised, and what the return on investment is. Further, the DoE would realise increased research outputs and more trained researchers to meet the development challenges of South Africa and our continent. This would help to reposition our country in a fiercely competitive global economy.

<div align="right">

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* Note: When this article was written, both these authors were senior managers of research at the University of Durban-Westville.

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Statistical Trends in South African Book Publishing during the 1990s[1]

Francis Galloway

Introduction

The 1990s can be viewed as a Rubicon era for the South African book-publishing industry. The industry had to make the transition from functioning in a colonial and apartheid context to operating in the arena of the fledging post-apartheid democracy. On the eve of the 1990s, industry spokesmen were looking forward to an extremely challenging era—full of exciting opportunities, especially in educational publishing, which has long been the backbone of book publishing in South Africa. The time has now come to appraise the transition and to take stock of the shape and size of the book publishing industry. *Did the industry grow during this period of no return?*

One of the frustrating problems confronting analysts of the South African book trade is that statistics are simply not available in any sensibly organised format. This article briefly contextualises the book-publishing sector as a cultural industry, provides a bird's-eye view of the industry's intimate connection with the history of colonialism and apartheid and highlights general trends of the book publishing culture during the first decade of the 'New South Africa'. Statistical trends on the number of books published during the 1990s are presented, according to category and language profile. The information has been retrieved from a prototype database that was developed in the Programme for Publishing Studies at the University of Pretoria.

The history of book publishing in South Africa is intimately connected with the history of colonialism, apartheid and the transition to democracy. Various sources (for example Hofmeyer 1985 and 1987) bear testimony to the fact that South Africa's social history has been sustained, even delineated, by what was and what could not be published.

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[1] This article is based on a paper delivered at the international conference *Colonial and post-colonial cultures of the book* (Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 6-8 August 2001.

Colonialism, followed by apartheid, circumscribed the exchange of ideas, stunted the development of identities and nurtured the artificial growth of ideologies concerned with exclusion (Evans & Seeber 2000:4). But always there were—and still are—publishers (and books) opposing the order of the day in the hope of a new, democratic order.

The investigation into statistical trends in local book publishing during the 1990s is one outcome of a three-year research programme focusing on the relationship between production figures, publishing philosophy and market expansion or contraction in the South African book publishing industry. Empirical literary studies and systems theory provided the research framework. One of the more recent applications of this approach is the investigation into 'Cultural Identity' as a construction (Segers 1997:272). Within a constructive framework the cultural identity of a nation, or groups within a nation, are construed by the interaction between three factors:

- The formal characteristics concerning that nation or group at a given time in history ('facts', figures and statistics, *including the number of books produced and sold; the ratio of language of publication, genre and local versus imported or translated books, etc.*).

- The self-image of the nation or group (the 'programming of the mind' on which the cultural identity is constructed by the in-group).

- The outside image of the cultural identity of the nation or group (the way in which people from outside conduct a process of selection, interpretation and evaluation concerning the in-group).

Dreaming on the Threshold

On the threshold of the 1990s, book industry leaders and spokesmen had high hopes for (and also some reservations about) the South African book industry in the next decade. The symposium *Book Publishing in South Africa for the 1990s*, hosted by the South African Library in Cape Town in November 1990, offered a platform for forecasting future developments and scenarios such as these:

David Philip (of the independent, alternative David Philip Publishers) foresaw that the 1990s were going to be extremely challenging for South African authors and publishers, full of exciting opportunities, especially in education. According to him educational publishing was the one most crucial problem that had to be resolved:

It will require a different kind of courage, a different kind of energy and commitment and expertise .... In a very real sense the role of an oppositional publisher does not disappear just because the government changes. Publishers of integrity are or ought to be endemically independent, always prepared to give voice to criticism of the establishment, always the supporters of freedom and creativity, holding open the doors for discussion and debate (Philip 1991:21).

Douglas Reid Skinner (of the independent Carrefour Press) stated that book publishing in South Africa has never been separate from its distorted political and economic context. But what of the future?

There is so much change and so much hope in the air. Is not the term 'multicultural' a term with a future, a 'progressive' term? Will all the distortion be ironed out, the discipline of the market be embraced? Will we get an economy less subject to the abuses of the politically powerful? Will we get a country in which everyone's cultural choices are respected, even equally respected? .... We are more likely to carry on reaping the consequences of years of clumsy and misguided social engineering and interference in the economy .... We are likely to find ourselves with more government, not less, and we are likely to persist in our bad cultural engineering habits along with it (Skinner 1991:23f).

Kerneels Breytenbach (of the mainstream Afrikaner-owned Human & Rousseau) hoped that the new South Africa would be acknowledged as a multicultural country, that all cultural groups would be equal, and that publishers would be able to publish for any of them, in whatever language was most suitable.

The educational policy of the future must give a clear indication of the definition of a multicultural society .... This will enable publishers of educational books to establish and follow a publishing policy; as for general publishers, it will eventually mean a normal society whose needs and tastes can be fathomed and at which they may aim their books (Breytenbach 1991:27).

In February 1991 a seminar on *Publishing and Development in the Third World* (Altbach 1992) took place in Bellagio, Italy. Mothobi Mutloatse (of the alternative Skotaville Publishers) represented indigenous publishing in South Africa and he was confident that a new era would dawn during the 1990s:

A democratic government must of necessity remedy the actual publishing situation as swiftly as possible. Call it affirmative action to indigenous writers and the disadvantaged of society if you will .... Come what may ... we are reconstructing a new African order .... Out of the ashes of apartheid will emerge a new superpower, there's no doubt about it. And an indigenous publishing house such as Skotaville will find itself being the centre of attraction on an unprecedented level .... By the year 2000, Skotaville will have grown into a young giant (Mutloatse 1992:216,219, 220).

With hindsight one can today compile a list of questions based on this wish list, including: What happened to the independent book publishers during the 1990s and to the dream of a new (African) order for the industry? What became of the 'bad cultural engineering habits' of the previous era? Did the vision of a multicultural (and multilingual) celebration of homegrown books materialise? Did the relationship between the industry and government change? Did this 'cultural industry' (DACST 1998:5) grow during the 1990s? *Was there statistical evidence of growth?*

Book Publishing Culture During Apartheid

Book Publishing in Afrikaans
In the African context the Afrikaans book publishing industry occupies a special niche as an indigenous accomplishment. It developed from a two-pronged cultural agenda. On the one hand it grew out of its liberation from the Dutch linguistic heritage and the struggle against Anglicisation; on the other it was politically and culturally entrenched after the victory of the National Party in 1948. Prior to 1948 the lucrative school textbook market was relatively open (being also subject to the more liberal influence of the missionary press). After 1948, however, the Afrikaner-owned publishing houses played a dominant role in providing school textbooks whose uncritical approach to apartheid ideology posed no problem for the government (as pointed out in various essays in Kromberg 1993). From the 1920s an increasingly vibrant general and academic Afrikaans book publishing industry was maintained; the 1960s, in particular, heralded a growth spurt in Afrikaans literary production. During the 1970s and 1980s this growth was threatened by state censorship—which, ironically, stimulated the development of alternative and oppositional writing and publishing in Afrikaans, the language of the oppressor. The dominance of Afrikaans can be measured in terms of the number of books published at the height of apartheid. On the eve of the 1990s the Afrikaans literature was the

most flourishing indigenous literary tradition of the colonial era. Yet, with a few exceptions, black Afrikaans-speaking writers were not included in this mainstream celebration.

Book Publishing in African Languages

After 1948 the indigenous African languages and literatures were 'de-linked from their missionary patronage and inserted within the overall designs of apartheid's ideology of ethnic nationalism' (Oliphant 2000:117). On the one hand there was a growth in the published output of these languages, but on the other the growth was controlled and directed towards providing a brand of didactic and moralistic literature for a school market encapsulated by the Verwoerdian system of Bantu Education, including Language Boards created to 'develop' these languages and to recommend prescribed books. Referring to the state of writing and scholarship in the African languages, Maake (2000:127) stated:

> It can be said with a degree of truth that the literature has not yet, qualitatively or quantitatively, achieved the standards of Afrikaans and English literature, and that both creative *écriture* and critical writing are unpolitical, and have not fully established a bond with African literature as a whole.

This condition, he feels, is a result of the fact that literature in African languages 'has been under siege since its birth' and the victim of prevailing publishing conditions and gate keeping (Maake 2000:128).

Book Publishing in South African English

By 1966 writing in South Africa became 'virtually white by law' (Rive 1982:3). English writing by black South Africans produced during this period was systematically repressed through bans, arrests and exile. According to Oliphant (2000:118), what remained of English mainstream writing consisted of a compromised variant that, while compassionate, existed in uneasy complicity with the status quo. It was overseas publishers that provided an outlet for more radical anti-apartheid voices within the country as well as for the revolutionary literature written in exile. The oppressive policies and intimidating practices of the apartheid government made the 1960s and 1970s the decades of expatriate literature written and published in English.

Alternative/ Independent Publishing

The 1960s and 1970s were, however, also the era of courageous local oppositional publishers, including David Philip Publishers, AD Donker, Ravan Press, Skotaville, Taurus and others. With the exception of the first two, most independent publishing houses were dependent on overseas donors for support. Cloete (2000:43-72) provides an overview of the development and valuable contribution of alternative publishing from the early 1970s.

High hopes were pinned on the growth and vitality of indigenous publishing in the post-apartheid dispensation, based on the legacy of the oppositional publishing houses and indigenous language publishing. *What happened to this vision during the 1990s?*

Book Publishing during the Transitional Era

In order to contextualise the statistical trends presented below, general developments and issues concerning the book publishing culture of the 1990s are highlighted.

Mergers and Acquisitions and the Demise of the Independent publishers

The scale and rate of mergers and acquisitions during the 1990s completely changed the face of the book publishing industry. This phenomenon also changed

> the complexions and cultures of companies in ways that render apartheid 'collaborators' and 'non-collaborators' simplistic and unreliable categories for classifying the publishing houses of the 1990s; not only have political allegiances shifted in the South African publishing arena, but their threads have become inextricably interwoven (Evans & Seeber 2000:30f)[2].

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[2] Examples of mergers and acquisitions: Hodder & Stoughton Educational Southern Africa bought a majority share in Ravan Press in 1994. During 2000 Macmillan South Africa acquired Hodder & Stoughton Educational Southern Africa, which included the list of Ravan Press. New Africa Education and David Philip Publishers merged during 2001 to form New Africa Books. Nasionale Pers merged Nasou and Via Africa, and offered almost half of its shares to individual black shareholders and to the black consortium Thebe Investments. De Jager-HAUM sold half of its shares to the black-owned Kagiso Investment Holdings in 1994, resulting in a change of name to Kagiso Publishers. Maskew Miller Longman (itself a result of an earlier merger between Maskew Miller and Longman) took over Sached Books in 1995 (and closed it in 1999) and in 1998 they acquired Kagiso.

Through mergers and acquisitions, alternative publishing has been absorbed into mainstream publishing. Reasons for the decline and demise of the independent publishing houses include factors such as under-capitalisation, declining markets, dwindling funding and loss of staff through the dispersal of intellectuals and activists into the State apparatus, accompanied by a kind of political exhaustion (Cloete 2000:68f). This is a major loss, since mainstream publishing cannot perform the role of innovation and renewal. (An interesting development in the late 1990s has been, however, the emergence of new independents focusing on Afrikaans language publishing.)

Publishing and the New School Curriculum

During the 1990s a new school curriculum was introduced—with ground-shifting consequences for textbook publishing. Curriculum 2005, founded on outcomes-based methodologies, shifted the emphasis from rote learning and regurgitating of authoritative knowledge gleaned from prescribed textbooks to the development of critical faculties on the basis of a wide variety of learning resources. A highly polarised debate developed around the role of learning support material, especially prescribed textbooks, and the educational publisher and author as authorities of knowledge (Evans 2000:195-201).

The shift in educational approach forced educational publishers to develop learning material suitable for the new learning environment. They invested heavily in new projects. Then in 1996 some provincial departments announced that they would develop and publish their own educational materials—state publishing seemed imminent. This threat did not materialise, but by the end of 1997 the national Department of Education announced that it did not have sufficient funds to purchase books. One source claims that government expenditure on schoolbooks dropped from R800 million in 1997 to R120 million in 1998 (Seeber 2001:17). Given that the industry was dominated by educational publishing, the blow was severe. Downscaling in production led to many job losses and contributed in a large degree to the acquisitions and mergers discussed earlier. This crisis highlighted the symbiotic relationship between the publishing industry and the state in a developing democracy (Evans & Seeber 2000:38f).

