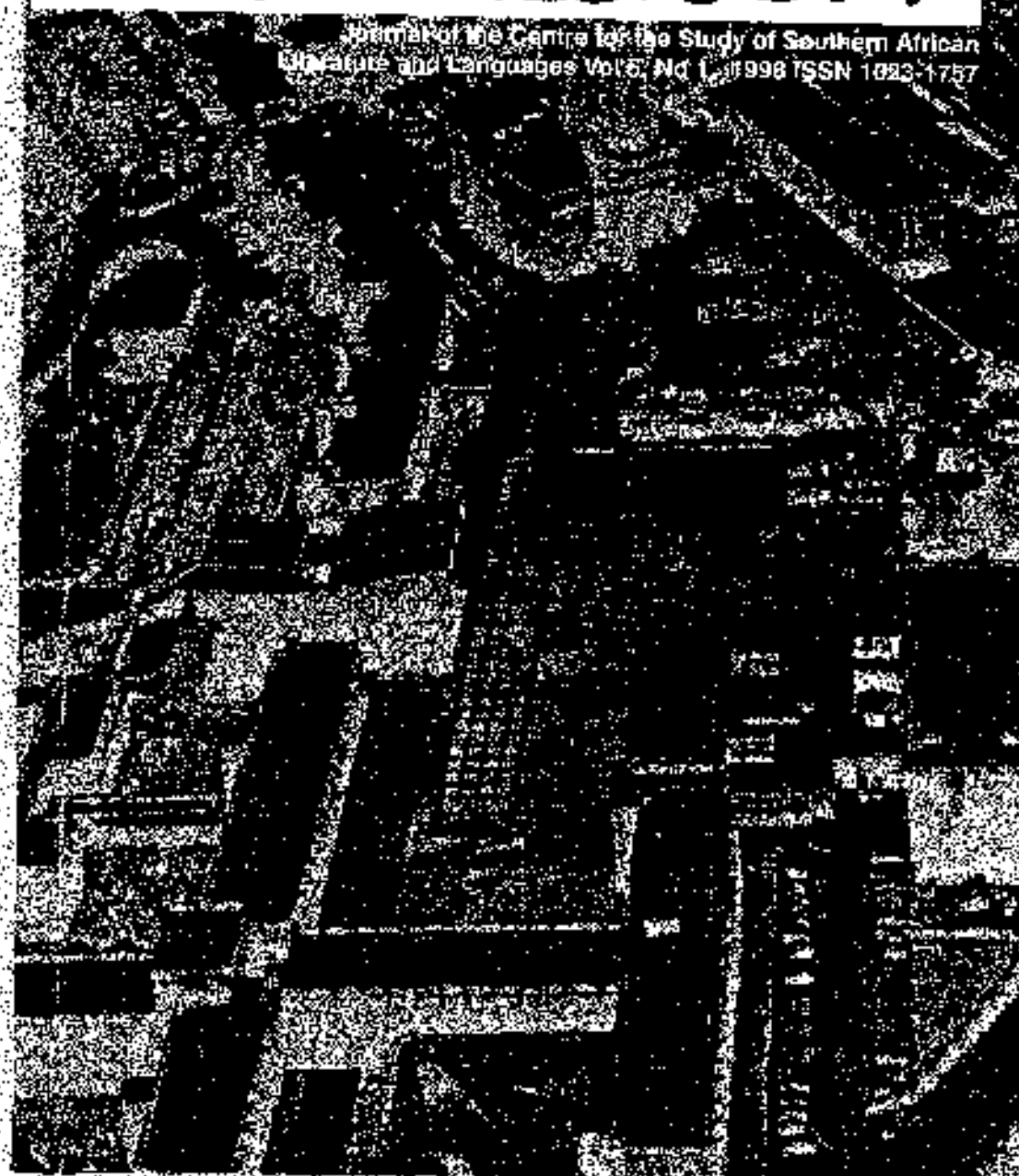


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Alternation

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Guest Editor
Shane Moran

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The Editorial Board wishes to congratulate Katwyn Sole on winning the Thomas Pringle Award for Best Literary Article published during 1996/1997 with his article 'South Africa passes the posts' (*Alternation* 4.1 (1997) 116-151).

Freedom of expression

I would like to thank the contributors, both young and old, for their passion, the production of this journal was the up to the leadership personnel of the University of Jember (Widada, D.D. 2013) who by the point who put in the house and received the contract Charlie Soediro, especially during the journal through writing and editing, after being the principal in the process.

While a degree of active opposition to the imposed reforms (DOW) is observed, through more economic policies to improve the living standards of economically disadvantaged. The marginalist or Symbolic Anthropologist states DOW has been produced as a capitalist mental quality of a social order, not a new one. The reality that university that is oriented on research activities is inadequate to the needs of the masses is frequently blackboardism in form may be described that university, among others, is not a social movement, but only a means to attain the ends of the bourgeoisie and not the ends of the Mexican people.

- 1 To make university or college accessible to all, especially to students who are financially and educationally disadvantaged, thereby opening up opportunities for their personal growth and development.
- 2 To empower each student to learn, to communicate, to solve problems, to lead and to take decisions.
- 3 To encourage mutual trust, understanding and tolerance.

[illegible]

In 1999, however, a right-wing conservative government used a strategy that consisted of an authoritarian policy, the attempt to weaken outside power structures, and ending the membership of local and foreign NGOs and support of a political administration that had been the exponent for a policy of human rights and social justice based on a policy of social justice for the benefit of the majority of the population.

phobic firms in which the 'customers', 'stakeholders', and 'beneficiaries' are not always historic, with a starting point, lineage and continuity of location and responsibility often distant from the reality of these transnational processes and obscures the work of genuine communities confronting the ravages of neoliberalism.

The cross-stating neo-liberal education policies associated with the heavy days of Reagan and Thatcher provided no limited but pertinent point of comparison from which to assess the impact of South African attempts to modernise higher education. While the U.S. tertiary education system developed its market-driven ethos and a self-governing high business sector based on its primacy in the global market, in the UK, polytechnics (now known) modified themselves to become universities. The latter represented both the upgrading of the status of vocational studies and the recognition of the importance of academic research interaction between the practical and the theoretical offers the incentives for a spirally investing in its future by integrating education and training. The excesses of the utilitarian wave of activity led to an absolute alignment of the value of a broad educational training that included all areas of culture, even those not immediately commercially successful.

One of the mainstays of education theory-conservatism in the U.K. based firm the doctrine that academics are productive in terms of publications; this often favoured younger academics and facilitated the removal of an entire sector (academia); the negative aspect of "Friedson's revolutionary paradigm" became clearer when the demand that academics (and everybody else) justify their existence in terms of publications, even the ones in education, in the conspiracy of teachers' useless knowledge; the authoritarianist has now proved her innocence (usefulness). An attempt, of course, that simply reaffirms a long-held view of the validity of the initial charge since any proof must be adduced in accordance with the terms of the ritual. This attitude has now never failed to reflect the ending of courses and the inferior "equivalent" with which the profession by degrees fails personnel. Those with a good "capacity" and/or business-oriented skills find themselves on the market, and students are left with the obstruction to study of a self-motivated staff, the "regeneration" of their converts. At the administrative level, the collapse of traditionalist scholars in business, economists and those gambling on the possibility of revolutionising the educational system in their corner. In this case the "equivalent" becomes an useful pushover and last refuge.

The inappropriateness of such a scenario in the developmental context of South Africa is clear not least because the neo-liberal agenda presumes an existing reserve of cultural capital and (possibly) education to be harnessed. Historically black universities have struggled to clear a space for a more radical and consistent humanistic education that is unlikely to quickly approximate that. In the walking and/or the grave diggers of apartheid, the world resurrected a re-orientated 'Bantu Education' and set on a different walking agenda. A centrally administered co-optation of the university curriculum for the management of state development and racialisation. Humanistic librarians/bureaucrats who were seldom regarded as socio-political theorists have set the agenda within an institutional structure that insistently rewards its bureaucracy - the backbone of the state for this age of democratic union - being the administrative need to institute centralisation, visionarily. Approaches regarding accountability in light of the recreation of compulsory references to apartheid and racialised exhibitions in picture libraries, still directed in part toward social responsibility and institutional transparency as mandated by a culture of bureaucratisation.

My reading of the majority of the contributions to this issue of *Alteration* is that they attempt to put forward a realistic prospect of planning and managing a radical new characterisation of political liberation. Authors writing from Malawi, Northern Ireland, the U.S.A., and a range of universities in South Africa, do this postmoderately, to recover a radicalised tradition that may well be useful in the struggle against multiple forms of domination. If U.T.W.'s radical announcements foster cohesion in all areas of the diversity, should ensure that the participation in this international dialogue by scholars of this background will not be lost.

Shane Moran
Guest Editor

Ngugi's *The Devil on the Cross*, the Body and Power

Elaine Ogude

One of the striking features of Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* is the way it directs attention to the idea of human struggle and martyrdom – the sacrifice of the body. Even if in this instance, Ngugi reverses the norm and it is the devil's body that is on the cross. This in itself should signal a shift in power relations because the devil that we tend to associate with the domination of other bodies has been subdued on the cross. But even with a superficial reading of the text, we soon realise that the devil has been ransomed by its followers and its body (read the colonial and neo-colonial state) has been turned into a site for struggle. It is the use of the body as a site upon which power is re-enacted and indomiated that interests me here. The paper aims at exploring Ngugi's use of the body as a site upon which the basality of power in a post-colony is dramatised in its stark manifestation. The paper argues that Ngugi uses the grotesque image of the body to portray the staging of power in a post-colony, while at the same time undermining officialdom or authority through parody. The paper concludes by drawing attention to Ngugi's failure to show how the masses, the oppressed, are implicated in their own oppression and how they mimic and emulate the absurd display of power by the rulers.

Achille Mbembe (1992), in a paper entitled 'Provisional Notes on the Post-colony', draws our attention to the nature of power and its actual performance in a post-colony. He characterises a post-colony simply as those societies which have recently emerged from the experience of colonisation and exhibit the violence which the colonial relationship par excellence involves. He argues that the

post-colony is characterised by a distinctive style of political improvisation, by a tendency to excess and a lack of proportion [and] a series of corporate institutions and political machinery which, once they are in place, constitute a distinctive regime of violence (Mbembe 1997:7).

The post-colony in fact becomes some form of a stage on which 'the wider problems and its corollary discipline' are played out (Mberube 1992:3). It is this theatrical display of power that Mberube calls the banality of power in the post-colony. He uses banality to mean

These elements of the dramatic and the grotesque that Mikhail Bakhtin claims to have located in 'non-official' culture but which in fact are intrinsic to all systems of domination and to the means by which these systems are confirmed or deconstructed (Mikhail 1993: 3).

Thus the grotesque and the obscure would seem to be some of the basic characteristics

that identify the colonial regimes of detention.

The writing of Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* was in more than one sense a product of the post-colonial violence to which Mberbe draws our attention. It was written while Ngugi was in detention and marked the actual enactment of violence in a post-colony through the capture and isolation of the body under the guise of the Public Security Order inherited from the colonial regime. In *Detained* (1981a:3), Ngugi confesses that the novel was written 'with blood, sweat and toil'. Written in one of the largest prisons in post-colonial Africa, the Kenyatta Maximum Security Prison, this novel helped Ngugi to keep his sanity. It is significant because it stands as a defiance to Kenyatta's regime which put him in detention so that his 'mind would turn into a mess or rot' (Ngugi 1981a:10) which is reminiscent of Gramsci's prosecutor who, under Mussolini's orders in 1926, asserted: 'We must stop this brain working for twenty years!' (Gramsci 1971: xviii). Having failed to control Ngugi, the Kenyatta regime sends him to solitary confinement which, as Michel Foucault (1984:210) reminds us, 'certainly the most frenzied manifestation of power imaginable'. In writing this novel, Ngugi seems to have refused to succumb to the dictates of violence to which the Kenyan regime often resorts in silencing all its critics. The novel became Ngugi's weapon for preserving the body and for overcoming the state of fragmentation imposed by the regime. Wariinga, the heroine of toil and the harbinger of freedom, whose image looms large in the text, was conceived in cell 16 in 1978 (Ngugi 1981a:3). If the regime's aim was to break Ngugi and to reconfigure his body, in *Devil*, he turns this attempt upside down. Instead, it is to the obscene body of the post-colonial regime weighed down by its 'impotence' that Ngugi directs our laughter. But, first, the content of *Devil on the Cross*.