Changing Higher Education Policies

Academic publishers also faced major shifts during the 1990s. Publishing programmes had to be adjusted according to a new market profile, caused by the increasing numbers of black students enrolling at historically white institutions

(Strauss Van der Linde & Plekker 2000: Fig 9 & Fig. 11), and to curriculum change and changing language profile (Smit 2000). Other factors that impacted negatively on the academic book sector included changing state funding formulas for tertiary education; large numbers of financially disadvantaged students entering the market; a dwindling book-buying culture and high levels of illegal photocopying. On the one hand the market for local titles fulfilling the need for relevant post-apartheid content grew. On the other hand, however, imported British and American titles continued to dominate the academic textbook market. During the apartheid era and in the transitional period, scholarly books on South African issues had a broad appeal and a potential international market, but this trend started to reverse. According to Horwitz-Gray (2000:161-171), we remain colonised in academic life. South African scholarly publishers seeking to publish leading authors now often find it necessary to co-publish with or buy rights from international publishers.

General Book Publishing

The textbook crisis of the 1990s spilled over beyond the educational arena, and the effects were felt in a reduction of certain small-market titles, including less viable projects such as literary genres and special-interest non-fiction, which many publishers customarily subsidise from their textbook profits. The local trade-publishing sector was vulnerable because it now had to operate in a multilingual society where books for leisure and pleasure should ideally be available in eleven languages (Van Zyl 2000a; Van der Merwe 2000a; Van der Merwe 2000b). The lack of a strong reading and book-buying culture hampered the expected growth of this sub-sector—books are luxury items for the majority of South Africans. And in spite of various programmes and initiatives to counteract illiteracy, the statistics remained daunting.

General publishing in Afrikaans seemed to hold its ground, due largely to the support of its language community (Van Zyl 2000b; Van Zyl 2001b). But no new market demand developed for general books in the African languages. English dominated the trade book market, despite being the first language of only 8,6% of South Africans (Deprez & Du Plessis 2000:101). At the same time the market was flooded with imported titles from the UK and USA, and the cream of local writers published internationally.

The Role of the Government

During the 1990s the government focused on service delivery–providing health care, housing and infrastructure to previously disadvantaged communities. Books (and

literacy and reading) were not amongst its priorities; nor was strengthening and stimulating the book industry (Evans & Seeber 2000:12).

The role of the government, according to Wafawarowa (2001:11) should not be to control but to facilitate and enable book development. The economic laws of supply and demand cannot be the sole regulator of book development. A democratic government should provide a suitable environment for the growth of the book sector and ensure that the country gets good returns on the incentives it gives to the private sector for book development.

As far as direct government involvement in generating partnerships between industry, government and civil society is concerned, only DACST became involved during the 1990s. (This involvement included the funding of the Centre for the Book; initiating emerging policy on the 'cultural industries' and the setting up of the Print Industries Cluster Council with the Department of Trade and Industry.) By the end of the 1990s South Africa, however, did not have a national book policy or a book development council.

Did the predicted growth of the book publishing industry (both in the number of books published and in the variety of language befitting the new multicultural democracy) materialise during the 1990s?

Statistical Trends during the 1990s

The Availability of Statistics
It is very difficult to obtain useful and reliable numeric data on the South African book publishing industry. In the UK the annual *Book sales yearbook* provides the industry with market intelligence (including new titles published during a specific year and comparative tables for three years) as well as category analysis. The analysis is based on primary data obtained from electronic point-of-sale driven tracking systems, which do not exist in South Africa.

In the past the Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA) made several efforts to conduct surveys of the South African book trade, but the results were so incomplete that no full picture could emerge; the government did not keep track of book trade statistics either. The *South African National Bibliography* provided some statistics of value, but it is primarily organised as a tool for librarians and its inclusiveness limits its use as a source of book trade statistics (Van Rooyen 1996:8).

The South African Publishing Industry Report (DACST 1998:72) did not provide any new primary statistical data on the book industry. The report stressed the need to generate and collate reliable statistics about turnover, volumes produced,

human resources, government spending and the like. *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa* (Evans & Seeber 2000) claimed to be the only

> ... single work available to date that analyses the issues surrounding book publishing in South Africa; that treats publishing as a strategic industry; and that provides a social and historical context as part of its analysis.

However, no primary statistical data was offered. Wesgro's Sector Research Section commissioned a report (Wesgro 2000) on the publishing industry in the Western Cape during 2000. This report confirmed that 'statistics are not readily available' in the book publishing industry. The compiler tabled turnover statistics for local book publishers, based on interviews with industry informants; production figures were not included. The publishing market profile produced by Global Publishing Information (GPI) tabled a 'fairly crude' estimated turnover for the fifteen top publishing houses, derived from 'best estimates based on various sources within the book trade' (GPI 2001:17); reference to turnover and production statistics were based on the Wesgro report and the University of Pretoria's *Production Trends Database* (Rall & Warricker 2000) respectively.

The Production Trends Database
During 2000 Nasboek, the book division of the media house Naspers, requested the Programme for Publishing Studies at the University of Pretoria to investigate the possibility of extracting useful statistical information regarding the number, categories and language profile of books published annually in South Africa from existing sources. A pilot research project, aimed at developing a prototype database for book production trends, was formulated. The objective was to retrieve comparative statistical data on the number of books (according to category and language profile) published during the 1990s.

Two Honours students in Publishing Studies addressed the following issues:

- To find a suitable primary source that contained the basic data needed to establish statistical trends.

- To find ways and means of extracting data from the primary source in order to compile cumulative statistics.

- To create an electronic database that could be updated on an ongoing basis in order to retrieve reliable data in the future (Rall & Warricker 2000).

The research design type was an empirical study based on secondary numeric data analysis. The analysis of the data involved breaking it down to manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships. The aim of the analysis was to see whether there were any patterns or trends that could be identified or isolated. The researchers were well aware that the strengths of secondary data analysis included savings in time and costs because of the use of existing data and the possibility of re-analysing previous findings. The limitations, however, were also taken into consideration: the researchers were not able to control all primary data collection errors; they were also constrained by the original objectives of the compilers of the primary data and by the effectiveness of the legal depositing of books by publishers.

The only source containing cumulative data on local publications, the *South African National Bibliography* (SANB) published by the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), was used as primary source. The SANB lists all published material submitted to the NLSA under the terms of the Legal Deposit Act (No. 54 of 1997). At the time when the pilot project was undertaken the SANB was compiled by means of an electronic database (DOBIS), which could be accessed at the NLSA and through the South African Bibliographic Network (SABINET). The printed format of the SANB ceased to exist in 2000. From 1997 it had become available on CD-ROM as part of the *African Studies Database,* produced and distributed by the National Inquiry Services Centre (NISC).

The three different formats were examined for their suitability for data retrieval. Each format posed unique problems. The major problem concerning the data contained in the printed volumes was that the records reflected the books received from publishers during a specific year and not necessarily the year of publication. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that there was a backlog in the capturing of the data into the SANB database. Although the search facilities on the CD-ROM were more user-friendly and searches could be conducted according to year of publication, comparative statistics could not be retrieved and it was not possible to distinguish between records containing an ISBN and those containing an ISSN. The CD-ROM, however, supported the facility of exporting retrieved data as ASCII text. This facility was used to import the required data into a searchable MS Access database. The following fields of data were selected for inclusion:

- Title;

- Publication date;

- Source (publisher and physical description of the publication);

- Language;

- SANB Call Number (Dewey Decimal Classification number);

- Category (e.g. fiction, juvenile);

- ISBN (International Standard Book Number);
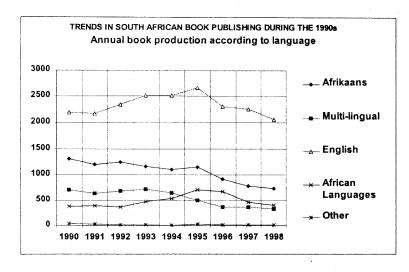
- Keywords (broad subject headings).

Once the data had been converted into MS Excel it was exported to MS Access. The data were exported in batches according to the year of publication and kept in different tables within the database. MS Access allows the user to sort records alphabetically or numerically. Using this function a total of 11 510 duplicate records was traced and, by defining the 'title' field of each record as primary key, these duplications as well as records for reprints (not revised editions) were removed. Records containing an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN)—issued for periodicals, magazines and loose-leaf publications—had to be removed manually. Incomplete records were verified by means of the publisher number within the ISBN.

The pilot project resulted in a prototype *Production Trends Database.* By July 2001 this database was the most sensibly organised source available on statistics of book production during the 1990s. The next phase of the research project was to verify the data and to update and expand the database.

Statistics on Overall Annual Book Production
During the period 1990-1998 a total of 40 057 new book titles were published in South Africa. This figure included all publications issued with an ISBN and published by a wide variety of role-players in the book publishing industry, including commercial publishing houses, self-publishers, organisations, institutions and government departments.

Fig. 1 *Annual book production according to language* (Rall & Warricker 2000: 21).

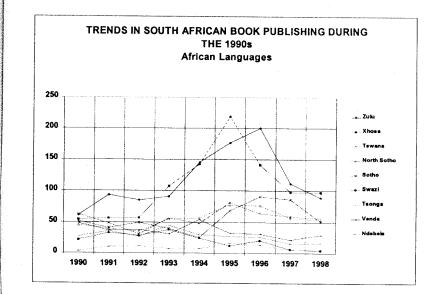|	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
Afrikaans	1295	1189	1236	1159	1092	1137	914	782	733	9537
Multilingual	704	630	683	717	643	500	369	370	333	4949
English	2197	2174	2350	2518	2519	2664	2306	2263	2069	21060
African Languages	372	394	361	470	531	710	662	458	401	4359
Other	33	21	17	16	4	21	17	13	10	152
Total	4601	4408	4647	4880	4789	5032	4268	3886	3546	40057

Annual book production peaked at 5000 in 1995. This marginal growth during the first five years of the decade was reversed during the latter part of the decade (during 1998 the production of new titles fell by 1000 compared to 1990). The general downward trend for all the languages reflected the effect of the educational crisis of the late 1990s. As far as the language profile of local book production was concerned, the following trends were manifested:

- A slight upward trend in the number of titles published in *English* between 1990 and 1995 and then a decline in numbers.

- A downward trend for titles published in *Afrikaans*.

- An upward trend in *African languages* until 1995 and then a downward one.

Because of the relatively small number of titles published in the nine African languages they were grouped together in this graph. (The naming of the African languages was based on the designations used in the SANB.)

The next graph reflects the breakdown in production figures according to the individual African languages:

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
Zulu	61	93	85	91	145	177	200	111	89	1052
Xhosa	54	56	57	107	142	219	141	98	97	971
Tswana	45	40	35	55	56	77	76	57	53	494
Northern Sotho	62	48	31	56	48	81	64	59	56	505
Sotho	51	41	49	40	25	68	91	86	51	502
Swazi	21	33	28	38	24	12	20	6	4	186
Tsonga	27	36	27	45	30	27	26	15	16	249
Venda	48	37	38	31	54	33	31	21	29	322
Ndebele	3	10	11	7	7	16	13	5	6	78
Total	372	394	361	470	531	710	662	458	401	4359
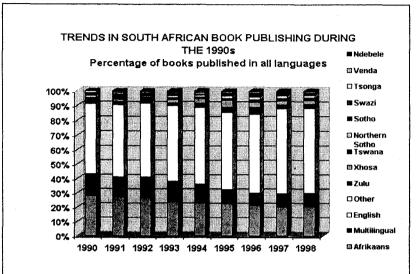
Fig. 2 *African languages profile* (Rall & Warricker 2000:22)

During the mid-1990s there was an upward trend, as well as an overall dominance, of publications in isiZulu and isiXhosa. From 1996 a downward trend in overall production was manifested.

The publishing scene in South Africa during the 1990s was dominated by English language titles:

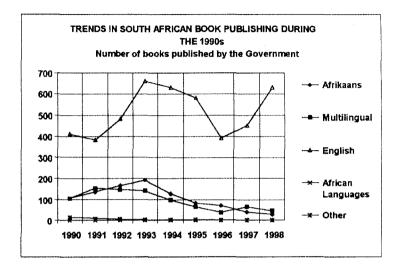|	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Afrikaans	28.15	26.97	26.60	23.75	22.80	22.60	21.42	20.12	20.67
Multilingual	15.30	14.29	14.70	14.69	13.43	9.94	8.65	9.52	9.39
English	47.75	49.32	50.57	51.60	52.60	52.94	54.03	58.23	58.35
Other	0.72	0.48	0.37	0.33	0.08	0.42	0.40	0.33	0.28
Zulu	1.33	2.11	1.83	1.86	3.03	3.52	4.69	2.86	2.51
Xhosa	1.17	1.27	1.23	2.19	2.97	4.35	3.30	2.52	2.74
Tswana	0.98	0.91	0.75	1.13	1.17	1.53	1.78	1.47	1.49
Northern Sotho	1.35	1.09	0.67	1.15	1.00	1.61	1.50	1.52	1.58
Sotho	1.11	0.93	1.05	0.82	0.52	1.35	2.13	2.21	1.44
Swazi	0.46	0.75	0.60	0.78	0.50	0.24	0.47	0.15	0.11
Tsonga	0.59	0.82	0.58	0.92	0.63	0.54	0.61	0.39	0.45
Venda	1.04	0.84	0.82	0.64	1.13	0.66	0.73	0.54	0.82
Ndebele	0.07	0.23	0.24	0.14	0.15	0.32	0.30	0.13	0.17
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Fig. 3: Percentage of books published in all languages (Rall & Warricker 2000:25).

The next graph represents the language profile of books published by state departments during this period. The numbers clearly reflect the fact that the government was not implementing a multilingual approach to its internal publishing programme.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
Afrikaans	105	135	167	193	127	81	71	39	28	946
Multilingual	105	154	147	143	96	65	37	66	45	858
English	412	382	482	660	628	582	392	451	628	4617
African Languages	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	13	9	5	2	3	3	1	1	0	37
Total	635	680	801	998	854	731	501	557	701	6458

Fig. 4: *Number of books published by the government* (Rall & Warricker 2000:37).
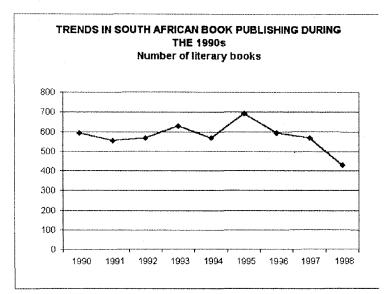
Statistics on literary publishing

All types of South African literature, from the advent of colonialism up to the transitional process of the 1990s, have been directly shaped by the economic, political, institutional and technological factors affecting publishing. Literary publishing in post-apartheid South Africa presents its own complexities and it is laced with what Oliphant
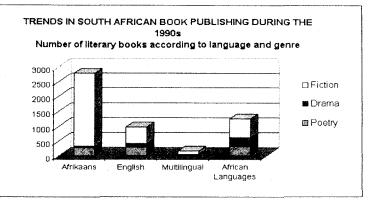
(2000:109) called 'historical ironies' such as 'the relative strength of local publishing output compared with the rather meagre output of South African literature in all the literary genres and languages'. The following graph, providing statistics on adult poetry, drama and fiction production (Galloway 2000), testifies to this meagre output of literature compared to the overall book publishing output presented in Fig.1.

TRENDS IN SOUTH AFRICAN BOOK PUBLISHING DURING THE 1990s
Number of literary books

1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
594	554	568	630	569	693	593	568	429

Fig. 5: *Number of literary books published* (Rall & Warricker 2000:45)

The output peaked during 1995 in anticipation of investment in the new educational curriculum and the traditionally lucrative school textbook market. Since then there has been a rapid decline in overall production of literary titles. The next two graphs represent a profile of literary production according to language and genre.

TRENDS IN SOUTH AFRICAN BOOK PUBLISHING DURING THE 1990s
Number of literary books according to language and genre

Language	Poetry	Drama	Fiction	Total
Afrikaans	283	53	2464	2800
English	302	127	545	974
Multilingual	34	20	109	163
African Languages	342	283	635	1260

Fig. 6 Literary production profile (Rall & Warricker 2000)

Afrikaans remained the dominant literary language in South Africa; storytelling in particular flourished during the 1990s. But Afrikaans literary publishing was no longer politically and institutionally protected and privileged and was numerically on the decline. The output in the combined *African languages* sector was higher than in the South African English literary publishing sector. But when this number was broken down to eleven individual languages, the graph became illegible. In spite of the new official status afforded by the Constitution, literature in the indigenous African languages remained trapped in the school-based and radio-drama markets; the statistics did not reflect the development of a new general adult readership.

More poetry and drama titles were published in *English*. In the past established English fiction writers have turned to international publishers rather than supporting the local publishing industry, but with more new black writers entering the field–preferring to write and publish in English–the statistics for local English fiction may reflect an upward trend from 1999.

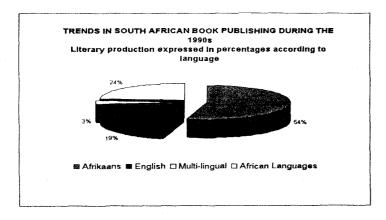Fig. 7: *Literary production expressed in percentage* (Rall & Warricker 2000:47).

Conclusion

South African publishing regressed during the 1990s–"in terms of diversity in ownership, as well as in the variety of its output, and perhaps also in its social importance" (Oliphant 2000:121). The vision of the growth and vitality of an indigenous industry, "based on the best features of the oppositional houses and on attention paid to indigenous language publishing" was bypassed (Combrinck & Davey 2000:230).

> During the 1990s it became clear how fundamentally writing and publishing had been stunted by colonialism and apartheid, to the extent that they have barely been able to survive the political transition, related as they were to the 'two economies'–developed and underdeveloped–in our society, and to the multiple languages and cultures that define us (Evans & Seeber 2000:7).

At institutional level the era of political transition chiselled out a new face for the book publishing industry of the future. According to Oliphant (2000:121) the publishing industry now finds itself in a democratic environment, where it has lost none of its national importance for the literary culture in South Africa, but radical changes are required for the industry to perform its role adequately. The next few years will be the real test for post-apartheid publishing in South Africa. Will the scales tip towards the fostering of indigenous knowledge systems and the development of a strong multilingual book publishing culture or towards new reading communities, transcending language and cultural groupings, with the advent of digital technologies and their global penetration?

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The Incredible Whiteness of Being

Judith Lütge Coullie

Review Article

Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight:
An African Childhood.
by Alexandra Fuller
London: Picador, 2002, 310 pp.
ISBN: 0330490222

Country of My Skull
by Antjie Krog
Johannesburg: Random House, 1998,
286 pp.
ISBN: 0958419515

The Whiteness of Bones
by Sarah Penny
South Africa: Penguin. 1997, 256 pp.
ISBN: 014026423X

People generally view the world from their own vantage point. Experiences of places, events, other individuals and groups, and even self, are apprehended through our own eyes, our own ears, our own skins, bodies and minds. It is from this ever-shifting centre that we evaluate all that impinges on—and that comprises—that experiencing self. Most people are, in a very general sense, self-centred; and this—in spite of structuralism, poststructuralism and postmodernism—remains valid.

And it is largely because readers expect to find this individualised viewpoint in autobiography that they are drawn to autobiography in the first place.

This is not to deny that there is a place (and a market) for testimonies of those who represent a group—and whose individuality is blurred behind their status as typical. A sub-genre of life writing which underplays the subjects' uniqueness and stresses the subjects' exemplary significance emerged in South Africa in the late 1970s and acquired some importance during the 1980s. These texts usually comprise collections of short testimonies by apartheid's victims. The principal value of such testimonial collections, at the time of their appearance, lay not in their ability to convey details about the lives of unique personages, but in their implied allusion to the experiences of countless others just like those whose stories were told. These texts give readers access not only to those who testify but also to the unknown women, men and children whose stories are not told but whose experiences are so very similar. Examples of these collections of mediated testimonies by apartheid's underdogs include *We Came to Town, Sibambene* and *Working Women*. These slim volumes gather together the brief accounts of men and women who lived, each day, with the degradations of institutionalised racism and the grinding poverty it generated, implying (sometimes by including accompanying photographs of other, unnamed people) that the individuals *spoke for* others like them. Also part of this subset, but even more conspicuous for its emphasis on the narrative subject's typicality, was the aggregated 'life story' recorded in *Thula Baba*. In this text, the subject and her account are amalgamations of a number of such people and their lives. Such a text shows not only that apartheid eroded human dignity for every one of its victims (represented by the various fictionalised characters) but also that apartheid effaced its victims: one name, one life story, being able to function metonymically for the millions, since racism is essentially inimical to individuality.

More recently, in post-apartheid South Africa, one can see something of this value placed on the subject's representativeness in the testimonies of those infected with AIDS. The reader is meant to understand that the women and men who have come out and testified and who are 'living positively' are not anomalies, but their experiences and stories are shared by thousands upon thousands of others (on whose behalf—to some extent—they speak).

Another example of life writing in which the subject's singularity is subordinated to her function as mouthpiece for the community, a non-South African text this time, is Rigoberta Menchú's *I, Rigoberta Menchú*. This mediated testimony came to provoke a storm of controversy because researchers found that certain of the narrator's claims about her experiences were false. She and her family had not—it was proven—been through everything she recounted. Menchú's rebuttal—and that of her supporters—was that *since* she was representing her people, the Quiché Indians of Guatemala, everything she said *was* true of their experience *as a people*. The detractors were accused of being too literal-minded in their insistence on a factual record of the narrator's life.

So there are instances in which life writing gives access to the typical, rather than the particular. Generally, however, even readers who are not quite so insistent upon verifiable historical accuracy may find generalised or symbolic testimonies less than satisfying. When an autobiography fails to convey a sense of a character who provides a singular source of apprehension and interpretation, when the autobiography records a bland sequence of occurrences, devoid of an inherent perceptual and narrating eye/I (to use Breytenbach's favourite pun), it may succeed

in drawing the reader because it conveys what are conceived of as larger 'truths' (as in the case of a witness to important events), but it will seldom succeed in drawing the reader into a relationship with the person implied or suggested by the autobiographical subject.

A large part of the dullness of barely individualised accounts derives from an unimaginative, crude use of words. If the words fail to depict a specific viewpoint, the reader will fail to imagine a specific *viewer* behind those words. For South African poet and critic, Stephan Watson, bland language—of which the cliché is an extreme example—marks not only an aesthetic failing, but also a moral one:

> Linguistically, there is no greater form of indifference to other people's suffering than the cliché. It is language's original sin. To reduce the suffering of others to cliché is to negate what every sufferer knows: the paradoxical uniqueness of that suffering, its irreducible individuality, its distance from that human coldness which every cliché contains at its heart (9).

In *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood* (London: Picador, 2002) Alexandra Fuller is equally adept at communicating human frailty, tragedy and humour. She deftly depicts her childish apprehension of reality. In Karoi, in Rhodesia, on a hot day,

> ... the heatwaves danced like spear-toting warriors off the grassland .... Grass, earth, air, buildings, skin, clothes all took on the same dust-blown glare of too much heat trapped in too little air (40f).

Her mother is often 'don't-interrupt-me-I'm-busy-all-day' (41), when she is not 'The Leaning Tower of Pissed' (31); a neighbour who has 'rock-hard bosoms encased in twin-set sweaters' and 'hair like a grey paper wasps' nest' will not allow the child to sit on the doily-bedecked chairs that her 'rash of small spoiled dogs' (70) enjoy. Fuller's accounts are vivid. For instance, she describes the day on which 'a small plague of two missionaries descended' (78): it was

> ... eye-ball-burning hot .... Our throats are papered with the heat; we sip at cups of cold, milky tea just enough to make spit in our mouths. The sky and air are so thick with wildfire smoke that we can't see the hills .... Swollen clouds scrape purple, fat bellies on the tops of the surrounding hills (79).

Suddenly, the dogs are alert. What appears is a 'vision': two fat white men, 'armed with thick, shiny black Bibles' (80). The missionaries are given stale bread sandwiches and tea in chipped mugs, eyed all the while by the dogs in whose flea-infested chairs they are sitting and whose repeated attempts to jump up onto their laps the two uncomfortable men deflect 'in an offhand, I'm-not-really-pushing-your-dog-off-my-lap-I-love-dogs-really kind of way' (82). They leave without having had a chance to '*fight the good fight*', but with swelling flea bites on their white legs.

Given Fuller's ability to do what good writers do—namely, allow the reader to share imaginatively in another's reality—it is small wonder that her book has been so widely praised. It is likely, I would imagine, to appeal both to specialist literary scholars and to a popular readership. The same is unlikely to apply to more trite texts which employ prototypical or proxy subjects. Indeed, this is borne out by the fact that such texts are produced in relatively small numbers. It is the most evocatively written personalised accounts of particular people, or those written by *extraordinary* individuals, which remain in print. By and large, readers read autobiographies not to get generalised assessments of places and times (for this we turn to politics, history, sociology or anthropology) but to get a sense of what it was like for a *particular* person to live through *particular* events. In this respect, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* is a wonderful read. One gets to feel that one has shared an intimacy with the author/narrator. In fact, this might more correctly be described as a sharing of intimacies—a whole string of them—with the central character as she grows up. So strong was this sense, for me, that I couldn't help feeling that the reference to the author as 'Alexandra'—when one has come to know her more familiarly as 'Bobo'—is rather stiff and overly formal, even misleading. Much in the way that you use your full, legal name, only with strangers or for official purposes. And by the end of *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* I certainly did not feel as though Fuller was a stranger to me.