The novel deals with a group of six protagonists traveling together in a *matatu* taxi in Nairobi. The protagonists discover that they are all mysteriously invited to a Devil's feast, where thieves and robbers of Kenya enter a competition for the election of the seven cleverest thieves and robbers. The characters are Wariinga, Wangeri, Gaturia, Muturi, Mwariri and Mwangi the driver. The narrative operates at two levels: the allegorical story of resistance by the competition or feast organized by the Devil, and the story of Wariinga with its power of the plot. Like *Periods of Blood* (1977), the novel takes place mainly in Nairobi and partly in Nairobi. The novel is dedicated to 'all Kenyans struggling against the neo-colonial stage of imperialism' (Ngugi 1987:5). It is no wonder, then, that the major trope in *Devil* should be the colonial dependency, with the devil on the cross as the structuring symbol. This is best illustrated in Wariinga's nightmare in which 'the white colonialist devil' is crucified by the masses, apparent reference to political independence, only to be rescued by the local comprador, significantly,

[t]he Devil had two mouths, one on his left-hand, and the other at the back of his head. His belly sagged, and it appeared to give birth to all the evils of the world. His legs were not like a man's legs (Ngugi 1987:14).

This is significant because the physical features of the Devil draw attention to his

grotesque image, the same image that he given to those that rescue him and to him serve him. Significantly again, the Devil rewards his rescuers by fattening their bellies. It turns out that a 'Devil's feast' is arranged by the local 'thieves' to commemorate a visit by foreign guests—'particularly from America, England, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden and Japan'—as part of 'the International Organisation of Thieves and Robbers' (Ngugi 1987:78).

The creation of a Devil's feast, where national robbers and their foreign allies gather in order to reveal their tactics and motives, provides Ngugi with the space for settling or deconstructing, through the grotesque and the obscene, the barality of power in a post-colony. Ngugi uses the Bakhtinian notion of the grotesque and subversion by turning the rulers of post-colony into objects of ridicule. But he moves beyond Bakhtin's use of the grotesque and the obscene as vehicles of public ridicule solely confined to the province of ordinary people. It is to the local comprador bourgeoisie, who boast about their cleverness and their cunning on how to steal from the public as well as how to bow to foreign control, that the grotesque is restricted. He does this by exposing how state power, represented by the local comprador class, uses its own magnificence through an absurd ceremonial display of their wealth as spectacles worthy of emulation by the ruled. It is in this feast that Ngugi treats the monstrous image of capitalism as a fetish. The worshippers of the fetish gather to preach before it, 'the fiction of its perfection' (Mberbe 1992:21). Each and every speaker that takes the stage demonstrates, in their bawl testimonies, that the post-colony has been turned into a stage for bourgeois self gratification, an absurd display of 'ambitions, foals and claws in the feast of 'modern robbery and theft'. The feast becomes the privileged language through which power speaks, acts and coerces. The arrogance of the leader of the foreign delegation of thieves and robbers—he admonishes the local delegates 'to drink the blood of [their] people and to eat their flesh, [as the imperial powers have done to the Africans over the centuries], than to repeat a step' (Ngugi 1987:39)—is greed and power magnified to their full and logical extremes, reduced to their essence. Yet the actual idiom of this display, its organization and its symbolism focuses on the body: specifically the belly, the mouth and the orifices.

Ngugi's thieves display striking forms of deformity. His portrayal of the local buyers at the feast foregrounds the grotesque image of the body in which the belly and the mouth stand out. The satire on the comprador class involves Ngugi's mockery of their borrowed power, and is best captured in the narrator's graphic description of Gaturia's body:

Gaturia had a belly that protruded so far that it would have touched his ground had it not been supported by the braces for his hips and knees. It was one of his body that identified him as a thief, and all the other organs of his body. Gaturia had no neck—at least, his neck was not visible. His arms and legs were short stumps. He had had shunters for ears of a disgusting (1987:20).

Gaturia's body is a body in the act of becoming; it is continually built, created, and

belly and [it in turn] creates another body' (Ndiritu 1968:117). It is a body that, figuratively speaking, 'swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world'. In the words of Ndiritu (1968:117), the grotesque body 'outgrows its own self, transgressing its own body, in which it conceives a new, second body: the bowels and the phallus'. In the act of swallowing, Gituru's body becomes monstrous – a typical grotesque hyperbole. His belly first seems to detach itself from the body and lead an independent life. His neck, arms, legs and head have been transformed into a grotesque animal vehicle.

The reduction of the grotesque image of the body by associating the parts or the whole body with the animal form is best illustrated again in the body of Gituru and, to a degree, in the body of Kihiriki, whose grotesque feature is his mouth rather than his stomach. To do this, Ngugi uses names which are semiotically fixed to the master code of the Gikuyu people. The names that are culturally positioned or grounded in a 'pretext' – a reference to the tradition of the Gikuyu, and in particular to some animal or inanimate object in the Gikuyu cosmos whose traits the characters personally or share. For the average Gikuyu reader the names are specific signs which they could readily interpret because of the shared typology of meaning between the signs and their interpreters.

The name 'Gitumu wa Gataangumu' shows the use of this mutually intelligible typology of meaning between the sign and its community of readers. 'Gitumu' in Gikuyu, Ndiritu (1991:161) writes, refers to a 'big finger' while 'Gataangumu' refers to a fully infected with tapeworms which produce a bloating effect'. His physical form resembles that of a 'gigger'. Thus Gitumu's name within the context of the Gikuyu readership helps to concretise the grotesque image of Gituru's body. There are clear grounds of comparison in which the physical features of Gituru – 'pot-belly', 'short-limbs' and 'tiny head' – are placed in stark juxtaposition to the physical features of a 'gigger'. But more importantly, these features underscore the parasitical nature of giggers and by extension the parasitism of the ruling class in the post-colonial state that Gituru represents or parallels. As a parasite, Gituru finds his nest in the lives of workers and peasants that he exploits. Characteristic of this class, Ngugi seems to suggest, Gituru eats more than he needs as he shamelessly confesses that his 'belly is becoming larger and larger because it is abominably overworked!' (Ngugi 1983:100). Ironically, he spends more time eating than working and his body has become a 'wasteland' or a 'barrenland' which his name evokes: the appropriate breeding place for tapeworms. But, as Gituru's deformity is not a sufficient sign of elite greed, Ngugi's thieves seek true monstrosity, as in the case of Ndikita wa Nguuji who argues for additional human parts:

Not seeing that I have only one mouth, one belly, one heart, one life and one soul, what's the difference between the rich and the poor? What's the point of robbing others?

... I would like to know that if I would have an extra pair for extra clashing human parts – the world would mean that a rich man who can afford them could have two or three mouths, two bellies, two hearts and two lives and the

first mouth become tired of chewing, and the belly could hold no more than the spare mouth and belly could take over ... We could coin some new sayings, such as a man's youth never ends (Ngugi 1983:180).

Ndikita desires a world in which

the rich few could ensure their immortality through the purchase of spare organs of the human body, thus leaving death as the sole prerogative of the poor (Ngugi 1983:19).

Yet Ndikita's desire to have spare organs serves to expose the insecurity of masculine authority: when Ndikita's wife becomes enthusiastic about the prospect of having two female organs, he is threatened. Ndikita expresses horror at the idea of such equality between sexes and he urges his wife to eschew, instead, 'True' African culture, to heed tradition, which Ndikita would like to interpret as meaning inferior status for women. As Erlene Julier (1992:1497) writes:

Ndikita would seem to need women as witnesses of his masculine prowess, yet he fears them and their sexual demands.

It is to serve his own masculine quest for privilege and power that he invokes the authority of 'tradition'. Thus, the unconditional subordination of women to the principle of male pleasure remains one of the pillars upholding the reproduction of the patriarchal system which turns post-coloniality into a world of anxious virility, a world hostile to continence, frugality, sobriety' (Mwambi 1992:9). Wariinga's body, for example, becomes the focus of a power struggle with far-reaching ramifications. Masculine authority seeks to imprison her body within the grip and grasp of the local elites – the ruling elite of the post-colonial state. But it is not until Wariinga regains her agency as an active participant in the process of history making, that she develops from the victim type to the fighting type.

It is not enough, in the post-colonial context, simply to bring into play the mouth, the belly or phallus, or merely to refer to them, in order to be semiotically absent. 'Mouth', 'belly', and 'phallus', when used in popular speech and jokes, have proved all too be located in the real world, located in real time. In short, they are 'live' statements about the human condition, and as such contribute integrally to the making of political culture in the post-colony. Every reference, then, to mouth, belly or phallus is necessarily a discourse on the world – the post-colonial world. Ngugi's use of the grotesque and the obscene points to this world, and his use of the grotesque image of the body is very much grounded in the primary politics of post-colonial Kenya. It is the kind of politics whose primary objective is to acquire power as the ultimate vehicle for economic success.

Most social struggles in Africa, Bayart (1994:239) is wont to remind us, only become useful if they lead to the accumulation of power.

It is a mission that it is easier to get rich from a position of power than from a

When one acquires power and the economic success that goes with it, one becomes humiliated and often one is not shy to perform one's success. Thus in a post colony, 'material' prosperity is one of the chief political virtues rather than [the] object of disapproval (Bayart 1983:212). While writing *Devil on the Cross* Ngugi must have been conscious of the fact that boasting about one's wealth in Kenya is part of the social norm. As Angelique Haugerud (1995:1) reminds us, 'Disabourment-however ship is one and not the other of Kenyan political life'. It is not unusual to encounter politicians boasting about their wealth and with great admiration from the people. Very much in the early days of Kenya's independence, Jomo Kenyatta – the first president of Kenya – deflated the radical nationalist exponent, Biko Kaggia, for failing to amass wealth for himself. 'Look at Kungu Karumbu', Kenyatta told Kaggia, 'He has invested in buses and has earned money, but what have you done for yourself since independence?' About two decades later, Mr O'ndipiro, one of President Moi's ministers, boasted in his political opponent's parliament in some money very similar to Kenyatta's when he declared:

We got money, I don't sell chickens... I am... I am spend 150 million shillings running over borders for the marriage of my son... I have six cars, two big houses, two big wives and sixty-something children.

Turning to his opponents, he retorted them that they 'are not small men, they are men of big bellies like Oloibetip' (*The Weekly Review* March 30 1984:11). Forty years later the populist deputy J.M. Karuki had absolutely no need to disguise his wealth in order to win credibility with the citizens – the 'warrior' (see Odongo 1992:62). Thus the 'politics of the belly', to use Bayart's phrase, is very much in the imagination of Kenyans and is not just a fictive creation of Ngugi.

Ngugi's intervention lies in his insistence that the 'politics of the belly' ought to be the object of ridicule rather than emulation. The belly which the rulers in particular invoke as a sign of success exposes the parasitic nature of the local comprador in a post colony. Thus far from confirming their authority, the grotesque images of rulers like Oloibetip, should serve to undermine the power of the rulers by turning them into pitiable objects of ridicule. After all the body itself is the principal locale of the idioms and fantasies used in denoting power (Mwambi 1992:17). If Kenyans as the bourgeoisie have associated 'the big belly' with power, then Ngugi is forcing them to debunk the myth, and realize that the authority of the local rulers is humoral.

It is, therefore, to the nature of the local comprador bourgeoisie that Ngugi draws our attention by using the grotesque mode in the depiction of them. Indeed grotesque characters, marked as they are by bodily deficiencies or deformation, would seem to offer Ngugi a perfect means of figuring the qualities that have led to

¹ See, for example, 1955, Nairobi in Odingo (1992:10). See also Ngugi (1981:189) and his reference to Kenyatta's upstaging of Kaggia.

characterise either the local comprador or the ruling elite in the post-colonial state in Africa. The use of the grotesque mode draws the reader's attention to the body as a site upon which power is constituted. If the Kenyan government had intended to ridicule Ngugi's body, he turns the butt on them. In *Dutunde*, he talks of his objectives:

I would coast them out of that hot hell by using my tongue, my hands over the land of seeing this class in nakedly machinistic efficiency with a myriad of iron men, were building in Kenya a total system, a program of the wishes of every citizen in this Kenya (Ngugi 1983:10).