Fuller recounts in evocative prose the foibles, flaws and idiosyncracies of her family, in (what was then) war-torn Rhodesia, and then later in Malawi and Zambia. We learn, for instance, of her mother's penchant for drunken exhibitionism. 'Mum', much to the embarrassment of her husband and children, 'has sung 'Olé, I Am a Bandit' at every bar under the southern African sun into which she has ever stepped' (15):

> 'Olé!' Mum sings at the club on Saturday night. 'I'm a bandit. I'm a bandit from Brazil. I'm the quickest on the trigger. When I shoot I shoot to kill...' She cocks her hip when she sings and sometimes she climbs up onto the bar and dances and shrugs her shoulders, slow-sexy, eyes half-mast, and sometimes she falls off the bar again (65f).

Ironically, when wielding an actual gun, she can't shoot straight.

At target practice she shuts her eyes and her mouth goes worm-bottom tight and she once put a round in the swimming pool wall and another time she shot a pattern, like beads on a string, across the bark of the flamboyant tree at the bottom of the garden. But she has never shot the target in the head or the heart where you are supposed to shoot it (66).

On their farm (purchased on credit in 1974), situated on the Mozambican border, this failing is serious. The farm is at 'the very birthplace and epicentre, of the civil war in Rhodesia and a freshly stoked civil war in Mozambique' (53). Bobo and her sister learn to load guns and practice target shooting; the family purchases a mineproofed Land Rover and collects an assortment of 'huge' dogs from the SPCA and from those left abandoned by civil-war fleeing farmers who 'gapped it ... without their pets' (54). Her mother and father join the police reservists.

'We were prepared to die ... to keep one country white-run' (23), her mother tells a visitor; we fought to maintain 'an oasis' in a continent which is 'a bloody cock-up' (18). Throughout, Fuller exposes the racism of her parents, herself and whites in general without flinching. The war they participated in was, they grumbled, 'instigated by "uppity blacks", "cheeky kaffirs", "bolshy muntus", "restless natives", "the houts"' (25). White children are exhorted not to undress in front of Africans or to behave like Africans by 'cement mixing' (mixing bread and tea together in their mouths when they eat) or picking their noses. Whites ensure that they do not use the same dishes as 'Affies'.

Fuller grows up bossing adult servants and their children alike. On numerous occasions she threatens: 'I can fire you if I like' (140). However privileged the Fullers are, as the ones who are waited upon by numerous servants, finances and nerves are strained. The Fullers watch themselves being watched.

> We drive through the Tribal Trust Lands to get to town, past Africans whose hatred reflects like sun in a mirror of our faces, impossible to ignore. Young African men slouch aggressively against the walls of the taverns. Their eyes follow as we hurry past, and we stare at them until they are swallowed in the cloud of dust kicked up behind the armed convoy and the mine-detecting Pookie and the snake of farmers coming into town to sell green peppers and mealies, tobacco and milk. Outside one of the African stores (which advertise Cafenol for headaches and Enos Liver Salts for indigestion and Coke for added life on bullet-pocked billboards) there is a gong hanging from a tree. When our convoy thunders through, an old woman squatting under the shade of the tree gets painfully to her feet and beats the gong with surprising vigour.

The sound of that gong echoes through the flat, dry TTL and bounces against the hills that border them. Anyone camped in those hiding, thick hills or crouched behind boulders by the side of the road can hear the warning. We know now that we are being watched. A blink of binocular glass against the rocks up in the hills. An unnatural sway of thigh-deep grass on a still day. The shaking foliage of a tree as branches are parted, then allowed to spring back. Mum sits back in her seat and slides the Uzi forward out of the window.

She says, 'Be ready to put your heads down, girls.' (58f)

Fuller's account is effective because it is so precise, discriminating and intimate. But it is effective, too, because it goes beyond the personal to evoke a sense of what it must have been like for many—perhaps most—whites during the Chimurenga (the civil war) and then after. After years of believing that God was on their side, they not only lose the war but discover that while there are many black heroes, there are 'no white war heroes' (151). As the schools become multi-racial, Fuller is amazed to discover that African children also have surnames and 'manners' (151) and that her white skin is the object of scorn. It is,

> ... the *wrong* colour. The way I am burned by the sun, scorched by flinging sand, prickled by heat. The way my skin erupts in miniature volcanoes of protest in the presence of tsetse flies, mosquitoes, ticks. The way I stand out against the khaki like a large marshmallow to a gook with a gun. White. African. White-African.
>
> 'But what are you?' I am asked over and over again.
> 'Where are you from *originally*?' (8)

And this brings me to a refinement of my earlier argument that it is the specific, the private, the personal that readers of autobiography tend to seek. They do seek this, but it seems to me that the self-representational writing which is most successful, most likely to be remembered, is that which can somehow *simultaneously* convey an understanding of how such experiences have significance *beyond* the singular and distinctive experiences of the narrating subject. I referred earlier to the self-centredness of autobiographical records. But of course, the narrating/focalising centre which readers seek to understand better is neither stable nor self-defined: much of who we are and how we perceive things (even our selves) is determined and shaped by our historical, political, cultural and—especially in southern Africa—racial circumstances. And it is this that marks *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* as a work of greater moment than might be expected of a record of the experiences of

an obscure white Zimbabwean.

Fuller lets the reader into the secret spaces of her life and that of her mother, father and sister, but she also lets us into the somewhat enigmatic lives of a broader community of white Rhodesians. Their lives were enigmatic because their values and beliefs and practices were taken for granted and hidden in plain view of those who were subjected to their economic, cultural and political domination. When Peter Abrahams, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Bloke Modisane, Bessie Head and Frantz Fanon were examining—painstakingly and painfully—the meanings of *being black*, most whites were simply *being*. Inhabiting a skin which secured positions of power, meant that there was, for the vast majority of whites, no psychic necessity to scrutinise the hegemonic norms which they took to be simply, unquestionably, obviously normal.

But this has changed. More and more whites are reinterpreting past experience and identities and are, in the process, questioning the significance of race. Ex-patriot South Africa Stephan Taylor retraces Livingstone's steps in search of what Taylor calls a dying tribe: the whites who have remained in post-colonial African states. Prompted by an interest (shared by others) in what it means to be white—in the context of Africa—Taylor's *Livingstone's Tribe: A Journey from Zanzibar to the Cape* has met with a ready readership. Earlier, Zimbabwean autobiographer, Peter Godwin, probed his life story for racial significance in *Mukiwa* (appropriately, the Shona word for white man). And a growing number of white South African autobiographers have also focused on this issue. Writers like Breyten Breytenbach (in all of his autobiographical writing, but perhaps most systematically in *True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* and *Dog Heart (A Travel Memoir)*); Lyndall Gordon in *Shared Lives;* Riaan Malan in *My Traitor's Heart;* Ian Player in *Zululand Wilderness*; and even, briefly, the late Marike de Klerk in her eponymous life story: all have questioned their racial identities.

Autobiographical attempts by whites from southern African to grow beyond the virtually unassailable and unyielding boundaries of their own hegemonic culture vary in approach. In *The Whiteness of Bones* Sarah Penny tells the story of her journey in the early 'nineties through Africa with a friend, Cyril. Bearing in mind that during apartheid, white South Africans were generally prevented from travelling in most of Africa due to the OAU's opposition to apartheid, the journey that she and her friend undertook was to a continent which was largely unknown to white South Africans. The venture is described by the publishers as Penny's rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood, from cultural myopia to a measure of comprehension of her 'place in a country and a continent which had turned their backs on one another for over forty years'. (The quotation is from the publisher's note, back cover.)

Penny was born in Cape Town in 1970 into an English-speaking, upper middle class, fairly liberal family—the kind that would never have supported apartheid or any sort of Afrikaner Nationalism. She typifies the non-conformist white liberal who is disdainful of crude racism. She feels quite secure in the knowledge that race and gender do not matter to her. But in Zimbabwe, at the Harare Show, when she and Cyril mix not with the whites who 'kept to their own groups, and away from the crowd', the women 'closeted in the ranks of their men' but rather with the Africans, she finds she has to keep 'side-stepping to avoid being pinched. Hands seemed to shoot out of nowhere and grab at my breast or thighs'. She is forced to confront her own vulnerability as 'a solitary white and a girl' (116). And at the Falls, she is threatened by a group of hostile black men. She realises that her fear of rape is mixed up with her own previously unacknowledged racism:

> Of course [rape] wasn't the preserve of black men, white men raped too, but their inflictions did not summon the same blanket terror …. Across the enormous gulf, black society was alien and incomprehensible. Its members had been offered up to us as servants and now we feared that we would be offered up as victims (84).

Her callow assumption that her race does not matter because it does not matter *to her* crumbles when she is mocked and groped by black men. It strikes her then that non-racism and non-sexism are a lot easier on white liberal university campuses than out amongst ordinary African people who still bear the scars of racist oppression. Penny's righteous rejection of racism as a schoolgirl—wrapped up in anti-Afrikaner prejudice and snobbishness (against those 'who had no art in their soul'; 118)—now seems naïve. Re-examining her participation as a university student in anti-apartheid protests, Penny confesses to the element of smug self-satisfaction afforded by her activism, in defence of 'the creed of the left': 'Non racism, non-sexism and democracy' (120). The prospect of a democratic South Africa in the near future, she is shocked to discover, might mean 'a curtailment of freedoms' (121) for her, as a white woman. The slogans and 'rehearsed ideology' (121) of the liberal protester fail to be relevant and ring hollow. She finds that it is her race as much as her gender which marks her as a target:

> This black/white thing, this man/woman thing—I wanted these divisions to be myths only, but they would not become myths. I am mocked because I am white, I am molested because I am a girl. If I pretend not to see the divisions, they will still exist and others will insist on them. Africa is a continent of polarisations.

To the black mass I am the enemy.
For the first time in my life, I was essentially aware of myself not as a young woman, but as a young white woman.
A member of the white race (118).

An especially contrite white South African is Wilhelm Verwoerd (grandson of *the* infamous Verwoerd). He comes to reject his membership of the Afrikaner *volk* as well as of the white race. My *Winds of Change* is his conversion narrative: conversion from die-hard Nationalist (and member of the junior Broederbond) to ANC member, from someone who realises with some surprise that 'non-whites' are people too (!) to non-racist; from typically patronising male to non-sexist; and from white Afrikaner to '"pigment poor" "afrika-ner"'. He prefaces the text with the following quote from the New Testament, urging confession upon sinners:

> *If you bring forth what is in you, what you bring forth will save you;*
> *If you do not bring forth what is in you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you* (n.p.).

The barrage of confessions and testimonies which emerge from the TRC hearings cause another Afrikaner to interrogate her identity as an Afrikaner and a white South African. In her role as reporter on the TRC, Antjie Krog confronts realities which were so successfully obscured by the apartheid state. Her account of these traumatic experiences is given in the multiple-award-winning *Country of My Skull*. The revelations of those who testify open up a whole new set of truths which provoke self-questioning and ultimately, self-refashioning:

> Is truth that closely related to identity? It must be. What you believe to be true depends on who you believe yourself to be (99).

Krog is sensitive to the fact that the worst perpetrators were either Afrikaners or they were the underlings of Afrikaners. She thus dedicates the book to 'every victim who had an Afrikaner surname on her lips'. However melodramatic this may sound, Krog's position is neither simple nor certain: at times she lurches from recognition of and identification with the Afrikaans speakers ('I go cold with recognition', 90), to anger against, and fear and rejection of, the Afrikaners who are 'the doers', the ones who did not hide behind euphemism. They are, she says, the 'nightmare of my youth' (90). Their bodies can be objectified to be read not as the vulnerable corporeal selves of feeling human beings, but as composites of inscrutable sign systems:

I go sit in a bench close to them. To look for signs—their hands, their fingernails, in their eyes, on their lips—signs that these are the faces of killers, of The Other. For future reference: the Face of Evil (90).

Their very speech, in her mother tongue, is heard with the ear of an activist; it 'makes my tongue go dry' (90).

But the distances crumble gradually as she interviews each of the 'white Afrikaner terrorist[s]' (94) to find out what she has in common with them. For these interchanges she uses 'all the codes I grew up with, and have been fighting against for a lifetime' (92). She acknowledges that these men have families, have been cast adrift by the Afrikaner community and even by the very leadership who gave them their orders. She understands, too, that there is no clear answer regarding just what they can do to effect reparation and reconciliation (93). As she tries 'to give evil a human face' (97), she takes cognisance of the importance of the apparently banal admission that what they did was wrong, that 'the central truth' around which their lives have been built 'is a lie' (95). She both abhors and cares for these men (97) who 'are as familiar as my brothers, cousins and school friends' (96); she and they are part of the same culture, 'that culture [which] over decades hatched the abominations' (96) and which must now ask for amnesty. And the psychiatrist she consults for his interpretations of the interviews reminds her (and us) that these men did what they did so that the rest of the whites could feel secure in a 'European' South Africa (93).

It is a complicity which she comes to accept as her own and that of all 'who did not do enough, who did not resist, who were passive'; this admission causes her skin to erupt in a rash (97). It is 'the Leader['s]' (98) refusal to acknowledge this moral guilt, his cowardly denials of blame, his failure to lead the Afrikaners out of the 'guilt and despair' and resentment which festers as the TRC testimonies emerge, which arouses her repugnancy on behalf of her father and mother and other ordinary Afrikaners, for whom being an Afrikaner is sacred and a source of pride and weighted with significance and responsibility and entangled with love of father, mother, family (98); of language and landscape (48).

Krog wrestles with psychic and bodily traumas of enduring the relentless barrage of testimony; she endures dislocation from her family (e.g. 48f). Moreover, in attempting to describe the process, she grapples with the ethics of narrative appropriation in reporting on the testimonies. She struggles with language's limitations, straining to find the words to recount the eruptions of anguish; yet she is repulsed by her profession as wordsmith, as purveyor of misery:

No poetry should come from this. May my hand fall off if I write this.

So I sit around. Naturally and unnaturally without words. Stunned by the knowledge of the price people have paid for their words. If I write this, I exploit and betray. If I don't, I die (1998:49).

(Interestingly, these words echo those of her mother, writing almost 40 years earlier, about the assassination of the man who epitomises the other side, the side of the racists, namely, H.F. Verwoerd; (98)). Krog asks how language can transcend its own banalities, its deficiencies, to record grief, guilt, the torments of experience. The faltering, imperfect words of the victims burn into consciousness, the unconscious, and blur the boundaries of self and other.

Through the narrative Krog literally and figuratively comes to terms with pain-laced fragments of history, and in so doing she (re)locates herself in that past, in the present of disclosure and exposure, and in the future of the emerging new South Africa. She recognises gratefully that it is through the Truth Commission that a new South African-ness is emerging:

> because of you
> this country no longer lies between us but within
>
> it breathes becalmed
> after being wounded
> in its wondrous throat
>
> in the cradle of my skull
> it sings ... (278f).

The symbol of the new South Africa holds within it the promise of reconciliation between the unendurable knowledge of the past and the primal yearning for renewal, absolution and redress. In their life-writing many—though not all—whites from South (and southern) Africa are striving to measure up to the ideals of the new South Africa. Singing the multi-lingual new national anthem—which is itself a marvel of reconciliation—Krog says,

> And I wade into song—in a language that is not mine, in a tongue I do not know. It is fragrant inside the song, and among the keynotes of sorrow and suffering there are soft silences where we who belong to this landscape, all of us, can come to rest (217).

All of the autobiographers referred to above have joined the growing ranks of those whites who use autobiography not merely to record a kind of life, but to *confess* to all who care to listen to their racialised s(k)ins. In *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* Fuller draws us into her childhood world, a world coloured white by prejudice and privilege, yes, but also by fear and tragedy, by war and death, and by the manic determination to hang on to what is an increasingly in-credible whiteness of being.

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Recent Reviews of Life Writing Publications

List of Publications Consulted

All publications are from South Africa, unless otherwise indicated.
Prices are quoted in South African Rands.

Cape Argus	*Mail & Guardian*
Cape Times	*The Mercury*
City Press	*The Natal Witness*
The Citizen	*Pace*
D'Arts	*Pretoria News*
De Kat	*Saturday Dispatch*
Die Burger	*Scrutiny2*
Eastern Province Herald	*The Star*
East Cape Weekend	*The Sunday Independent*
Fairlady	*Sunday Times*
The Herald	*Sunday Tribune*
Journal of Southern African Studies	

Ackerman, Raymond
Hearing Grasshoppers Jump: The Story of Raymond Ackerman as told to Denise Pritchard.
by Raymond Ackerman.
Cape Town: David Philip, 2001, 342pp. R149,95.
This biography of businessman Raymond Ackerman recounts the growth of his business empire, situating these developments in the context of South African politics. Ackerman is characterised as an astute strategist, brilliant businessman and someone with a big heart.
> Unnamed reviewer. *De Kat* July - August 2001:87.

Alagiah, George
A Passage to Africa.
by George Alagiah.
London: Little, Brown & Company, 2001, 286 pp. R189,00.
Born in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Alagiah grew up in Ghana. A Passage to Africa is an autobiographical account of this BBC journalist's travels in Africa—in Ghana, Liberia, Somalia, Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe and South Africa. He gives an eyewitness account of newsworthy events, and his experiences of them. For readers who seek an overview of recent political developments, Alagiah's book offers a stimulating history lesson. Occasionally romanticised and reliant on generalisation, Alagiah nevertheless maintains a critical distance.
> Herman Wasserman. *Die Burger* 11 February 2002:7.

Passage to Africa 'is a profound, soul-stirring and introspective exploration' of Alagiah's relationship with the continent.
> Sandile Mimela. *City Press* 9 December 2001:26.

Buckle, Catherine
African Tears: The Zimbabwe Land Invasions.
by Catherine Buckle.
Pretoria: Covos Day, 2001, 243 pp. R115,00
As the land grab campaign that started in Zimbabwe in 2000 escalated, farmers who were helpless in the face of state-orchestrated terror kept the world informed of developments via e-mail. African Tears is the product of Catherine Buckle's e-mail correspondence. It is 'the most chilling, most depressing book I have read in a long while. It begs comparison with what it must have been like to have been a Jew in Germany in the thirties'. However, what strikes one is not so much a race war, but rather 'a campaign of political terror conducted by political thugs whose role models are the soldiers who murdered thousands in Matabeleland in the early eighties, rather than the liberation fighters who fought for a just society.'
> Yves Vanderhaeghen. *The Natal Witness* June 8 2001:6.

Highly topical and very disturbing, this book climbs out from behind the headlines and the politicking to present the reality of the land grabs happening in Zimbabwe. Buckle has given a shocking human face to an issue that is growing more and more urgent.
> Michele Magwood. *Sunday Times, Lifestyle* June 10 2001:13.

Campbell, Roy
Bloomsbury and Beyond: The Friends and Enemies of Roy Campbell.
by Joseph Pearce.
London: Harper Collins, 2001, xii & 340, R194,00.
In this new biography, coinciding with the centenary of Campbell's birth, Joseph Pearce examines previously unpublished material. He has produced a 'rich and engaging insight' into Campbell.
> Moira Lovell. *The Natal Witness* June 8 2001: 6.

Chimeloane, Rrekgetsi
Whose Laetie are you? My Sowetan Boyhood.
by Rrekgetsi Chimeloane.
Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2001, 136pp. R50,00.
To be asked 'Whose Laetie are you?' in the Soweto (South Africa) of the 1970s was
a recognition ritual. You told people who your older brothers were and you were
immediately known and placed in the township hierarchy. Chimeloane grew up in
Soweto in the 1960s and 1970s and this delightful memoir—more personal than
political—offers an appealing glimpse into a childhood world of frightening dogs,
games, fights, friendships and delights in times of profound turmoil.
　　　Margaret von Klemperer. *The Natal Witness* June 8 2001:6.

Original and powerfully honest, Whose Laetie are you? is an autobiographical
journey of a boy growing up in South Africa's largest township.
　　　Unnamed reviewer. *Sunday Tribune, Magazine* July 15 2001:6.

Coetzee, J.M.
Youth.
by J.M. Coetzee.
London: Secker & Warburg, 2002, 169 pp. R165,00.
In Britain, JM Coetzee's new book has been read as a novel. Yet it is clearly an
autobiography, one that follows on the first volume, Boyhood: Scenes from
Provincial Life. The distinction impacts on reading strategies: as Craig Raine argues,
'With fiction, the reader constantly asks why? Autobiography apparently answers
this question before it can be asked: incidents, details, are included because they
happened.' The reader is going to be interested in *Youth* because it is the
autobiography of a writer whose fiction is already known; to read it as a novel is to
be disappointed. *Youth*'s lack of shapeliness and rather hard, cold prose alone should
make its autobiographical status clear, especially if one compares it to Coetzee's
novels. Coetzee's use of the third person is a distancing manoeuvre, and he is
merciless in his portrayal of this miserable, half-deluded John (between the ages of
19 and 24) and his passive, ne'er-do-well father and clinging mother. The book's
conclusion is inconclusive, but the doubts about art that plague John are those that
have informed Coetzee's fiction and criticism ever since.
　　　Shaun de Waal. *Mail & Guardian: Friday* May 10 - 16 2002:3.

The narrator, a student at the University of Cape Town, seems to dislike women: his
behaviour when a young woman he has impregnated has an abortion is, he observes,
ignominious. He writes: 'He prays she will never tell the story to anyone'. Perhaps

within this beautifully written little sentence lies the utter tragedy and ghastliness of
Youth. The narrator cannot make contact with people. He fears the loss of face and
of his non-existent art. But the joke is on him in the end, because he cannot be an
artist because he is too scared of failure.
　　　Can this be everything this slim novel is about? If it is about something
more profound I could not find it. *Youth* is 'one of the most beautifully written books
about nothing that I have had the privilege to read.' It is a depressing book 'about
god-forsaken people who would all have benefited the reading public greatly if they
had not been inflicted on them.'
　　　Jennifer Crocker. *Cape Times*. May 20 2002:9.

Colenso, Harriette
*The View Across the River: Harriette Colenso and the Zulu Struggle Against
Imperialism.*
by Jeff Guy.
Cape Town: David Philip, 2001, 498pp. R149,95.
This is 'a fluently written recapitulation of the public life of a remarkable person
and, simultaneously, a carefully wrought study of key events in a formative period
for whole societies. A world springs alive in Jeff Guy's readily accessible,
evocatively gripping, always scholarly writing on an outstanding woman' whose
unswerving opposition to colonial injustice led to her lasting commitment to the
Zulu struggle. The narrator distances himself from lapses into novelist-like
speculation about emotions and thoughts; he abjures elevating the characters to
saint-like forbearance; and he rejects the many trivialising stereotypes associated
with writing about European women in colonial African history.
　　　Alan Lipman. *The Sunday Independent* 30 December 2001:18.

Coulter, Jean
Remembering ... The Life, the People and the Places.
by Coulter, Jean
(Further information not available at time of going to press.) R100.00.
This book is packed with the author's memories of growing up in the Transkei and
Pondoland, in South Africa. It is rich in history, illustration and anecdote.
　　　Hugh Baakens. *The Herald* May 4 2002:4.

Denis, Philippe
The Casspir and the Cross: Voices of Black Clergy in the Natal Midlands.
by Philippe Denis, Thulani Mlotshwa and George Mukuka.
Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 1999, 102 pp. R40,00.

This short book is the result of a research project located at the School of Theology at the University of Natal in South Africa. It aims to contribute to the writing of history from below by recovering the 'silenced memories' of 34 members of the black clergy who lived in the Natal midlands during the apartheid years 1948-1994. The oral interviews are arranged thematically: chapter one looks at discrimination in daily life; chapter two records discrimination within the church and chapter three at the formation of black caucuses within mainstream churches in response to apartheid. The last two chapters focus on protest and political violence in the broader society.

While the book provides fascinating and rich oral testimonies, the fact that the authors provide no analysis, argument or interpretation is an abdication of the responsibility to challenge hegemonic accounts.

> Debby Bonnin. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27,1, March 2001:179 - 180.

de Lille, Patricia
Patricia de Lille
by Charlene Smith.
Cape Town: Spearhead, 2002. 202pp. R130.
Journalist Charlene Smith's biography of the South African Pan Africanist Congress parliamentarian Patricia de Lille holds her up as an heroic figure. Smith etches out a full portrait of a woman in all her multiple facets—from the teenager forced to part with her daughter, to the grief-stricken sibling vowing to bring her sister's murderer's and rapists to justice, to the middle-aged woman struggling against cancer and exposing the South African State's arms scandal. Although 'this well-written biography tends to lose focus somewhat', it 'succeeds in revealing how much [South Africa] needs people like de Lille'.