Yet, the full significance of the grotesque image in the text only makes sense when linked to a couple of sub-texts in *Devil*.

The first is derived from Werling's nightmare. In the grotesque image of the Devil in Werling's dream, Ngugi seems to suggest a mirror and continuing relationship between the Devil (read colonialism) and the black elite (read comprador bourgeoisie) that takes over an independence. Ngugi further suggests that the desire of the comprador class which resembles the devil, thereby introducing a new form of colonialism, is to inherit the Devil's worst qualities. The second consists of three stories that Gathika relates to his fellow passengers on their way to Thuroy, in a *matatu*. Common to all the stories are the themes of avarice and conceit. The first story is about the peasant farmer that was turned into a beast of burden by an ogre (Ngugi 1987:65). The second story is about the black and beautiful girl who rejected the men of her country and took to the first young man from a foreign country. The young foreigner turned out to be a man-eating ogre who tore off her limbs one by one and ate them (Ngugi 1987:62). The third and last story that Gathika relates is about an old man called Nding'uni who had a son that was richly endowed. He was well respected, hard working and displayed neither desire nor greed for other people's property and, one day, he started getting sick and died in the village and despoiled all his possessions (Ngugi 1987:68). Nding'uni was forced to turn to the evil spirits. 'At the entrance to the cave', we read, 'he was met by a spirit in the shape of an ogre'. We are further told that the ogre

and to a man he showed his forehead and the other in the back of his head. The man, he took off his head and ate it by his long hair and arms only visible when the wind blew the hair and (Ngugi, 1987:64).

The third story of the *matatu* is that Nding'uni surrenders his soul to the ogre who demands a 'in exchange for riches, Nding'uni is made into an ogre of human flesh and a drinker of human blood' (Ngugi 1987:64). And in a typical Bakhtinian conception of the grotesque image of the body – the body as a site for defecation, soil, laughter and revolting, we read that:

² This also correlates with Werling's (1984:120) characterization of this class as 'decadent and parasitic, material and humanely degraded, devoted to the satisfaction of its immediate needs'.

From that day on, Nding'uri began to eat property, to sell property, to steal property, to snatch property, to catch property, to drink property, to drink property, to take property, to take property, to sweat property, to pass property (Ngugi, 1987:64).

If the first story by Githinji relates directly to the burden of colonialism on the colonised and points to the possibility of liberation from the shackles of colonialism, the second one relates to a colonial mentality—a form of cultural imperialism that locates the colonised within the orbit of dependency and leads to a fixation with all that is foreign. The third story captures the advanced stage to which the colonised now succumbs as he loses his integrity and pride in the coloniser in order to receive his protection and be schooled in the ways of the agrar. The third story is a narrative expression of the stage that Ngugi (1987b, 1996) has characterised as the neo-colonial stage of imperialism. This is the stage that he satirizes in the Devil's feast by focusing our attention on the grotesque image of the comprador class that has given up its soul and betrayed the nation for property. There is, therefore, a parallel between Waringa's nightmare and the story of Nding'uri. Just like the Devil's ransom in Waringa's nightmare, Nding'uri also gives up his soul—his fieri-fun—in exchange for property.

Significantly, both the agrar and his worshippers like Githinji and Kihwahu seem to have a similar bodily deformation: they both seem to share in the common traits of avarice and cannibalism. Thus every other layer of the narrative in the text serves to draw our attention to the grotesque image of the agrar, the Devil and his followers. The narrative layers serve to reveal the nature and values of the capitalist agrar and the comprador class that he gives birth to. The likes of Githinji are born out of the agrar's womb and they continue to perpetuate his legacy, the legacy of neo-colonial dependency. A section of the African elite, Ngugi seems to be saying, never contributed in the struggle for independence, but were able to make it through sheer cunning and cheating, and by exploiting their history of collaboration to their advantage. This class, Ngugi suggests, cannot survive without the patronage of their foreign masters. Part of their fundamental weakness is that they are disposed to parasitism, selfishness, greed and naked exploitation of workers and peasants through cunning rather than creative entrepreneurship and hard-work. For Ngugi then, the grotesque and its best exaggerations and caricatures the negative, the inappropriate, the anti-human that the comprador class has come to symbolize in his works. To this end Ngugi is in agreement with Koorapetsu Kgoatsile's (1969:147) comment that black writers should deploy the grotesque to portray 'the undesirable, the corrupting, the dehumanizing'. For as Bakhtin (1968:308) argues:

A grotesque world in which only the inhumanity is exaggerated in only quantitatively large, but qualitatively it is extremely poor, colorless, and barren space.

conclusion

In spite of Ngugi's scathing exposure of the so-called borrowed power in a post-colony, in choosing the comprador class as the sole object of his bull, Ngugi fails to draw attention to how the masses are themselves implicated in their own exploitation. By confining the display of power to the elite, and suggesting a hegemonic power structure controlled by foreign and local comprador, he fails to rise above the binary categories used in standard interpretations of domination. Within this structure, the dominated can only collaborate with or resist the rulers. And yet, as Bayart (1993:249) reminds us,

the production of a political space [in a post-colony] is on the one hand the work of an essential of actors, dominant and dominated, and that on the other hand it is in turn subjected to a double logic of totalizing and detotalizingizing... The 'small men' also work hard at political innovation and their contribution does not necessarily consist in that of the 'big men'.

A linear narrative of the rulers versus the ruled, the oppressor versus the oppressed, which characterises Ngugi's discourse in a post-colony runs the risk of excluding

heterogeneity from the domain of utterance and is thus functionally incapable of even conceiving the possibility of discursive negotiation or resistance to it (Sloanea 1987:11).

The point being made here is that in order to have an effective understanding of power relations in a post-colony we need to realize that it cannot simply be

a relationship of resistance or collaboration but it can not be one of mere self as if self collaboration, a relationship brought by the very fact of the [rulers] and [the ruled] having to share the same living space (Sloanea 1992:4).

This kind of relationship can only result in what Mbembe (1992:4) has called the 'mutual zombieification of both the dominant and those they apparently dominate'. It is a relationship of co-viability in which both the ruled and the rulers rob each other of their vitality and, in the process, render each other impotent. But because a post-colony is also a regime of pretence, the 'subjects' have to learn to bargain in this market marked by ambivalence. They have to have the

ability to manage not just a single identity but a mixed one (which means a reduced, limited), but several, which are flexible enough for them to negotiate and when required (Mbembe 1992:4).

It seems to me that Ngugi's otherwise brilliant critique of the rulers in a post-colony debates the ambivalent relationship and/or mixed contradictions between the ruled and the rulers. In a way, it also robs the ruled of any historical agency outside the grand regime

of resistance are varied (see "Discrepancies, however, and beyond the scope of this paper" (see Cooper 1997, and Cooper 1997)).

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Ngugi's *Matigari* and the Politics of Literature

Glean Hooper

The issue of art in the service of politics is a notoriously complex one. Although many are content with the concept of imaginative writing being harnessed to a political enterprise, not all are happy with the end result. In a review of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Peoples of Blood*, for example, Henri Bhabha (1977) suggests that although the narrator avoids a form of 'human rationalism' that 'can lead to an idealized quest, for identity, for a mystical pristine Otherness', the text's 'rambling narrative and wide cast of characters' is no less than impressive. Bhabha continues:

In spite of [Ngugi's] serious and intelligent concern to the problems of social realism, this [narrator] is not a first-hand appropriate and original form of the human condition. (Bhabha 1977)

Despite Bhabha's reservations, and his belief that Ngugi's adaptation of the classic realist form for a socialist agenda is simply too ambitious, one aspect of the text's composition elicits approval: the fiction.

Ngugi's novel, one of his most memorable efforts in using the traditional mode of storytelling to wake a sleeping nation to their own revolutionary duty. (Bhabha 1977)

While Bhabha's approval of the use of fiction in *Peoples of Blood* is clearly evident in the text, it has an even greater bearing on the later *Matigari*. Published in 1986 *Matigari* is a much shorter novel than *Peoples*, with a more explicitly political agenda, a focus for the narrator and reader alike. Written originally in Gikuyu, before being translated into English, *Matigari* values consensus when *Peoples of Blood* for a more critical, albeit open-ended quality. More importantly, *Matigari* is a text allied to the oral tradition, finding in indigenous culture a more locally satisfying method with which to engage with the specificities of post-independent Kenya's *Where Politics*, in

It is important to recognize that while the fiction in *Matigari* is a self-contained story, it is also a political statement. The author's use of fiction is a political statement, a statement of the author's view of the world. It is also a statement of the author's hope. The author's hope is that the fiction will be a more satisfying method with which to engage with the specificities of post-independent Kenya's *Where Politics*, in

other words, used certain folkloric images or references – the character of Nyakinyua and the spiritually fantastic properties of Sheng'eta, for example – to tie the text to a non-western tradition, *Mutiga* makes the oral tradition a central component of the text itself. The employment of oral motifs and structure, with the accompanying use of song and story-telling, not only privileges or celebrates specifically non-western traditions over another, but posits a formally decisive movement towards aligning indigenous practice with radical politics.

In the course of this essay I wish to examine Ngugi's most explicit attempt to marry traditional and experimental forms, and to question how beneficial are his efforts at integrating orature within the fictional world of *Mutiga*, particularly when the text gestures towards developments within postmodern writing also.¹ First said, although I wish to engage with the relevance of a postmodern reading of *Mutiga*, I want to stress the limits of an overly postmodernist position, arguing that *Mutiga* needs to be principally tied to the realities of Kenyan politics and not just to the formally experimental techniques of contemporary Afro-American writing.² Besides, Ngugi not only posits the superiority of an African aesthetic, making the oral tradition, song and story-telling, a central component of the text itself, but he invests these aspects of the text with a value that goes beyond aesthetic considerations only.

If there is a particular cultural and ideological source to which Ngugi has consistently turned over the past thirty years it is Franz Fanon. In Fanon's *Stakes in a Dying Colonialism* the identification of the French language with complete authority can be linked to a long established critique by Ngugi of the denigration of African languages in favour of English, within the educational system, but also within the publishing industry upon whom Kenyan teachers are largely dependent. In *Black Skin, White Masks* the psychological associations of relations between colonized and coloniser are

¹ The literary values, views and expectations are never as conservatively underscored within Ngugi's writings as we might imagine. As this essay will demonstrate, 'tradition' is taken to mean both a positive reference, and as something that can be beneficially developed. If tradition enables reactionary orientations within other cultures, reserves to nostalgia and retreat to the written, Ngugi

For a largely subjective, if not a little skewed, account of the complexities of Kenyan history, see Ngugi's critical works to date (*Homecoming* 1977; *Decolonised* 1981a; *Where is Politics?* 1981b; *Harvest at the End of the Day* 1983; *Decolonising the Mind* 1986; *Moving the Centre* 1993; *Peasants, Gunpoint, and Doctors* 1998). In addition to charting the ongoing battles, periods of overhauling, and difficulties of exile associated with vigorous campaigning, Ngugi in these the political transformations of the last twenty-two years or so in considerable detail. For a sufficiently up-to-date general history, but is somewhat critical of Ngugi, see Ochieng' (1995: 214–375).

taken as the basis for many of the concerns developed in Ngugi's plays, novels, and critical works to date. However, it is in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* that Ngugi finds some of the most useful, and most appropriate, comments. Many people now think of *Wretched* as the text which challenged the ideology of nationalism, almost solely, but *Wretched* also talked about the complex and difficult task of establishing a national literature, and of the usefulness of the oral tradition in particular.

On another level, the oral tradition – stories, epics and songs of the people – which formally were filed away as set pieces are now beginning to change. The storytellers who used to relate inert episodes now bring them alive and introduce into them modifications which are increasingly fundamental. ... Every time the storyteller relates a fresh episode to his public, he presides over a real invocation. The existence of a new type of man is revealed to the public. The present is no longer turned in upon itself but spread out for all to see. The storyteller once more gives free rein to his imagination; he makes innovations and he creates a work of art (Fanon 1960: 195).

Fanon's emphasis on the commonality of experience, of the benefits to be gained from oral literature but, more significantly, of the importance of the storyteller helps to contextualise *Mutiga* perfectly. For example, Ngugi (1987) dedicates the novel to 'all those who love a good story, and to all those who research and write on African matters'. There then follows a note on the English edition of the text, followed by a preface/poem, in which the reader/listener is advised on how best to approach the text.

This story is imaginary. The actions are imaginary. The characters are imaginary. ... May the story take place in the country of your choice.

The introductory note further informs us that the idea for the novel comes from 'an oral story about a man looking for a cure for an illness. Finally, the tale not only 'disembodies' with fixed time and place', but is described as simple and direct, thereby suggesting a model that can transcend the difficulties of artistic and imaginative presentation for a peasant, frequently non-literate, audience.

While *Mutiga* engages with several of the issues outlined in texts such as *Devil on the Cross* and *Petals of Blood* – such as the writing of history, the problems of identity, and the complexities of locale – the overall sense of the text is of a rather more limited project. Almost as though the criticisms levelled by figures such as Rukhsana apaike, *Petals* considerably altered Ngugi's narrative vision, *Mutiga* seeks to engage with the complexities and challenges of postcolonial identity, but to do so by recourse to a smaller cast of characters and a tighter narrative order. In addition, Ngugi employs immediately recognisable historical issues with which to strengthen his strategy. By opening the first chapter of the text with the image of a returning 'Map Man' fighter, for example, Ngugi makes use of a recognisable moment from the past, but one that has a

contemporary neocolonialism. Matigari is presented as being in possession of an AK 47, in addition to being attired in a variety of colors and fabrics suggestive of prolonged deprivation and hardship. This is suggestive, therefore, not only of those who took to the forests for the duration of the Emergency, but he actually conforms to historically verifiable fact. Robert Edgerton, for example, presents several examples of the outward appearance of "Man Man" and, more importantly, of their effect on native and settler society alike.¹⁰ However, the inclusion of a "Man Man" figure in Ngugi's writing has considerably meant something more than a symbol of political instruction, rather it represents a potentially regenerative force in the struggle against neo-colonial authority. Indeed, Ngugi has made strenuous efforts to rework the "Man Man" image and its reputation for amenable opposition to colonial authority, and it is in this context that *Matigari* should be placed. As might be seen from several of his critical references, in addition to his celebrated and notorious play *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, Ngugi not only wants to bring "Man Man" back, but to use them as a means of transforming, or at the very least challenging, a corrupt and ill-generated polity.

With respect to the oral tradition, Ode Ogede (1992:76) has spoken of the "lyrically balancing imitatory statements" of oral performance, and of the way in which they can "impart a sing-song quality to the passage that thrills the audience whom it transports, as it were, in a hypnotic fashion to a land of miracles". Something of the same quality that Ogede mentions is discernible in *Matigari* also, for example, in the way that Matigari is lingeringly, almost lyrically introduced to the reader—"What is your name?" Njirau wa Kiriin asked him. "Matigari ina Njiruungu," "Matigari ina Njiruungu?" "Yes, that is my name." (Ngugi 1987:20) — or the way in which emphasis is added to the mystery of the character at the ends of chapters:

Who was Matigari ina Njiruungu, a person who could make poison walk around? From that night Matigari's fires spread over all the country. He

¹⁰ The words "Man Man" have no literal meaning in Kikuyu or Swahili, there is no generally accepted origin of the name and, most important, the members of the movement did not apply the name to themselves. "Man Man" was the colonialist's name for the movement and will accordingly be placed in inverted commas. Any unqualified use of the name is implicitly an endorsement of a particular class of the movement — that promulgated by Kenyan whites during the Emergency (Muganyizi-Brown, 1985:16).

¹¹ As far as most whites were concerned, the Man Men were filthy, long-haired "vagrants" who participated in the "red flag" and brutally mistreated women and children. They were held to be contemptible, too, because instead of dynamite, they wore ragged or made-up with any uniform they possessed and only a tattered shilling (Edgerton 1990:68).

¹² In terms of her imaginative engagement with "Man Men", the co-authored *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976) is possibly Ngugi's most explicit statement on the issue. But see also his essay entitled "Man Men, Violence and Culture", in the *Harvard Review* (1977) essays.

became a legend. He became a dream. Still they question remain: Who was Matigari? (Njiruungu 1985)

At other points repetition is supplemented by the incorporation of phrases that are definitive and emphatic, but which also hint at something potentially regenerative. For example, Matigari speaks of "blowing the horn of patriotic service and the trumpet of patriotic victory", of "blow[ing] the trumpet to call together the family and the patriots who survived", and of "hear[ing] now the sound of the trumpet and the sound of the horn of justice" (6.38.21). In each instance a different emphasis may be discerned, between victory, common unity and justice for example, but the cumulative effect is of a politically charged device which hints at the power of an oral tradition. Indeed, Ngugi has personally spoken of how language has a quite different function within Kikuyu culture, and of the way in which it is seen, not as "a mere string of words", but as having

a suggestive power well beyond the immediate and lexical meaning. Our appreciation of the suggestive magical power of language was reinforced by the games we played with words through riddles, proverbs, transpositions of syllables, or through nonsense, but musically arranged words (Ngugi 1986:13).

Balancing statements and repeated phrases, then, have an important role in *Matigari*, for they bind the text to the immediacies of lived oral tradition. But in some cases repetition and emphasis has a further structural relevance, one that manages to fuse the various strands of the text together, in addition to providing a focus for a specific set of issues. Consider, for example, section ten, part two of *Matigari* in which a five-line episode provides a whole battery of structural correlations:

The true seeker of truth never loses hope. The true seeker of real justice never tires. A farmer does not stop planting seeds just because of the failure of one crop. Success is born of trying and trying again. Truth must seek justice. Justice must seek the truth. When justice triumphs, truth will reign on earth (Ngugi 1987:84).

In this quotation, incidentally the currency of section ten, the narrator uses a series of methods with which to document the realities of neo-colonial conduct. Echoing such common tenets and perseverance, the text is a recapitulation of many of Ngugi's concerns: the pursuit of honesty and personal integrity, and the demand for justice and truth. In addition, it provides a moral, specifically agricultural image, so that the message may be deemed sufficiently concretized for a peasant audience, an important element, in the case of creating since works that are rooted in social reality — "have the reason and authenticity" of lived experience (Ogede 1992:7). More specifically, perhaps, the text may be said to have significant structural status, in addition to displaying some of the balancing and balancing strategies referred to by Ogede. For example, "the true seeker of the truth and the true seeker of justice not only find one another, but are repayed and further consoled in truth must seek justice. Justice must seek the truth". The effect of

especially where the narrator uses the tree to suggest 'not so much sexual fertility, as reproductive fertility (the genus 'fructifera' plants?)', and where in writing he makes it to regard Mwangi's activity not so much as concealment or military caution, as impregnation (the gunpowders bringing forth revolutionary fruit). What I wish to suggest about Ngugi's use of the fig tree, then, is that it finds itself not only the subject of constant dismissal, as in *The River Between*, where it appears as 'a huge dark tree, thick and mysterious', a 'tiny and awesome' sight, but as something which he frequently updates and employs as an accessible cultural referent (Ngugi 1987:119). In other words, the symbol links Ngugi's two texts together and shows a developed political awareness, but it also functions at the level of immediate oral tradition, and as a means of providing the basis for what Edward Saeky (1991:390) calls the 'fructification of the novel form'. Basically, *Mwigari* is a novel about one man's arrival and subsequent movements through the landscape of modern Kenya, his search for a home, and the racialising influence he has on those with whom he has some degree of contact. However, in other respects it is about finding an appropriate medium to fully express those ideas, one that can successfully unite traditional forms to a political end.

Barbara Harlow (1987:169), in *Resistance Literature*, discusses Zakariya Tamer's *Excuses in the City* in terms of his 'disorientated traveller', someone who finds the usual procedures of recognition and provenance significantly altered, someone who finds himself a stranger on his own land. Topographical and architectural detail may be familiar, suggests Harlow, but the character's sense of unease, and the more apparent because of the potent familiarity of the surroundings, is fully established. In Elnke Boehmer's *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (1995), a similar claim to Harlow's is made:

From what we have observed, it becomes apparent that the novel acts as a remembering which characterizes post-colonialist writing practice in an ever-evolving metanarrative of journeying and return.

And later:

A writer may also choose to focus on specific episodes in the greater narrative of journeying: the idyllic childhood and the dawn of self-consciousness in the time following, of severance and departure, and the bewilderment, loss, or return (Boehmer 1995:194-200).

I cite Boehmer's discussion of the 'postcolonial journeying tale', which includes Wilson Harris's *Palace of the Peacock*, Aye Kwei Annan's *Two Thens and Seasons* and Wole Soyinka's *The Road*, as well as the image of Harlow's 'disorientated traveller', because they provide precisely the sort of context best suited for understanding *Mwigari*. In Ngugi's text a character's arrival is marked, not just by a turn of self-transformation as when the accustomed hardware of timeless resistance (swords and guns) is put to use, but by his crossing over from outside of the country to the other. However, the effect of crossing the river, a baptismal and purificatory gesture

remnant of the initial incantation for young men, tends to confirm the land of his birth as a territorially appropriated enclave. Like the finalities that separate one nation-state from another, Ngugi suggests that divisions not only exist, but exist to maintain control and to exclude a resisting, revolutionary politics from entry. As with the characters cited by Boehmer and Harlow, Ngugi's *Mwigari* is both perpetrator, and confused, native and an exile.

From the outset, then, the importance of oral structures, such as story-telling, songs, traditional metaphors and myths, is clear. Indeed, *Mwigari* himself is drawn directly from myth, and from the sort of testimony that is the preserve of traditional society. In its original form the myth is 'about a man looking for a cure for an illness', and about his quest for relief from discomfort and pain. But in the newly updated version provided by Ngugi it is about a man's political suffering, and about his search for integrity and truth in contemporary Kenya. Based on a traditional text, but updated for a more contemporary purpose, Ngugi manages to show the reader toward an established folkloric element, while at the same time giving it a more current usage. Moreover, Ngugi (1986:78) supplements these story-telling and mythological traditions by employing particularly ceremonial gestures, galvanising records from what he has called 'a known tradition'. Indeed, the narrator's use of song is particularly important, given his emphasis within Gikuyu culture itself. For example, in the text's opening scene, as Mwigari bends down to the river to wash his face and hands, he is reminded

of the old waters in the past which had been just as clear. He remembered how, then, they had sung throughout the night in the open air (Ngugi 1987:4).

At several other points in the text references are also made to songs, with the stress usually on belonging and loyalty and plans for the future:

We shall all gather, go down together, fight the fire together and build our home together. These were our songs, his clan. Could I have forgotten so soon the song we used to sing? (Ngugi 1987:6)

And, of course, in the final episode of the text, with the emphasis on regeneration and the continuity of resistance, songs are also included:

He recalled the night of the workers' strike. And suddenly he seemed to hear the workers' voices, the voices of the peasants, the workers, the students and of other members of all the different nationalities of the land, singing in harmony (Ngugi 1987:75).

In such case then the incorporation of song can be said to seal a mood and a participatory element from the audience, something that Ngugi has written of already in several texts. For example, in his writing on African theatre he has spoken at length about the use and benefit to be gained from the incorporation of song:

Song and dance as we have seen are central to nearly all the rituals celebrated by the Kikuyu, the second most influential group. They do not hold ordinary ceremonies. Even daily speech among peasants is interspersed with song. It can be a line or two, a verse or a whole song. What's important is that song and dance are not just decorations; they are an integral part of that conversation, that thinking process, that ritual, that ceremony (Ngugi 1985:15).

While the thrust of Ngugi's essay concerns song as a formally intrinsic aspect of African theatre, the sense of song having a central, almost peripatetic part to play in life and literature generally is well made. By permeating his text in the manner that he does, in other words, he provides his narrative with additional interest, but also with a set of folkloric cadences that provide cultural depth. Moreover, song may also be regarded as a challenge to more western novelistic conventions, since it incorporates 'a living mythical framework' that endows the text with something distinctly separate and special (see Kirpal 1988:151).