> Nichole Temkin. *Mail & Guardian: Friday* May 17 - 23 2002: 3.

This biography is essentially about how this parliamentarian, a member of a small opposition party, has managed to 'hog the headlines' in South Africa. It 'is a good read that not only provides an insight into Patricia de Lille as a public and political persona but also into how political parties operate within the parliamentary context' in post-apartheid South Africa.

> Patrick Cull. *The Herald: La Femme* April 10 2002: 4.

Smith's account brings us closer to the defiant and fearless woman whose role in the exposure of corruption in the South African Government's arms deal elicited death threats, who has challenged the President, Thabo Mbeki, and his government's AIDS policy, as well as their responses to the Zimbabwean elections.

> Maureen Isaacson. *The Sunday Independent* March 24 2002: 6.

Along with Helen Suzman, de Lille has changed the way South Africans perceive and play politics and the way in which women see themselves. What shines through in this (occasionally sloppily-edited) biography, in which the subject gave full co-operation to the author, is that this remarkable woman 'is the ultimate patriot'.

> Yvonne Grimbeek. *Pretoria News: Interval* April 22 2002: 10.

De Wet, Christiaan
The Great Escape of the Boer Pimpernel: Christiaan de Wet. The Making of a Legend.
by Fransjohan Pretorius.
Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2001, 240 pp. R145,00.
That a few poorly educated men, largely farmers, who valued their independence highly, could produce a military force that tied the world's greatest empire in knots for three years the during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) still strikes us as worthy of study. Christiaan de Wet, the subject of this biography, was a farmer and a leader of a commando (the Boer term for militia); he illustrates many of the characteristics that made that long defiance of Britain possible.

This is a soundly written account and suffers only from the lack of good, detailed maps.

> Dalvan M. Coger. *The African Book Publishing Record* 27,4, 2001:310.

Dolny, Helena
Banking on Change.
by Helena Dolny.
London: Viking, 2001, 346 pp. R129,95.
'Helena Dolny, Joe Slovo's widow and former 'disgraced' managing director of the [South African] Land Bank, soundly exposes the dirty tricks behind its shafting of her in this intriguing read about the transformation of a white male-dominated, apartheid structure to its present success story. A brave, compelling and important book.'

> Unnamed reviewer. *True Love* June 2001:121.

Evans, Gavin
Dancing Shoes is Dead: A Tale of Fighting Men in South Africa.
by Gavin Evans.
London: Doubleday, 2002, 470 pp. R148,00.

There is an unfiltered honesty about Evans's descriptions of his childhood, and on this foundation he builds an account of his later experiences. These are divided between accounts of his growing political involvement in the underground movement of the ANC and his work as a boxing journalist.

What makes the book is Evans's effortless style. Laced with a dry, cynical belief in the fallibility of human nature, his writing is simple and direct. It is a book that anyone who abhorred apartheid should read.

Ray Hartley. *Sunday Times, Lifestyle* March 10 2002:13.

This is a real-life, riveting string of stories recollected by Evans about his youth—inside the amateur boxing ring and as a young member of the ANC underground in the Eastern Cape. This 'vivid and incisive portrayal' of twin passions is set against the backdrop of South Africa under apartheid. It is a must-read for boxing fans and historically-minded readers alike.

Hugo Hagen. *The Citizen* March 18 2002:14.

'Compellingly written, it is riveting from cover to cover. ... [It] is unmissable—one of the finest reads to emerge from South Africa in recent decades.'

Tony Weaver. *Cape Times* March 18 2002:11.

'*Dancing Shoes is Dead* boasts some of the most gripping and intelligent writing on the sport [of boxing] I've read, combining knowledge of the ring ... with a complex political and personal hinterland.' 'Among other things, this book is a major addition to the literature of activist burn-out .... In his ambivalence towards both the heroic years of struggle [against apartheid] and the compromised realities of post-apartheid South Africa, Evans is not alone among veterans of the movement.'

Mike Marqusee. *Mail & Guardian: Friday* March 8 - 14 2002:5.

The title and cover are misleading: 'the book is an autobiographical work that uses boxing' (Jacob 'Dancing Shoes' Morake was a great South African boxer of the 1980s and early 1990s) 'and politics as beasts of burden bearing the yoke of pulling the cart (book) along .... For Evans alone, an autobiography would be as difficult to sell as fridges in Alaska. He is not a great name.' Nevertheless, boxing and politics are 'integral to his life' and this is 'a great book'.

Andrew Molefe. *The Sunday Independent* April 28 2002:18.

Fordyce, Bruce
Bruce Fordyce: Comrades King.
by John Cameron-Dow.

Parklands: Guide Book Publications, 2001, 272 pp. R99,95.
John Cameron-Dow's account captures in a very readable manner the varied depth of Bruce Fordyce, one of South Africa's all-time sporting greats, the eight times winner of the Comrades Marathon.

Simnikiwe Xabanisa. *Sunday Times, Lifestyle* June 10 2001:13.

Fuller, Alexandra
Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight.
by Alexandra Fuller.
London: Picador, 2002, 400 pp. R137,00.
Alexandra Fuller's story of growing up as the youngest member of a dysfunctional family in the sweltering madness of Rhodesia's civil war, is 'simply spellbinding'. Fuller came to Africa when she was two, and by the time she was five she could strip and clean all the guns in the house, load a rifle and shoot to kill; but it's really her relationship with her family that lifts the book from the danger of being just another African tale of woe.

Sharon Sorour-Morris. *Cape Times* April 8 2002:9.

Fuller recounts her childhood in Zimbabwe. 'What sets this book apart from other African memoirs of childhood is not only its refreshingly frank exposé of white consciousness then, but also its writing that is concise, swift, stylish and deeply poetic.'

Jane Rosenthal. *Mail & Guardian, Friday* March 28 - April 4 2002:3.

Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight has been much praised in the major English newspapers and acclaimed in the New York Times in part because of the timing of its appearance (Zimbabwe is in the global spotlight), in part because—unlike other recent books on Zimbabwe which tend towards liberal apologia—Fuller's book is being hailed as a refreshingly 'honest' account of growing up during the Rhodesian civil war.

It is 'charming, harrowing, compassionate and funny'; it refuses to reduce the colonial world to anything less than the sum of its parts. 'Overall, it is a beautiful little book.'

Stephen Haw. *Sunday Times: Lifestyle* April 21 2002:10.

This astoundingly honest 'memoir of her childhood in war-torn Southern Rhodesia manages to be both frank and humorous .... Do not expect sentimentality, even though she conveys her passion for the feel, smell and sounds of Africa with a captivating vividness. Fuller is frank about the racism that characterised her youth,

and the land hunger that fuelled the war in Rhodesia.' Her record of racist epithets is shocking, 'but Fuller carries it off, just as she manages to lay open what happened to her family without detracting from their dignity.'

      Andrea Weiss. *Cape Argus* March 18 2002:12.

Fuller makes no attempt to white-wash the colonial attitude she was brought up with. Refreshingly, there are no fake liberal analyses or self-conscious apologies for the political views of her family, although there is certainly a sense of hindsight acknowledgement of the part whites played in the whole mess. Over-riding the danger and tragedy is the family's unrelenting passion for the continent which brings with it so many hardships.

      Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight is an immensely readable book.

      Barbara Hollands. *Saturday Dispatch* March 16 2002:4.

From its arresting title to the very last word, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* is 'utterly spellbinding'. Fuller's account of her family's loyalty to and ferocious love of a harsh and testing continent is 'searingly vivid and evocative'.

      Unnamed reviewer. *Femina* May 2002:117.

Haggard, Henry Rider
Diary of an African Journey.
by Henry Rider Haggard.
Scottsville, South Africa: University of Natal Press, 2000, 345 pp. R149,00
Diary of an African Journey was written in 1914, by the author of *King Solomon's Mines* and *She*. Rider Haggard's original encounter with South Africa was as a young civil servant in the early 1880s. The diary recounts his return to Africa in 1914, as a member of the Dominions Royal Commission.

      Unnamed reviewer. *The Star, Tonight* September 3 2001:3.

Haynes, Tim
The House at the Edge of the World.
by Tim Haynes.
Milpark, South Africa: Mail & Guardian Books, 2001, 170 pp. R113,00.
This book is the true account of South African Tim Haynes, his wife Clare and their two small children, who escape to a ramshackle country house in the west of Ireland. Tim recounts hilarious anecdotes of rural life among the locals. The book is a must for anyone who harbours the romantic dream that if one can just get far enough away from it all, a life of bliss is to be discovered.

      Robyn Bentley. *East Cape Weekend, Leisure.* April 20 2002:3.

Hunter, Glyn, Larry Farren and Althea Farren.
Voices of Zimbabwe.
by Glyn Hunter, Larry Farren and Althea Farren.
Johannesburg: Covos Day, 2001, 292 pp. R130,00.
Voices of Zimbabwe is a moving and inspirational book presenting the views and experiences of people from different backgrounds, ethnic groups and economic sectors, including those with opposing views. Most stories and poems begin with a pertinent quotation and many are enhanced with illustrations. Original paintings and photographs portray the immense beauty of a country that deserves to be protected.

      Unnamed reviewer. *D'Arts* February 2002:11.

Isaacson, Rupert
The Healing Land: A Kalahari Journey.
by Rupert Isaacson.
London: Fourth Estate, 2001, xiv & 272 pp. R198,00.
Rupert Isaacson grew up in an exile home in London, constantly reminded by his South African mother and Rhodesian father that Africa 'was where he was from'. Through songs, stories, objects and images his parents ensured that the Isaacson children felt the vast southern sub-continent as a tantalising contrast with 'the overwhelming ordinariness' of their London life. The first of a series of journeys to find his roots begins in 1985. Increasingly, he is drawn to the Kalahari and the struggles of the Khoi-San people. 'Notwithstanding the author's evident empathy for his subjects, I found the juxtaposition of the social tragedy represented by 'first people' politics with Isaacson's personal story of self-fulfilment both morally and aesthetically disconcerting …. Isaacson's text ends on a note of elegiac hope: if the old ways can be recaptured and as 'the little people of the Kalahari dance', so 'shall the little people round the world dance too'. Maybe not.'

      Tom Lodge. *The Sunday Independent* August 19 2001:17.

Rupert Isaacson's account of several trips to the Kalahari and the people he met along the way is worth reading for things like his description of a healing trance dance held among the Nharo Bushmen of Botswana. But the book is flawed by its lack of research. The author's sources are generally the people he meets along the way and he readily accepts their perceptions and prejudices. Some anthropological research would have enabled him to better understand the rituals that puzzle him.

      Susan Smuts. *Sunday Times, Lifestyle* October 28 2001:13.

This book 'rates remarkably well' amongst competitors which deal with the Kalahari. The reviewer, herself an enthusiast who is obsessed with that part of the

world, 'scanned this book for inconsistencies and skewed opinion. Apart from the usual smattering of errors in the spelling of names and the odd word' she was 'pleasantly surprised at how careful Isaacson was to give a balanced view of the circumstances of contemporary Bushmen, while still allowing his own romanticism to shine through.'

Andrea Weiss. *Cape Argus* May 28 2001:10.

Kaplan, Jonathan
The Dressing Station—A Surgeon's Odyssey.
by Jonathan Kaplan.
London: Picador, 2001, 407 pp. R115,00.
Jonathan Kaplan is a rare mix of science and art: a surgeon who has travelled the world and treated victims of violence and disease, and a writer who is able to translate the intensity of his experiences into fascinating stories. *The Dressing Station* is an autobiographical chronicle of a South African doctor's passage from Kurdistan to Burma to Eritrea, through war zones, poverty-stricken rural hospitals, laboratory work in America and the intriguing politics of life as a ship's doctor. The author says that he is dogged by a sense of guilt: 'You feel sometimes that everything you are doing is making no difference at all, but you keep doing it because you have no other option .... Part of writing this book has to do with bearing witness and hoping that doing so will somehow cause a change.'

Karyn Maughan. *Cape Argus*. August 6 2001:10.

The Dressing Station is fascinating yet disturbing reading. Fascinating because Kaplan has a real gift for describing medical detail in a clear and comprehensible way and disturbing because it ruffles that complacent ignorance in which we continue our lives while there is so much blood-letting and conflict on the planet. And as to why anyone would go off to where it's all happening if they didn't have to—well, the answer is not really provided in this book. Kaplan is as reticent about his own personal life as he is discreet about the privacy of his patients. But his take on aid organisations and interventionists such as Médécins sans Frontieres is lucid and disillusioning.