Perhaps one of the most important uses of song, however, lies not just in its affiliation to an oral tradition but in its direct relationship to 'Mau Mau'. In Kinyatta's anthropological study of Gikuyu custom and folklore, songs are described as having very specific functions, such as the use of cultivation songs, praise and warning songs, as well as the extensive range of initiation songs that mark the transition from childhood to adulthood:

In every stage of life there are various competitions arranged for the members of the several age-groups to test their ability to recall and relate in song and dance the stories and events which have been told to them, and as such fabulous parents and the general public form an audience to judge and correct their compositions (Kinyatta 1967:xxv).

However, Roger Edgerton also suggests that songs were a specifically central part of 'Mau Mau' resistance and culture, and as cites the 'Mau Mau' passion for singing, before, during, and after their many compulsory meetings as a common occurrence. Referring to 'Mau Mau's' practice of especial communion to what he calls 'song fests', Edgerton (1990:17) concludes:

There is nothing peculiar about the men of a Mau Mau army singing songs about the reasons for the rebellion, although the amount of time they spent time doing so was certainly remarkable.

Given Edgerton and Kinyatta's dual emphasis within Gikuyu culture to the use of song, one can begin to understand better, I think, why Ngugi decided to include them in *Matigari*. They provide rhythm and texture, of course. But they also establish a relationship to 'Mau Mau' and to direct historical experience. In this way the narrative is able to demonstrate both an affiliation to cultural practices unbound by the dictates of historical provocation, as well as a commitment to the specificities of Kenyan,

specifically Gikuyu, resistance – not as barely thirty years ago.

IN

In a recent essay by Heidi Gilbert (1994:98) on the subject of African drama and, in particular, its use of a 'linguistic innovation and sometimes repulsion' that 'weaken[s] notions of performed speech or story-telling', it is suggested that the oral text should be seen 'as a mode of decolonization' and appreciated for its 'attempts to avoid hierarchies of value that privilege the literary'. While Gilbert's comments are more directly relevant to the 'tribal' cultures of Australasia, they are of considerable importance for our reading of *Matigari* also. As stated at the beginning of this essay, Ngugi employs traditional methods and ideas with which to produce a revolutionary novel capable of reaching as broad an audience as possible. As a starting point he uses an oral tale which he then embellishes and reworks, thereby allowing himself to simultaneously traditionalise and modernise his text. In addition, he employs certain motifs, and uses certain language techniques, to accompany what is a late twentieth century western narrative form concerned with the problematics of neo-colonialism. Developing a rapport with an audience through the use of traditional symbols, then, is one of the primary concerns of *Matigari*. Fundamental to the writing of a text obliged to a living oral tradition, however, is how ideas and political motivation can be best communicated. In other words, it is all very well being aware of what *Matigari* is 'intended to signify, but as so much of the text involves his interaction and constantly updated transformations the question of how his story is to be told becomes increasingly important. In an essay on the development of contemporary postcolonial writing in India Meenakshi Mukherjee (1989:46) suggests that

Ngugi tries to capture the quality [of oral culture] not only in the texture of the narrative but also in the structure of the novel, which gradually unfolds in a free-wheeling manner. Anecdotes are linked with episodes either in a chain with contemporary situations, others as part of the traditional fabric of the narrative – although in very broad strokes evident in the subtle and muted teaching of his earlier work.

Mukherjee goes on to suggest that since the earlier *Tales on the Cross* 'was read out' in homes, in laundries, in offices during lunch breaks and in public bars, and was reintegrated back into the oral tradition, its success as a fully hybridised medium, or more oral and literary, capable of mass appeal while operating within the parameters of sustained imaginative writing, was well established.

Interestingly, because the English translation of *Matigari* follows on from the original Gikuyu version we are able to see how *Matigari* fared in terms of its public reception, and able to establish its political impact also. First published in October 1986, *Matigari* became such a source of worry to the authorities, suggests Ngugi in the note to the English edition, that

By January 1984, intelligence reports told of two prisoners in Central Kenya who were starving and talking about a man called Mungazi, who was restoring the whole country making demands for truth and justice.

Although the reports soon made clear that the figure was more fictional than real, the destruction of all copies of the novel still took place the following month. Because the novel was destined to be ambivalent, and because its central character had apparently the power to infiltrate even the enclosed and impoverished areas of the Kenyan countryside, it had to be repressed. Of course, however loud the government might try to eradicate or make negligible the story of Mungazi, its efforts to eliminate the text from popular consciousness entirely must be regarded as a failure (a failure because its existence as a written text had already been hypertexted, and because its new life as an oral document had been absorbed within those communities most likely to benefit from its message within a relatively short period). In Ngugi's scheme of things, the power to move beyond the confines of the literary, to find up and publicise an account of revolutionary challenge without having to rely on the transfer of the printed word is not only the best answer to chronic and widespread illiteracy, but to the oppressive measures of state supervision and censorship.

Ngugi strives for a text that, because of its immediate accessibility as a Gikuyu published novel, achieves greater political renown than if it were to be only published in English. In addition, the popular and easy appropriation of the text, the sense that its characters and their various difficulties can be widely discussed, suggests a text that has taken on a distinct life, one that has drawn forth, and is now drawn back into, oral tradition. For instance, in the opening pages of *Mungazi* one is introduced to a scene in which a sense of locale and history is established, and in which a central character developed through the use of highly rhetorical language and motifs, is clearly presented. Emphasis is kept on the physicality of the man through a set of detailed and visualised descriptions, while the physical landscape is either subordinated or well noted. In keeping with the almost reverential quality of the scene, and as an effective method of drawing attention to the details of transformation and arrival, an effective silence is consistently maintained. The third person narrative, in the ideal story-telling position, simply documents the scene, taking care to emphasise the importance of water, inflation, prostitution, and the quest for a sense of belonging.

But how does Ngugi invite his audience to empathise with this, and in what way can the story be told so as to allow for further public retellings? Perhaps one of the most engaging methods of directly involving an audience is to ask questions, not direct questions, but rhetorical ones, such as can be found at the end of the first and second sections of the text. For example at the end of section one the narrator suggests that 'from that night, Mungazi's fame spread over all the country. He became a legend. He became a dream. Still the question remained: Who was Mungazi? ma Njirauugu?' (Ngugi 1987:86). At the close of the second section we are told of how

the herders of the wildlife in a dry season. They travel through the villages. The people stare after them and sing. . . . They would sing the song of Mungazi, ma Njirauugu. . . . But who was Mungazi? ma Njirauugu? (Ngugi

1987:87)

These questions may well have the effect of simply retaining interest, as of tying the various strands of the story together in ways that I have already discussed, but they also invite a form of interrogative and participatory involvement where the audience is concerned. And something of this orientation is established in the opening scenes also, which invites that challenge and provides the audience, thereby drawing them directly into the text. In other words, even where Ngugi presents one voice or one set of psychological considerations within the text, he still invites others to contribute.⁵ At other times he simply establishes a democratic, non-hierarchical structure by providing multiple, frequently competing, voices; for example in the way that he uses radio sequences not only to heighten tension, but to provide additional commentary from alternative perspectives. By splitting his narrative up, by creating a sense of what Derek Wright (1992:86), in a discussion of Amos's *Two Thousand Seasons* has called 'traditional communal intimacy', Ngugi builds oral structures directly into the text. Of course this was a strategy he had attempted with *Pera* also, with various characters taking it in turn to discuss their experiences, each experience seen as a uniquely articulated moment that would eventually collect around a central idea. But the process within *Mungazi*, I think, is a much more developed and structurally intrinsic aspect of the text.

Direct appeals to story-telling and to its hypnotic, in some cases transhistoricising power, run throughout the novel.

The main characters, brightly coloured and full of life and his story had become captivating. . . . Mungazi and Ngugi, ma Njirauugu did not realise that they had reached the restaurant. His story had so fascinated them and others, that long ago when the clashing of the war's drums and spears shook trees and mountains in their midst (Ngugi 1987:220).

In this particular instance story-telling would seem to be capable of reaching into the past, suggesting a continuity of resistance, in addition to providing a vehicle for statements of solidarity and communal feeling. In addition, Ngugi's deliberate referencing to an active and tribally rooted opposition might be seen as a means of showing how politically repressed individuals can be successfully motivated by the use of story-telling techniques. At a more practical level, however, the practice of story-telling prepares the ground for the text's direct fragmentation into oral culture. The easy identification made between the text and oral tradition helps define the novel as directly suitable to a story-telling environment and gives it a more performative

⁵ In order for the [Kenyan] students to fully appreciate the process, we encourage them to fully participate in any performance that they create. . . . It is believed that participation in the performance shape the narrative and that the audience can help an artist to make an otherwise short performance a long, complex one (Ngugi & Kariuki 1980:66).

service, one that renders it less fixed and less dependent on print media. In striving for a more committed oral contribution, then, writers like the Ngugis are not only sustaining the belief in the value of traditional forms and oral ideologies, but publicising fairly explicit opposition to the formal criteria established by western novelistic convention. In other ways, however, they are addressing the immediacies of post-independent African society, and that by forging a connection with indigenous poetic traditions of folk tales, conversation and meaningful recounting of personal moments of experience² a more and more relevant form is established (cited in Ashcroft *et al.* 1989: 128).

For instance, at the beginning of the second section of *Matigari* Ngugi incorporates story-telling as a distinct and politically motivating tactic. Up until this point we have witnessed Matigari's arrival, his search for a home, his increasing disapproval of contemporary Kenya life, and his subsequent imprisonment. Representing the enduring spirit of revolutionary nationalism, Matigari clearly presents a newly resuscitated force capable of personal and social transformation in a country of increasing corruption. But by the time we get to the opening scenes of the middle section, however, Matigari has become a much better figure: his fame has spread and, more importantly, it seems to have been spread by word of mouth. 'Tell us! Tell us about the man ... Tell us about Matigari' the young boys ask:

The story of how Matigari had saved Githara from the police dog had already reached them. They had heard how the police had already shaken well fear from old Matigari (Ngugi 1987: 69).

In an example such as this Ngugi directly addresses the issue of postcolonial history, seeking to explain what he has called, in a different place, the 'loss of collective memory [of] ... a people' (Eyo 1988: 163). Moreover, by providing his audience with direct and uncomplicated approval of an oral tradition, he shows how the story of Matigari can be successfully transposed from locale to locale and – possibly the ultimate test for the text – from the imaginative to the real. Story-telling, in other words, is seen as both a shaper of action, as well as a part of it. It can be a provider of pooled, communal information, giving support and providing a forum for potentially radicalising ideas, but it can also create opportunity and its own momentum. It can be a reference point for indigenous culture, but its importance for this text lies in the way in which it events are given additional emphasis with each subsequent retelling: 'You wait!!! you hear the whole story!' (Ngugi 1987: 71).

IV

If *Matigari* is marked by a proliferation of voices and multiple perspectives, it is important to remember that while the text's plurality might take it into the realm of experimentation, it is most satisfactorily read within the context of postcolonial writing. In a recent essay arguing for a distinction to be maintained between postcolonial and postmodern writing, Helen Tiffin (1991: vii) acknowledged the 'formal and tropological overlap' that exists between both terms, but suggested that

since the postcolonial text is conceived of as a set of discursive practices, prominent among which is resistance to colonisation, its essential independence from the postmodern must be established. Tiffin's argument should be seen not only as one which has witnessed the writings of figures such as Ngugi becoming increasingly appropriated for postmodernism, but one which regards these loosely structured forms as requiring more, rather than less, critical sophistication. Ngugi might employ song and oral testimony, and generally work with formally experimental techniques found within the Afro-American tradition, but his writing is of a consistently political nature. Moreover, to make little distinction between the two types of writing, or to allow the commonality of expression discovered at the level of form to suggest a more general, specifically ideological, similarity, is to advance some very dubious arguments indeed. To establish the similarities between postmodern and postcolonial writing as our principal and determining critical concern, I would argue, is to repress the historical and political specificities of imperial intervention.