Jane Rosenthal. *Mail & Guardian, Friday* August 3 - 9 2001:6.

In *The Dressing Station*, the reader is taken down an unforgettable route through the mind of one South African doctor who, against all the odds, battled day in and day out to save the mangled bodies of his patients. It is a powerful medical odyssey with gripping anecdotes that make the reader recoil in horror then pause for thought.

Craig Bishop. *The Natal Witness* August 7 2001:7.

Khoisan, Zenzile
Jakaranda Time.
by Zenzile Khoisan.
Observatory, South Africa: Garib Communications, 2001, 168pp. R79,00.
Jakaranda Time is the life story of one of the investigators for South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This book is a 'little gem', even though it is often badly written.

Gustav Thiel. *Cape Times* October 15 2001: 9.

Luyt, Luis
Louis Luyt: Unauthorised.
by Max du Preez.
Cape Town: Zebra, 2001, 237 pp. R123,00.
It would be no exaggeration to say that Louis Luyt is a nasty piece of work whose arrogance, ambition and viciousness have made him one of the least-liked public figures in South Africa. Investigative journalist Max du Preez tries to probe beyond the reticence of even his bitterest enemies, all of whom had seen him destroy too many careers, too many lives, in the past two decades. The intrigues, financial wranglings, nepotism and his greatest miscalculation, dragging former president Nelson Mandela into court to justify a probe into rugby's affairs, all are chronicled diligently but without much more insight than has already appeared in the press.

Yves Vanderhaeghen. *The Natal Witness* August 30 2001:20.

Louis Luyt Unauthorised is an excellent piece of work, well researched and crisply presented by a top South African journalist who is himself no stranger to controversy. It is a most readable and fascinating insight into the life of a man who has been one of South Africa's great headline grabbers of the past 30 years.

Cal Seton-Smith. *Eastern Province Herald* October 30 2001:4.

Mathabane, Miriam
Miriam's Song: A Memoir.
by Mark Mathabane.
New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000, 315 pp. R153,00.
South African, Mark Mathabane, went to the US on a tennis scholarship. *Miriam's Song* is the story of his family who stayed behind. Its great appeal is that it takes the reader into the life of a girl wrestling with daily concerns of peer pressure, ambition, boys, parental control and disappointment. In the background, of course, is the constant menace of the police, and Miriam inevitably gets sucked into the violent protests that typified the last years of apartheid. Miriam's story contains no

revelations, no burning passions and little political commentary. These are its great strengths, as the lived experience of South Africans is always subtler and more complex and in many ways more ordinary than is possible to see in stories of brutality and murder.

> Yves Vanderhaeghen. *The Natal Witness* March 16 2001:10.

This book is not only remarkable because of its sadness but because of the child's resilience. Poverty, worsened by her father's drinking and gambling, did not dampen her spirits but did lead to her mother's mental illness. This book should inspire many deprived black children.

> Simphiwe Sesanti. *City Press, Groove* October 28 2001:6.

McNeice, Angus, Maisie and Travers
The Lion Children.
by Angus, Maisie and Travers McNeice.
London: Orion Books, 2001, 216 pp. R189,95.
From a comfortable rural life in England the McNeice clan moved to Maun in the Okavango Delta in Africa: *The Lion Children* is the children's story of their experiences. It is a unique book, at once a coffee-table treat and a heart-warming read. Through the exquisitely illustrated pages, Maisie, Angus and Travers convey articulately, and with the absolute honesty of youth, their positive reaction to being in Africa. A refreshing, informative and truly addictive book that brings to light a number of important conservation issues that affect southern Africa as a whole.

> Kirsten Cordell. *Fairlady* April 24 2002:136.

Meer, Fatima
Prison Diary—One Hundred and Thirteen Days, 1976.
by Fatima Meer.
Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2001, 212 pp. R92,00.
Prison Diary deals with the lives of a group of women who were detained under the Terrorism Act during the apartheid period in South Africa. Among those detained with Fatima Meer was Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, who wrote the foreword to the book.

> Unnamed reviewer. *D'Arts* September 2001:11.

This is a 'compelling personal account' of Meer's jail term.

> Unnamed reviewer. *The Sunday Independent* August 12, 2001:18.

Mkhabela, Sibongile
Open Earth & Black Roses.
by Sibongile Mkhabela.
Braamfontein: Skotaville Press, 2001. 130pp. R99.
This autobiography by 'one of the foremost campaigners in the liberation struggle' in South Africa was released in 2001, twenty-five years after the student uprisings of 1976. The author tells of her harrowing experience at the hands of brutal policemen at the time of the Soweto uprisings. The book is a 'must have' because of the historical events it relates and its easy style.

> Sonia Motaung. *City Press, Groove* 4 November 2001:6.

'After an overdose of the glorification of June 1976', the date on which thousands of Soweto students confronted the South African apartheid police, 'from opportunistic writers who have never set foot in Soweto, Sibongile Mkhabela's account of what really went on behind the scenes before the anger of students spilled into the smoke-laden and dusty streets of Soweto, is a powerful and gripping recollection of events of that day.' The story 'is told with lucid simplicity and feeling which makes for compelling reading.'

> Gugu Sibiya. *Sowetan* 30 August 2001:28.

Mugabe, Robert
Robert Mugabe: Power, Plunder and Tyranny in Zimbabwe.
by Martin Meredith.
Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2002, 243 pp. R140,00.
Meredith, a former journalist and acknowledged author with respectable knowledge of Southern African affairs, paints a gloomy picture of a Zimbabwe under siege by a small bunch of Zanu-PF bigots led by a tyrant. In several instances, however, Meredith intimates, however unwittingly, that Zimbabwe and Mr Mugabe might not have been solely responsible from steering the once economically thriving country into the abyss.

> Sicelo Fayo. *East Cape Weekend, Leisure.* April 6 2002:3.

Apart from giving a profile of a violent despot, the book also details the extent to which Mugabe and his circle of cronies have looted the country. The treatment of Mugabe is somewhat superficial, however, and many readers will be left seeking explanations rather than mere descriptions of Mugabe's excesses.

> Yves Vanderhaeghen. *The Natal Witness* March 11 2002:6.

Meredith vilifies, ridicules and demonises Mugabe in this one-sided biography.

Unnamed reviewer. *The Citizen* March 4 2002:12.

Meredith's short book concerns itself mainly with Mugabe's career subsequent to his election as prime minister of independent Zimbabwe; the most heroic phase of his political career—the period spent in Mozambique imposing his will on the various guerilla factions—is still shrouded in mystery. Mugabe and his 'intellectual apologists project Zimbabwe's political future as guided by the precepts of Marxism-Leninism'; Meredith does not explore what they mean by 'Marxism'. Nor does he explore fully the 'genuinely impressive achievements in the provision of public housing, access to health care, and the stimulation of peasant farming through land and agricultural pricing reform'. Such accomplishments were, however, 'increasingly overshadowed by the rapacious behaviour' of the governing class. 'In this potboiler... Meredith has hardly even bothered to address the obstacles that confront any attempt to understand Mugabe'. His approach is 'slipshod', the text littered with 'factual errors'.

Tom Lodge. *The Sunday Independent* March 3 2002:18.

In his nearly 250-page portrait, the Zimbabwean president emerges as an awful, but also as a tragic figure: a greedy despot, but also hugely intellectual, a man who suffered much, but who, with sickening irony, has inflicted much suffering himself. 'Determined to remain in power,' Meredith writes, 'Mugabe has used all the resources of government to attack opponents, sanctioning murder, torture and lawlessness.' Among Meredith's striking observations is his claim that 'democracy is being assaulted in the most vicious way possible because it is actually quite strong .... [It's] because of the strength of the opposition, and the demand of the people to be heard, that [Mugabe] is having to use vicious methods to suppress it. He needs to use police, the militias, the Zanu-PF youth wing.'

Michael Morris. *Cape Argus*. March 4, 2002:10.

Meredith shows that from the beginning, Mugabe has believed in the power of the gun and has not hesitated to use it. Most of this book is devoted to showing how Mugabe and his ruling elite have systematically looted their own country, destroying its once flourishing economy, using whatever means came to hand to stay in power. Yet Mugabe has never entirely abandoned the pretence of democracy (along with the use of undemocratic methods to win the vote); Meredith doesn't really examine why this should be. He hints in places at the pressures placed on Mugabe by the World Bank and the IMF, but does not really delve into the nature of that relationship, or describe exactly what those funding bodies expected of the Mugabe government in exchange for their moneys.

The book as a whole, it must be said, is relatively superficial, though it does give a reasonable overview of Mugabe's years in power. And what a sorry story it is. The land resettlement issue is exposed as blatantly political and corrupt, with land being appropriated not only from whites but also from black opponents like Ndabaningi Sithole and about 20 000 members of his tribal group; usually appropriated land is given not to the poor, but to members of the ruling elite. It is clear that the notion of an African renaissance is meaningless unless a stand is taken against despots like Mugabe.

Shaun de Waal. *Mail & Guardian, Friday* March 1- 7 2002:3.

Paton, Alan and Neville Nuttall
A Literary Friendship.
by Jolyon Nuttall.
Cape Town: The Valley Trust, 2001. 74 pp. R114.00.
This slim, well-researched volume furnishes a fascinating insight into the early, mainly literary friendship between Neville Nuttall, the author's father, and Alan Paton. Paton and Nuttall first met at Natal University College, Pietermaritzburg, in 1921. Most of the first section of the book consists of edited quotes from Nuttall senior's diaries. In the second part, Jolyon Nuttall's writing skills come into their own, as does his fine editing of letters between the two men.

Jonathan Paton. *The Sunday Independent* 30 December 2001:18.

Paul, Matthew
Parabat.
by Mathew Paul (ed.).
Johannesburg: Covos Day, 2001, 288 pp. R125,95.
These 'personal accounts of paratroopers in combat situations in South Africa's history' cover five military encounters, from 1955 to the South African incursion into Lesotho in 1999. The accounts are not ideologically neutral since the narrators fought against the southern African liberation movements, and the book could be misused to support political causes. However, this is an intensely human, valuable book.

Leopold Scholtz. *Die Burger: Boeke* March 22 2002:7.

Pires, Adelino Serra
The Winds of Havoc. Adelino Serra Pires, as told to Fiona Claire Capstick.
by Adelino Serra Pires.
New York: St Martins Press, 2001, 265 pp. R175,00.
Adelino Serra Pires was born in Portugal and came out to Mozambique as a child of

eight. *The Winds of Havoc* is the story of a man who became one of the most renowned professional hunters, as told by Capstick, who painstakingly constructed the memoir through tape-recorded interviews between her late husband and Pires.

The memoirs 'make for absolutely fascinating reading, as we are led into a world of sun-swept savannahs and endless beaches'. This idyllic existence came to an end in 1975 when Portugal withdrew from Mozambique. There are tales of violence and destruction, capture and torture. Pires' life, over six decades, in nine African countries, is one of excitement, turbulence and also tragedy.

Orielle Berry. *Pretoria News, Interval* 21 January 2002:10.

Plaatje, Sol T.
The Mafeking Diary of Sol T. Plaatje.
by John Comaroff and Brian Willan, with Solomon Molema and Andre Reed (eds.).
Oxford and Cape Town: James Currey and David Philip, 1999, xvi + 206 pp. R90.00.
This new edition of what is 'perhaps the only surviving diary of any war-time black South African', released to commemorate the centenary of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) has a revised title, undoes the 'improvements' to Plaatje's prose by a previous copy editor, has new useful footnotes, an expanded map section, and a Preface by Comaroff which examines key theoretical issues. Here Comaroff presents the Diary as a modernist work and Plaatje as a writer who 'anticipated the current concern, in cultural studies, with hybridity'. Also in this third edition are updated dictionary references and amended Endnotes. A century later, it is Plaatje's Diary, rather than Baden-Powell's auto-hagiography that provides a necessary reflection, sometimes ironic, even sardonic, on what was ultimately a war between two colonial powers, British and Boer. Plaatje's observations and interpretations of British and Boer policy are both rare and meaningful.

Jane Starfield. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27,4 December 2001: 855-863.

Robinson, Sir Joseph Benjamin
Buccaneer.
by Jeremy Lawrence.
Cape Town: Gryphon Press, 2001, 512 pp. R216,60.
Lawrence recounts the life of the controversial Joseph Robinson, son of 1820 Settlers. Robinson became a formidable figure in the early diamond-hunting days, a member of the Cape legislature and a newspaper proprietor. Lawrence has done a 'thorough and most entertaining job. You won't end up liking Sir J.B., but you're sure to enjoy the book.'

Robert Ball. *Eastern Province Herald* August 1 2001:4.

Lawrence has made use of the tangled Robinson papers to produce the first warts-and-all biography of a man who was '[alone] among the great pioneers of [South Africa's] gold and diamond fields .... In the days when 'the race question' meant relations between English and Afrikaner, Robinson... was well aware of the harm brought by the dissension between these two groups .... His reward was to be vilified as a 'pro-Boer'.'

James Mitchell. *The Star* May 7 2001:12.

Schechter, Ruth
The Cape Town Intellectuals: Ruth Schechter and her Circle.
by Baruch Hirson.
Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2000, 222 pp. R133,00.
The daughter of a rabbinical and Talmudic scholar, Schechter was raised in Cambridge and New York. In 1907, she emigrated to South Africa at the age of nineteen, following her marriage to her first husband. Dubbed a 'celebrity hunter', Schechter befriended many contemporary luminaries, including Ghandi and Olive Schreiner. Hirson has 'resuscitated from oblivion an intense and passionate woman who was certainly influential in the prevailing intellectual debates'; the book, however, 'cannot live up to Ruth's own demands for biography: that 'the historian rescues for us the dead''.

Sarah Penny. *The Sunday Independent* August 13 2001:18.

Sharpe, Chrystal
If the Cat Fits: Stories of a Vet's Wife.
by Chrystal Sharpe.
London: Penguin, 2001, 260 pp. R95,00.
This semi-autobiographical tale details South African Sharpe's years as a vet's wife in the early 1980s. The author's 'laid-back, humour-filled and chatty style ... makes for thoroughly enjoyable reading .... Sharpe's stories—like the animals who have moved in and out of her life—will constantly remind you of not only how precious animals can be in our lives—but how they can impart wisdom and inspiration ...'.

Brett Adkins. *Eastcape Weekend, Leisure* 15 December 2001:5.

Sher, Antony
Beside Myself.
by (Sir) Antony Sher
London: Century Hutchinson, 2001, 258 pp. R195,00.

South African-born actor, Antony Sher has written an autobiography which is 'extremely readable and entertaining'.

Joe Podbrey. *Pace* July 2001:20.

Slaughter, Carolyn
Before the Knife: Memories of an African Childhood.
by Carolyn Slaughter.
London: Doubleday, 2002, 179 pp. R115,00.
'Harrowing is too weak a word to describe this autobiographical memoir.' Carolyn Slaughter should have had an idyllic childhood: born in India in 1947, and moving to Africa after Indian independence. However, this 'beautifully written, lyrical' book records horror and sadness. It is 'an acute and brilliantly observed portrait of British colonialism in its dying days', 'a classic of African writing ... that will rank with Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*'.

Tony Weaver. *Cape Times* April 29 2002:13.

'Slaughter has enveloped a withering portrait of her appalling parents in a lyrical eulogy to the African landscape'. The narrative skirts around the edges of suppressed memory, and loses itself in descriptive prose, leaving the reader feeling strangely disoriented. Is this a book about Africa, or is it about child abuse? Indeed, there are many unanswered questions.

Andrea Weiss. *Cape Argus* May 6 2002:10.

Smith, Charlene
Proud of Me: Speaking out against Sexual Violence and HIV.
by Charlene Smith
Sandton, South Africa: Penguin, 2001, xiv & 331 pp. R80,00.
Despite its desperately serious subject matter, this is an immensely readable book. It begins with an account of South African journalist Smith's own rape story, and then turns to other people's stories. Smith has interviewed many people: police, doctors, prosecutors and rape survivors from all walks of life. Throughout she raises questions and picks up on unexpected, but important, issues. The purpose is to call for action against the AIDS pandemic in Africa.

Jane Rosenthal. *Mail & Guardian* August 31-Sept 6 2001:6.

Smith, Ian
Bitter Harvest: The Great Betrayal.
by Ian Smith
Jeppestown, South Africa: Jonathan Ball, 2001, xiv & 434 pp. R179,95.

This story of Rhodesia's recent past 'is a tale of ... cynical betrayal' by Great Britain. A novel which covered, as Smith does, 'the treachery and sheer, blatant chicanery that Rhodesia was forced to tolerate' from Britain would be criticised as 'being so far over the top as to be ludicrous'. But, as far as was possible, I checked on the accuracy of the author's memories and conclude that 'it appears that Mr Smith is telling the whole truth'. Although the style is 'somewhat cumbersome and pompous', the book is a must-read for those who wish to have the calamity that is Zimbabwe today put into perspective.

Peter Canavan. *Pretoria News: Interval* July 16 2001:10.

Former Rhodesian prime minister Ian Smith writes his version of what took place before Zimbabwe won its independence. The book is 'a compendium of excuses and justifications of what occurred when Smith declared UDI so that the whites of the country could continue enjoying their privileges without a thought of granting equal rights to the black citizens .... The book is the full story of how the country developed .... It will be read avidly by Smith's admirers—of which this reviewer is not one.'

Joe Podbrey. *Pace* July 2001:20.

Stevenson-Hamilton, James
Wildlife and Warfare: The Life of James Stevenson-Hamilton.
by Jane Carruthers.
Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2001, 244 pp. R245,00.
Jane Carruthers' biography of Stevenson-Hamilton, a man who pioneered environmental conservation in South Africa and became the world's leading authority on game management, is an important contribution to the genre of environmental history. Although it is bland in patches, Carruthers succeeds in presenting a rounded protrait of an extraordinary individual in an attractive and accessible study.

Tim White. *The Sunday Independent* 10 February 2002:17.

Strydom, Monique and Callie
Shooting the Moon: A Hostage Story. As told to Marianne Thamm.
by Monique and Callie Strydom.
Claremont: Spearhead, 2001, 232 pp. R89,95.
The four-month ordeal of these two South Africans began in April 2000. They were abducted, along with a group of other internationals, from the island of Sipadan, off the northeastern coast of Borneo. Shooting the Moon is an account of their harrowing ordeal which is, unfortunately, marred by Thamm's 'over-dramatised'

and 'adjective-heavy' prose. Thamm's 'thriller-style ... robs a heart-wrenching human drama of its most crucial ingredient—intimacy'.

   Tanya Jonker-Bryce. *Saturday Dispatch* May 19 2001:4.

The story of their ordeal as hostages of Islamic militants in Malaysia is recounted in more-or-less chronological order, in both third- and first-person (in the form of diary entries). Interspersed are clips from news reports, facts about their lives and marriage before the drama, accounts of what was happening back home, letters to the couple from various political figures and background information on political hostilities in the region. Although it needs 'some serious editing', the book 'makes for unputdownable reading'.

   Geraldine Fröhling. *Pretoria News: Interval* May 21 2001:7.

This story of the abduction and captivity of South Africans Monique and Callie Strydom by Indonesian separatists in 2000 is told by Marianne Thamm. Thamm includes sufficient background to let us understand the motives (if not agree with their methods) of the Abu Sayyaf rebels, and it becomes clear that 'the Philippines continues to be a dubiously effective state, with endemic corruption'.

   James Mitchell. *The Star* May 14 2001:8.

Suttner, Raymond
Inside Apartheid's Prison: Notes and Letters of Struggle.
by Raymond Suttner
Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2001, 203 pp. R139,00.
This book is an important addition to the record of atrocities committed in the name of apartheid. Arrested in 1975 for producing a pamphlet to publicise the African National Congress, Suttner gives graphic details of his interrogation and his torture. The letters included in the book provide a sense of intimacy to the story and reveal his precarious emotional state. The reflective nature of Suttner's story gives it a dynamic quality, but we come away depressed at the waste of so many years.

   Tim White. *The Sunday Independent* 2 December 2001:18.

Taylor, Stephen
Lvingstone's Tribe: A Journey from Zanzibar to the Cape.
by Stephen Taylor.
London: Flamingo, 2000, 270 pp. R153,00.
Taylor's 'illuminating travelogue' recounts his travels in Africa, from the island of Zanzibar to the Cape in South Africa, in search of what he calls 'Livingstone's Tribes'—those white people who stayed on after independence in the various

African states. Taylor encounters fascinating characters. The book is 'an engaging study of societies dealing with a colonial legacy', its 'attention to detail and lucid descriptiveness makes good reading'.

   Thebe Mabanga. *Mail & Guardian, Friday Books* April 26 - May 3 2001:7.

Trovato, Ben
The Ben Trovato Files.
by 'Ben Trovato'.
Milpark, South Africa: Mail & Guardian Books, 2001. 200pp. R97,00.
'This is a wickedly funny book by a mysterious author going by the pseudonym of Ben Trovato.

   It consists of letters, many of them outrageous, written to all sorts of people: government officials, President Mbeki [of South Africa], the British Prime Minister, Mick Jagger, the police, various organisations, Nasa, Bill Gates and many others .... The publisher assures us that all letters and replies are quite genuine.

   Unnamed reviewer. *The Citizen* 10 December 2001:12.

This collection of letters 'is blistering satire at its best. The man is a lunatic.'

   Michele Magwood. *Sunday Times, Lifestyle* 27 January 2002:13.

Tucker, Linda
Children of the Sun God.
by Linda Tucker
Milpark, South Africa: Earthyear Books, 2001, 400 pp. R245,95.
In 1994, Linda Tucker and a group of friends were in an open-topped truck when they were surrounded by a pride of roaring lions. They were rescued by a sangoma (a traditional African healer). This experience changed the author's life and she decided to find out more about the creatures and the shamanic woman who saved her life. Tucker's book is 'compelling reading' for in it she 'skillfully intertwines her shamanic knowledge with scientific ... knowledge garnered from her study of this extraordinary breed of lions.'

   Orielle Berry. *Pretoria News, Interval* 21 January 2002:10.

Van der Post, Laurens
Storyteller: The Many Lives of Laurens van der Post.
by J.D.F. Jones.
London: John Murray, 2001, 505pp. pp. R195,00.
Laurens van der Post's reputation was made by his writings about Africa and his prison camp recollections, both autobiographical and fictional, distinctive within

their genre for their forgiving quality and their attribution of complex personalities to his Japanese captors in Java. His experiences were demonstrably brave, impressively compassionate and politically visionary. All there is to admire in van der Post's real achievements is generously acknowledged in JDF Jones's meticulously researched and carefully written biography, commissioned by the van der Post family. And yet van der Post emerges from this exercise as an arrestingly unpleasant man partly because van der Post's life stories were often distorted. He defended this by arguing that fiction itself could be a form of truth. The difficulty with this is that his stories were motivated merely by narcissism and snobbery and, in fact, the real version of events might often have been more interesting. Jones's biography is surprisingly dispassionate. He began his work as an admirer, but he arrived at an understanding of a powerful writer, but a flawed man.

Tom Lodge. *The Sunday Independent* August 19, 2001:17.

Jones says that van der Post was a 'master fabricator' who created multiple versions of his stories—multiple lives, multiple versions of himself—the maintenance of which must have required a skill bordering on genius. Van der Post's life-long self-promotion was, Jones points out, 'premeditated, deliberate, even ruthless, never missing a trick'. This 448-page hardback is an absorbing interpretation of the life of a brilliant, but fundamentally flawed, human being.

Patrick Leeman. *The Mercury* October 12 2001:8.

'It may be an established custom for the reputations of prominent figures to take a dive after their deaths, only to be re-appraised a few decades later, but seldom has anyone been so thoroughly trashed in a biography as Laurens van der Post in this one.' The detailing of his exploits as 'a massive bullshit artist' makes for an absorbing and entertaining read, 'but once you've got the general idea you almost start feeling sorry for the underdog.... Although Jones concludes with an observation of how much those who knew him loved van der Post, he does not quite explain why.

I suspect that in the end Jones, so busy with the detail of deception, fails to really understand Van der Post and his version of reality. He was a shaman, a trader in myths, a man who bent both legend and reality to his own ends. Where his end was to give meaning and inspiration to a world increasingly searching for it, he succeeded spectacularly ....

Of course, if you pick at a magician's tricks you can reveal the fraud, but why?'

Andrew Unsworth. *Sunday Times Lifestyle* October 14 2001:13.

Wylie, Dan
Dead Leaves: Two Years in the Rhodesian War.
by Dan Wylie.
Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: University of Natal Press, 2002, 196 pp. R115,00.
This 'lightly fictionalised memoir' is the result of the author's 'long, desperately hard look at his two teenaged years of soldiery in the Rhodesian army from 1978 to 1979'. It is a poet's response—a personal and public truth commission. 'It is rich with literary reference, over-laden perhaps with poetry and prose, when it is the graphic, pacey story telling that gives the reader a lasting impact of one war in southern Africa.'

Mike Loewe. *The Herald* April 17 2002:4.

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