We might be able to see how these arguments are better understood if we take the development of Matigari himself as an illustration of some of these issues. I have already spoken of Matigari's arrival, and of the way in which the opening scene is structured around him, but perhaps a more direct way of assessing the fundamental differences between postmodern and postcolonial writing would be to look at the supernatural and fantastic manner of his depiction. To begin with, our introduction to Matigari is one of physical force nationalism, and of historical coherence. Ngugi has spoken himself of the filmic quality of the text, or at any rate of his sense of having 'visualiz[ed] the whole movement of [the] characters as if ... striding behind a camera'; so the very stylised, and historically verifiable sense of the character, is clearly and directly intended (Tynh 1986: 166). But a sense of supernatural agency, something that stretches the realistic frame of the scene out somewhat, follows on from this quite quickly, and suggests a different type of character entirely. For example, when Matigari is attacked by the young boys who live among the wreckage of an increasingly alienated and materialist culture, Matigari 'seemed to be protected by a powerful charm, because not a single stone touched him' (Ngugi 1987: 17). A little later he is described as appearing as though 'he could see far into the future' (Ngugi 1987: 19), and as moving easily between youthful and aged states. Gestures of self-transformation such as these might be compatible enough with an oral tradition more used to the surprise and challenge of fantasy, what Okpaku (1988: 3) might call 'mythical capture', but what relationship might they enjoy with the postmodern and, more importantly, what sort of reading and critical strategies do they require?

Definitely, our first inclination would be to establish links between Ngugi's use of supernaturalism or fantasy, and the manner in which it might be said to be employed by other writers, perhaps from other cultures. For example, T. Apter (1982: 76), in *Fantasy Literature*, suggests that

the transformation theme is utilized in modern fantasy to indicate, as does the double theme, doubts about our own identity, about that of others, and about the way in which our relations with others affect our identity. The modern use

linked in its complex interplay in which metaphor is provided special powers of disclosure and critical capability.

However helpful such comparisons are, Nguigi's use of fantasy still requires that the text, because of its political commitment and its broader intentions, be read differently. Obviously Apter's comments about conflicting, or doubtful, identities, the power of disguise, and the mobility allowed to characters of certain assumed properties make for instructive enough criticism. However, the motivation for the use of fantasy in Nguigi's case is to be seen as stemming from a desire for social instruction, and from a wish to make something of traditional and modern forms.

What I wish to suggest about the development of fantasy in *Mungari*, then, is that while the text has all the appearance of compatible forms within the Euro-Africanist tradition, its motivation and ultimate objectives are substantially different. Something of the interest in developing a character of supernatural qualities may be found in Nguigi's earlier *The River Between*, for example when Choge, an elder in the tribe, is said to have 'the gift of magic' and, more importantly, said 'to gain in stature and appearance so that Waiyaki [the protagonist] thought him transmuted' (1965:8). Like *Mungari*, Choge's reason for having been bestowed with these powers is not so he can act as a focus for the development of experimental techniques, but because he represents the apothecosis of Gikuyu wisdom and generosity, and because such attributes are best illustrated with reference to a non-realistic fiction. By the time of writing *Mungari*, of course, figures of supernatural and timeless significance have come to carry more greater and broader responsibilities for Nguigi, but the fantastic qualities that a character represents are still intended for purposes other than mere literary affectation.

What the development of issues such as those of supernatural agency consistently reveal, it seems to me, are motivations that have a basis in lived, historical and political experience. Postmodern writing may well be the product of, or a response to, a crisis in western philosophy. And it may well articulate that crisis by celebrating non-linear forms and by leaving its narratives essentially open-ended in their crisis. If it can be called that, within the postcolonial text is rather different. In other words, the superhuman Mungari whose various metamorphoses suggest comparison with other forms of literary representation is there for the purpose of political instruction. The novel may well work within several representational domains, but its commitment to a specifically political and ideological ideal is undiminished.

Patricia Waugh (1993:49) defines postmodern art as not doing

a series of metaphors (fragmentation, instability of meaning, disavowal, the breakdown in grand theories as other narrations of imagination or speculation.

Waugh goes on to question the legitimacy of those for whom postmodernism is a non-committed and politically uninvolved practice, and she presents the example of John's Hatcher, whose 'earlier, non-political interest in modern uses of self-reflexive forms'

has transpired into 'in defence of postmodernism as a mode of intertextual, "self-reflexive discourse", always inextricably bound to social discourse' as an interesting, perhaps acceptable, development. In addition, she cites the ideas of other critics who see postmodernism as problematising 'dominant values by contesting their codes of representation from within' and why, therefore, represent and re-qualify the postmodern. Yet a difference still seems to exist between the writings (as opposed to theoretical speculation) of many postmodern writers, and figures such as Nguigi. For instance, Waugh (1993:51) speaks of postmodernism as being 'a condition where the possibility of human agency has disappeared' and of how, in a brief discussion of Salman Rushdie's *Shame*, postmodernism thrives on the creation of 'provisional identities'. However, as principal elements of a mode of writing committed to political issues, comments such as these would find little acceptance in *Mungari*. Problematising identity, of course, is acceptable if it leads, as with *Mungari*, to an accumulation of transhistorical referents capable, in fact, of the reactivation of emancipatory politics. But it is not acceptable if it leads, as in *Parat*, to characters losing a sense of themselves and of their will to live. *Mungari*, it must be emphasised – and here is how the supernatural elements of the text may be said to differ substantially from the sort of gloss they might find in a postmodernist reading of the text – is indeed plural and fragmented, is seen as a figure of multiple and complex composition, because that is the best method of securing a sense of optimism and radical commitment from a reader. Difficulties may be discerned, of course, and so long as Nguigi continues to move between literate and oral traditions, linking fantasy and song to the more practical considerations of a revolutionary formula, will continue to be seen as appropriate to the postmodernist canon. But the emphasis on making those combinations and movements distinctly proactive, making them appear as a posture of commitment and political integrity, will persist.

'Our people, let us share this beer, and this drop of wine'. Something in Mungari's voice made them listen to him attentively. There was a sad note about it, but it also carried hope and courage. The others now fell silent. The words seemed to remind them of things long forgotten, carrying them back to dreams they had long before. 'How are we going to see it this darkness?' (Nguigi 1986:56).

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The Use of Vernacular Languages in the Malawian Literary Industry

Gregory H. Kamwendo

The focus is on the African languages, but some from 'higher' African languages as well as from European languages, and is liable to do so in the present context, any one is provided an estimate of the widely spoken languages. It is hoped to encourage the study and writing of other languages of the country. A more positive approach is for the process of 'higher' African languages to be protected as an encouragement for the written development of the languages in the country (Duffy 1985:21).

Malawi's political history took a new turn in 1994 when the first post-independence multiparty elections were held marking the end of a one party dictatorship and the birth of multiparty politics. The thirty years of the one party state in Malawi (1964-1994) led to a number of negative developments such as 'scorpius' loss of various freedoms and rights (e.g. freedom of expression). Very tough censorship laws crippled the country's literary industry and the language policy played a significant role in regarding the growth of literature in Malawi. English and Chichewa operated as the only officially recognised languages of the post-independence Malawi. I will examine the consequences of this post-colonial language policy for the Malawian literary industry, and suggest possible ways forward. Now that Malawi is economically and politically flourishing, efforts should be taken to promote creative writing in the once marginalised languages.

Literary beginnings and post independence policy

The history of writing in Malawian languages starts with the nineteenth century arrival of Christian missionaries who realised that in order to achieve success in the evangelisation task they had to use indigenous languages. The missionaries set up parish schools in which African converts were taught the BRS with the aim of developing a group of Africans who could read religious literature and then preach to fellow Africans. Malawi's first printing house, Hetherwick Press, was set up at Blantyre Mission by Scottish missionaries in 1834. The missionaries became the first developers of the vernacular languages, codifying the vernaculars and producing orthographies, grammars and dictionaries. Some of the fruits of missionaries' work included translations into indigenous languages of the Bible, catechisms, hymn books, secular literature, and literary works in indigenous languages produced by the missionaries

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themselves. Other works of secular literature were created by the educated Africans with the encouragement and support of missionaries. This marked the birth of the literary industry in Malawi (see Mwiyeziwa 1978a).

The language policy which the country pursued after independence crippled the production of literary works in indigenous languages. In 1968, Chichewa was made the only indigenous language with official status. Thus Chichewa, and English, became the two languages of the mass media. Chichewa also became the medium of instruction at primary level from standards 1-4 and the only indigenous language taught as a subject from the primary school to the tertiary level of the education system. English maintained its pre-independence position as the language of government business, the judiciary, parliament, commerce, mass media, and the medium of instruction from senior primary school up to the tertiary level.

People of diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds were urged by political leaders to ignore their ethnic differences, and Chichewa came to be seen as a symbol of national unity and identity (Torguza-Mvula 1992). People of various ethnic groups were called upon to identify themselves with one nation (Malawi), one leader (Lift President Dr. Hastings Banda), one party (the Malawi Congress Party) and one language (Chichewa) (see Chirwa 1994). This political climate led to the development and promotion of Chichewa at the expense of other potential indigenous languages such as Chitumbuka, C Chilomwe, Chiyao etc. The idea of having Chichewa as a national language in the current author's view, was not bad in itself. However, what is lamentable is the fact that Chichewa's development was not accompanied by development of other indigenous languages. For example, the government set up the Chichewa Board whose functions included

advising on the use of the Chichewa language throughout Malawi and promoting as well as giving guidance with regard to work on the Chichewa language in Malawi and neighbouring countries (Torguza-Mvula 1972:14).

Yet other Malawian languages were not given such opportunities. The first Lift President Banda took an active role in promoting 'good Chichewa' and gave public lectures on the subject. He often charged that mispronunciations and local, non-native speakers of Chichewa (e.g. Yao, Lomwe etc.) had spoilt the Chichewa language. It was not surprising, then, that in 1975, the University of Malawi elected him to an honorary Chair of Chichewa in recognition of his services to the national language (*This is Malawi* 1975:17).

No other indigenous language received support from the government and the president. The prominent position acquired by Chichewa meant that other indigenous languages were reduced to languages of the home. To this end, Mwiyeziwa's (1978: xiv) claim that 'the emergence of Chichewa as a lingua franca has not meant the liquidation of other languages' is far from telling the truth. Alex Chimwani agrees that in the thirty years of Malawi's one party dictatorship, Chitumbuka together with so many other Malawian languages were severely marginalised by the government's policy of granting official recognition to only one indigenous language, Chichewa.

could agree that such a policy may have dangers and a harmful side, the rigid enforcement has struck me with many other Malawians, as well, being dangerously impractical and ethnocentric. This could have become a major case of indigenous cultural extinction and the diminishing of people's right to access to their own language and culture (Cramer in Turner 1996:13).

Literary drought in indigenous languages

Lack of government interest in the promotion and development of indigenous languages other than Chichewa means that when you go into a bookshop or library in Malawi, you discover that the first thirty years of independence (1964-1994) have been a disaster as far as literature in indigenous languages is concerned. Katothani, one of Malawi's prominent writers turned to writing in Chichewa after discovering that not much had been produced in this language. He claims that it makes sense for him to write books in Chichewa since his target audience comprises the ordinary man and woman in the village who are often literate in Chichewa and cannot understand a text in English. His reasons are

If these books would ever taste the blessing of being translated into other languages, I would opt for other Malawian languages like Chitumbuka, Chiyao or Chikwena before any foreign languages (Katothani 1994:17).

According to a survey conducted by Writers and Artists Services International (WASI), the period 1960-1988 witnessed the publication of 143 literary works mainly in three languages: English is the most frequent, followed by Chichewa the national language and Yankake¹ (Cramer 1996:27). Much of the literary production in Chitumbuka was done in the period before Malawi's independence. The Livingstonia Mission of the Church of Scotland in the Northern Region of Malawi contributed significantly to the development of Chitumbuka as well as encouraging the growth of secular literature in the language. As for other languages such as Chiyao, Chisena and Chitumbwa, literary works remain non-existent; one, therefore, cannot talk of a novel in Chiyao, a short story anthology in Chitumbwa, or a collection of poetry in Chisena in Malawi.

This situation has given rise to a situation under which there is a void in the Chichewa language

an unequalled growth body of literature which includes essays, poems, novels, newsletters, books and fully fledged novels. This volume of literature is remarkable at such a geographical progression that one would assume that Chichewa is the only national language of national importance. Unfortunately there is no corresponding literature in any other languages (Livingstone-Mwaanga 1990:41).

When we turn to the oral literature side, the situation is still the same. Chichewa has the richest list of recordings of oral traditions such as folktales, epics, proverbs, fables, riddles, etc., in the whole continent and due to its cultural and linguistic liberalisation

policy of the state, researchers find the freedom to collect and record oral traditions from any ethnic/linguistic group of their choice – however, under the one party state, academic freedom (which includes freedom to carry out research) was tightly controlled, and research on oral traditions mainly centred on the Chichewa language.

democracy and linguistic liberalisation

In 1994 Malawi emerged from a one party state to a multi-party state, with a new constitution which includes a Bill of Rights. In addition to the right to freedom of expression the new constitution recognises that:

Every person shall have the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of his or her choice (Section 35, chapter IV: Persons & Institutions).

People are now free to operate in the language of their choice. Linguistic liberalisation has also translated into the introduction of Chiyao, Chisena, Chitumbuka and Chikwena languages on the national radio. Furthermore, these same languages have been proposed as media of instruction in the first four years of primary education in Malawi which should provide one of the motivations for producing literary works in as many languages as possible.

Despite this linguistic liberalisation, the Malawian writer and publisher remain glued to the two 'traditional' languages i.e. English and Chichewa. Whilst the new government does not confine writers and publishers to English and Chichewa, there are a number of obstacles that writers and publishers face. Unless the following obstacles are removed, Malawians cannot adequately enjoy the fruits of linguistic liberalisation.

technical problems

Only Chichewa has had its grammar and orthographic principles developed and reviewed by a language developing body, the Chichewa Board. However, the work is far from being satisfactory. For instance, at the time the Chichewa Board was being dissolved in 1995, the much awaited Chichewa dictionary had not been finished. So even Chikwena poses problems to those who want to use it in writing. Malawian poet and critic, Anthony Nzonzo, is quoted as saying that he opted for English as the language of his literary output because Chikwena's

rules, orthography and, especially, grammar, are so cumbersome because of their complexity that you are writing correct Chikwena. This has inhibited me, and I have refrained from writing in Chikwena, and more comfortable in English (in Landfors 1989:54).

Nigerian writer, Cyprian Ekwensi (1988:96) has a similar problem:

For years and years, there has been a standing controversy about which

It is the right one to speak and write. Dialects and orthographies vary from district to district and from person to person.

There is no effort made to develop standard orthographies and grammars of other major languages of Malawi. This will alleviate writers' problems when using these languages. It is pleasing to note that in April 1996 the University of Malawi established a Centre for Language Studies (replacing the Chichewa Board) whose mandate is to develop and promote Malawian languages. Among the initial projects of the new Centre is the review of the existing orthographies for Chiyao and Chitumbuka.

prestige and economic considerations

There are some writers who feel that it is prestigious to write in an international language such as English. Writing in an international language affords them the opportunity to be known across their country's borders. While this is true, we should bear in mind that it is the quality of the literary work that makes a writer popular or unknown beyond his/her homeland. Njabulo Ndebele has argued that

Tobias did not write in English. Nor did Hlaka, nor Thomas Mankwa. Yet their works are known the world over, in 10 millions (1989:50).

It is often argued that it is economically more rewarding to write in an international language than in an indigenous language because an international language guarantees a wider readership, and hence more to be pocketed from royalties. What is needed in Malawi is that writers should lobby for reasonable royalties from publishers. The current rates of royalties are just too low to motivate the writer's interest. Special incentives should be set aside by government and publishers for writers who opt for indigenous languages. One way of boosting creative writing in these neglected languages is to organize writing competitions which carry with them reasonable and attractive prizes. On a recent trip to South Africa, the author of this article came across a call for entries in the 1996/97 Kagiso/First National Bank Novella writing competition. Top winners were assured of having their works published. In Malawi, unfortunately, writing competitions do not offer much in terms of money. What the author found particularly striking about the Kagiso/First National Bank competition was that the competition was open to all the eleven official languages of South Africa. The case in Malawi is that after writing competitions are restricted to English and Chichewa. Organisers of writing competitions in Malawi should open up to the following vernacular languages: Chitumbuka, Chiyao, Chikwaka and Ufisiya.

publisher's lack of interest in indigenous languages

Chichewa is the only indigenous language that has been of interest to publishers and sponsors of writing competitions. For example, both Popular Publications and Donko Publishing have a Chichewa series. The Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) Radio One has some programmes devoted to literary items (e.g. 'Writers' Corner') as a

programme in which literary works in English are critiqued. 'Ngoni Nkumbumba', a programme on Malawian culture airs some poetry and short stories in Chichewa; 'Makatsili' is a programme on MBC devoted to Chichewa poetry. Theatre of the Air covers radio drama in English. There is need to have similar radio programmes featuring creative writing in the other major languages of Malawi.

Some interest in publishing both literary and non-literary works in indigenous languages has started to be noticed. On the non-literary scene, Mankhuchi Publishing House of Zomba launched a Basic Chiyao Reader, written in simple grammar and with simple structures, progressing from one syllable words to sentences of seven syllables. The same publishing company has started translating already published literary works

in the absence of any original creative writing in Chiyao so far. We have started with translations from published sources. These translations are of two kinds: original writing from Chichewa in English, and written folktales in either of the two languages (Mankhuchi Publishing Company Catalogue 1996:5).

negative attitudes towards indigenous languages

Clearly, negative attitudes towards indigenous languages are detrimental to the growth of literature in such languages. It is unfortunate that thirty years of independence have not freed some Malawians from linguistic imperialism or linguistic chauvinism. There is a tendency to degrade local languages, and go for foreign languages (especially the language of the former colonizers). Offensively

some people brag that they only read the English articles in the bilingual newspapers, finding the vernacular portions rather repulsive (Mwinyika 1978:xxiv).

When an indigenous language is on the verge of 'death' very few people express concern. However, when the position of English is about to be threatened, loud cries are heard. Recently, the Ministry of Education directed that as from the 1997 academic year vernacular languages will be used as media of instruction in the early phases of the primary school (grades 1-4). You just have to read the papers and listen to the radio to have a feel of people's concern that the policy will lead to a lowering of standards in English. Whether this is a genuine fear or not is not the worst matter here, for what is important to note is that those who express such fears seem not to care about indigenous languages.

In conclusion I would like to join with those warning that national languages should not be developed in the dire expense of regional languages (Ngugi 1986:72). When will African languages be elevated? Why do Africans' education efforts aimed at elevating the status of their indigenous languages?

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Racial Governmentality: Thomas Jefferson and African Colonisation in the United States before 1816

David Kazanjian

Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate, than that these people are to be free. Nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government (Jefferson 1821).

But to return to the colonizing track. It will be well for me to note here at once, that I do not mean indiscriminately to condemn all the members and advocates of this scheme, for I believe, that there are some friends to the sons of Africa, who are laboring for our salvation, not merely orally but in truth and in deed, who have been drawn into this plan. Some, moved by compassion from any thing else, while others, with humane feelings and lively zeal for our good, seeing how much we suffer from the afflictions poured upon us by numerous tyrants, are willing to avail their names in any thing which they think has the promise and our redemption from wickedness and misery; such men, with a heart truly overflowing with gratitude for their past services and zeal in our cause, I humbly beg to examine this plan minutely, and see if the evil which they have in view will be completely counteracted by such a course of procedure. Our friends who have been imperceptibly drawn into this plan I view with tenderness, and would not for the world injure that, for I hope, and I have only to hope for the future, that they will withdraw themselves from it—for I mean to mean, that the plan must for the glory of God in this country, the perpetuation of slavery in this country, and the well-being of the country forever, unless something is immediately done (Walker 1829).

The Americas and Africa have long been connected by circuits of appropriation and exchange. In this paper I offer an interpretation of how one such circuit—Thomas Jefferson's plan to deport African Americans from the United States and to recolonize them in West Africa—concretely articulates emerging forms of nationalism, racism, and liberal egalitarianism. I take up Jefferson's commitment to individualism by reading Jefferson's writings with Michel Foucault's studies of governmentality and thus testing the boundaries between 'history' and 'theory'. In doing I hope that this interpretation of Jefferson's colonization proposals will resonate with current South African debates over discourses and practices of race, nation, and equality. I also hope that this essay's own appropriation of 'history' and 'theory' can become part of the

ongoing circuits of exchange – historical, theoretical, political, intellectual – between the U.S. and South Africa which also have a long history.

In 1829, a free African American reformer named David Walker published one of history's most uncompromising, effective, and calls for resistance against U.S. white nationalism. In particular, the fourth chapter or 'article' of *David Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular and very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America* offers a sharp critique of one of the most extensively discussed and debated policy proposals of the colonial and ante-bellum periods—a proposal that, by the turn of the nineteenth century, would commonly be known as 'colonization'. Although particular colonization proposals differed from one another in some of their details, they were invariably some version of the following: a state and/or privately funded plan to appropriate a territory in Africa or the Americas and to forcibly deport, and/or otherwise the emigration of, either the entire African American population, or just the free African American population, to that territory. The appropriated territory was, in turn, to become a formally free and independent nation-state. In addition, for many colonizationists this new and independent nation-state was to become an informal political, economic, and ideological colony of the U.S.

Walker took particular pains to address a peculiar aspect of the colonization movement, an aspect about which contemporary scholars have been strikingly silent. He insisted on addressing the fact that some colonizationists understood colonization as emancipatory. That is, they understood colonization as a practical means of rendering or realizing the often illusive, modern ideal of 'freedom'. In Article Four of his *Appeal*, Walker writes about such 'liberal' colonizationists in the unusually paralytic terms of the passage quoted in my epigraph. Even if we detect a hint of Walker's famous sarcasm or ironic hyperbole in this passage ('Our friends who have been imperceptibly drawn into this plot I view with tenderness, and would not for the world injure their feelings...'), we still must take seriously his concern that the ideals of 'salvation', 'truth', 'human feelings', 'good', 'redemption', and 'the glory of God' had been conjoined with 'the colonizing trick'. He alerts us to the problem that such 'friends to the sons of Africa' understand colonization as a 'deed', 'plan' or 'project'—that is, a utilitarian rendering of such ideas, a material realisation or representation of the illusive notion of 'freedom'. By rhetorically disavowing unabashed pro-slavery colonizationists such as Henry Clay—who he condemns elsewhere in the *Appeal* to

quite different and no uncertain terms (Walker [1829/1905:45-55]) from these 'friends to the sons of Africa', Walker refuses to interpret colonization as simply a covert or duplicitous ploy, as merely an ideological surface beneath which would lie more fundamental and self-evident economic and racialist interests of pro-slavery whites. Instead, Walker presents us with the difficult task of interpreting its 'confounding'—'imperceptible'—'by persuasion'—of colonization with an emerging, Enlightenment conception of 'freedom'. Now, he seems to ask, might we perceive and formulate a critique of this powerful persuasion?

The articulation of 'freedom' with colonization—that so concerns Walker—must be traced to an under-examined, early period in the history of the idea of colonization— from the 1770s, when the first full scale colonization proposals began to be discussed in the British-North American colonies, to just before the founding of the American Colonization Society in 1816— and in particular in the pro-colonization writings of Thomas Jefferson. Although some pamphlets advocating colonization appeared before Jefferson first wrote of the proposal, his over forty years of persistent and detailed advocacy undoubtedly make him the project's intellectual father.¹ In fact, early nineteenth-century texts that argue for and against colonization widely represent him as one of the proposal's most influential supporters. As Walker's *Appeal* suggests, the colonial and ante-bellum periods in general, and Jefferson's foundational texts in particular, challenge today's predominant, historical understanding of colonization as solely a pro-slavery deportation project—that is, as a mechanism for expelling free blacks and rebellious slaves who might 'incite' a desire for freedom among slaves. Pro-slavery forces did begin to control colonization ideologically and organisationally after 1816, and by the mid 1830s would thoroughly dominate the movement; in addition, even before 1816 some colonizationists certainly envisioned colonization as solely a deportation scheme. However, from its origins in the 1770s until approximately 1816, the project was in fact planned and supported by a complex and uneasy coalition of free and enslaved blacks (most of whom were northerners), white abolitionists (mostly non-borners), and slaveholders who were vaguely troubled by the existence of slavery (most of whom were Virginians such as Jefferson). The colonization projects envisioned by these disparate interests were not simply

¹ This focus on Jefferson is also indebted to Walker, who in his *Appeal* critically examines Jefferson more than any other figure, although he does not discuss Jefferson's pro-colonization writings in detail— not surprisingly, at least of these writings or in the form of personal correspondence. In fact, Walker issues an impassioned, if unrelentless, call for all African American men to conduct such an examination of Jefferson themselves. Challenging Jefferson's idealism, Walker (1905:134) writes: 'Mr. Jefferson's every reverence makes a manhood an error; any argument by which we are seduced from the path of duty, I shall never be able to reach; that would have needed all which was uttered in the field of my political belief; the path of duty of Mr. Jefferson, who even Virginia, and in this land of America, let me say of us, says that the rebellion is a crime, has been vented by our white friends, and enough—bury a white man—bury a black man'.

² See, for example (1968:342-343) for detailed description of the earliest proposals.

³ See for example Rosenthal (1968), Booth (1976), Frederickson (1981) and Marx (1983).

⁴ Windrop Jordan (1968:536) notes the 'workshop atmosphere' between 1800 and 1816 that placed a passionate belief in the destiny of the white settler colonization of the least the entire North American continent, and made Africa and the Caribbean the only realistic sites for colonization. The Monroe Doctrine and Jefferson's approving response to it in a letter to Monroe, 24 Oct. 1823 (Jefferson 1899X:277), was a nod to this belief, although Jefferson seems to have believed in such continental destiny as early as 1786, as his 'Observations for the article titled 'Disposition' in the *Encyclopædia* (Jefferson 1899 IV:182) indicates.

deportation schemes, but rather multi-phase, decades-long re-settlement projects meant to establish a Christian nation-state of free African Americans in the image of, closely allied to, and even controlled by the U.S.

Despite Jefferson's role as a 'founding father' of colonisation, Jefferson scholars rarely even mention his long advocacy of and copious writings on the proposal. When his advocacy is discussed, it is inevitably placed in the context of the frequently examined relationship between his role as a 'founding father' of liberalism and his defence of racism or his role as a slaveowner. Most accounts of this relationship inevitably guarantee one of three positions. Firstly, Jefferson is said to be an enlightened liberal whose racism and slaveownership were unfortunate but aberrant or atavistic when one considers his entire legacy.¹ Secondly, Jefferson's racism and slaveownership are said to be moral outrages and clear signs of the limits or contradictions of his liberalism.² Thirdly, Jefferson is said to have been a benevolent but realistic or pragmatic slaveowner who did his best for his slaves and who grappled honestly with the overwhelming complexities of 'the peculiar institution'.³ To the contrary, Jefferson's long and passionate advocacy of colonisation, and in particular the very language of that advocacy, suggest that colonisation was by no means inconsistent with or contradicted by what has been called Jeffersonian liberalism. Rather, any account of such liberalism needs to consider how Jefferson could incorporate into 'liberalism' both his distrust of strong, centralised government and his dogged advocacy of a massive, centralised, state-sponsored scheme to encourage, deport, and resettle African Americans in Africa, and then to street and control that resettlement after deportation.

In this essay I argue that the racism and nationalism which characterise Jeffersonian colonisation are constitutive of the particular form of 'freedom' Jefferson embraced – the calculable or formal and abstract equality of subjects as citizens. When faced with the incomplete arrival of 'freedom' in the U.S. after independence, or what he persistently represented as the obscured and mistreated 'light' of the Enlightenment, Jefferson sought to capture that light and render a distinctly 'American freedom' through a distinctly modern, calculable logic of racial governmentality. That

is, his colonialism discourse embodied what Michael Foucault called 'governmentality' with a rationalised fantasy of racial purification by articulating formal, abstract equality with the racial and nation-constitution of populations. In this, his colonisation discourse naturalised his orientation by representing itself as merely the technical, practical, and self-evident reduction of pre-existing, especially verifiable racial and national formations. My reading thus suggests that we place colonisation firmly within the 'principle of reason' that founded, and continues to echo throughout, the U.S.

In what follows I offer a brief account of the historical specificity of colonisation discourse before 1810. I then situate Jefferson's advocacy of colonisation in his personal correspondence and published texts, within the wider context of the negotiation of the relationships between the U.S. and Europe, between the U.S. and African Americans, and between 'freedom' and racial-national codification.

the colonial and ante-bellum colonisation conjuncture

'Colonization' is, at first glance, a curious term for a proposal often represented today as a white nationalist scheme to deport African Americans. From the late sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, the words 'deportation' and 'transportation' were commonly used in English to describe forced expulsions of an individual, class, or group from a community, colony or nation.⁴ On the other hand, the terms 'colonization' and 'emigration' had been used since at least the seventeenth century to describe the more or less voluntary efforts of Europeans to establish economic and political outposts around the globe. 'Colonization' thus suggests a degree of voluntary activity not suggested by 'deportation' or 'transportation'.

Now, then, might we account for the widespread application of the term 'colonization' to U.S. proposals for the resettlement of African Americans? Firstly, these proposals were different from deportation and transportation proposals because early colonisationists were far more concerned with the development of African Americans in their new location than they were with the details of the emigration or expulsion itself. They imagined colonised African Americans in a new African nation-state in the image of, and committed to the interests of, the United States.⁵ Secondly, and perhaps

¹ The words of John Chester Miller (1971: 217): 'he signally failed to live up to his own precepts' See also Cunningham (1983: 6); McVey (1994: 83); Miller (1977: 253-266).

² In the words of Paul Finkelman (1993: 81): 'Summarizing the contradictions between Jefferson's profession and his actions... [Europeans had] the test of Jefferson's position as a way to see whether he was able to transcend his economic interests and his sectional background to implement the more laudable but Jeffersonian ideal.' See also Barlow (1970: 170).

³ In the words of Dennis Malone (1948: 257): 'If his judgement on the Negroes was unfavorable, that of his race contemporaries generally was probably far more so. His observations were less not able at themselves, however, than in the opinion which he made them. He commended the measures of assimilation, advocated by his contemporaries. On the practical point, he felt, they required the humane judgment of a kindly and generally-minded man who accepted the absence of sufficient data and accepted criteria.'

⁴ For example, the British practiced the deportation/transportation of criminals to various locations, and the early English colonists in North America deported/transported from their towns or communities poor and/or did not conform to European, racial, or legal requirements (Beale 1985, MacDougall 1992, 173 Smith 1985).

⁵ We might say, alternatively, that colonisation proposals were something of a hybrid of seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth-century deportation/transportation proposals, nineteenth-century African colonisation in the sense that they involved establishing governmental and cultural replicas of the U.S. in other continents through white colonisation, and high imperialism or neo-colonialism in the sense that they involved installing governmental and cultural control over a foreign population even after that population obtained formal independence and control over their own territory. It is this hybrid nature, and its intertextuality with the standard narrative of colonialism, imperialism, and neo-imperialism, that we can consider.

more importantly, colonisation is also different from other juridical realisations of 'race' and 'nation' from the period, such as anti-segregation laws, because its discourse of national statehood promised formal equality to African Americans in the form of emancipation and national autonomy in Africa. That is, at its inception colonisation was associated less with punishment or exile as much as it was associated with an emerging Enlightenment conception of 'freedom'. This aspect of colonisation is particularly pronounced in its early period, from the late eighteenth century until the early nineteenth century. In fact, pro-slavery forces did not begin to support the proposal in substantial numbers, and African American and white abolitionists did not begin to organise against it in substantial numbers, until after the founding of the American Colonization Society (ACS)⁷ in 1816–1817 (Foner 1975:584; Foner 1988:291,295; Foner 1988:266; McArthur 1992:71; Miller 1975:54–90; Moses 1978:34–5; Moses 1996:35). Between the 1770s, when the first North American colonisation proposals emerged⁸, and 1816, black and white anti-slavery forces made up the great majority of colonisationists (Foner 1975:579–584; Jordan 1968:34–80; Miller 1975:viii,3–26; Moses 1996:6–13).

This periodisation is certainly somewhat artificial and schematic – some pro-slavery forces did support colonisation before 1816, and after 1816 pro-slavery and anti-slavery arguments vied with each other for political and ideological control over the movement. My point is that during the period before 1816, when the term 'colonization' began to be applied to the expulsion and resettlement of African Americans, discourse on the proposal was predominantly characterised by arguments for colonisation as a necessary and logical extension of emancipation, and thus

foregrounds the complicity between colonisation and emerging Enlightenment principles of 'freedom'. The sense of voluntary emigration carried by the word 'colonization' can, I would suggest, be read as a hinge of this complicity. Though perhaps counter-intuitive in today's terms, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries colonisation's fusion of expulsion and emigration, of emigration and racial segregation was self-evident to many of its advocates.

As opposed analyses as those of W. I. B. Jordan and Henry Louis Gates would make this point explicitly – without, however, pursuing its wider implications. Writes Jordan (1968:348), 'What was striking in this proposal [in its early period] was that fervent equalitarianism led directly to Negro removal'. And writes Sherwood (1916:487; see also 507): 'During the last quarter of the eighteenth century deportation was regarded not as a punishment for crime nor as a means to prevent an increase in the number of free negroes, but as the logical outcome of manumission'. Jordan's suggestive adverb 'directly' and Sherwood's passive construction 'was regarded' both

Davis (1994) and Stein (1979) argue that even in the 1870s there was no sharp division between emancipation and colonisation.

It should be noted that Sherwood (1916:207) is an apologist for white colonisationists in general, as when he argues that white leaders of the movement were committed to an essential 'natural freedom'. The men identified with the movement were not a high order and had for their purpose the emigration of a race and the civilisation of a continent. Sherwood might, as was Wacker, not to dismiss or repress the connect between 'freedom' and colonisation, but rather than collapse to the 'high', a more late and timeless, name of the concept of 'freedom' at the core of colonisation, as Sherwood does, I will argue that colonisation projects a historically specified, discursively formed notion of 'freedom' itself, epitomised by its inseparability from racial and national domination. In any otherwise careful argument devoted to tracing the historical character of U.S. white supremacy or violence to African Americans, Jordan (1968:348) to some extent echoes this Sherwood position when he claims that 'No one [of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century anti-slavery advocates in the North] denounced colonization as a proslavery institution, as the next generation was to do, for the good reason that the project was supported only by men of genuine antislavery feeling'. Foner (1975:583) also criticises Jordan for this argument, but he too places it in the context of Jordan's entire argument about colonisation. Consider the passage immediately following Jordan's (1968:348) claim about 'genuine antislavery feeling'. 'Indeed, by far the most beautiful of the depictions of colonization during this early period', and there seem to have been many, namely Lewis and Clark, he most vividly, was proponent of slavery. William L. Garrison Smith... Colonization was an emancipationist scheme calculated primarily to protect the emancipators. Especially it was a means of profiting white Americans by getting rid of the twofold burden of Negroes and slavery'. Each sentence in this passage offers a somewhat different account of the articulation of emancipation with emigration. Following this Sherwood-esque passage, but colonisation's 'emancipationist' to be recalled and the freedom Jordan claims that true antislavery forces opposed colonisation, and that 'American colonization was a thoroughly self-interested project... The shifting reflects Jordan's concern if not entirely sincere but strategic bias against the problem of the colonisation regime.

⁷ The ACS was a private, pro-colonisation organisation – many of whose members were non-slaveholder government officials who helped secure some government funding for the Society – which was founded in 1816–1817 and which eventually directed the establishment of Liberia in Western Africa. The ACS took inspiration from the British Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor, founded in 1785, and the British Sierra Leone Company, founded in 1791. See Asiwaju (1969) on the role of these British organisations in the establishment of the colony in Sierra Leone. On the origins and early history of the ACS, see Bancroft (1937); Foner (1975:584–597); Fox (1919); Shick (1980); Samuels (1980). For the history of the ACS after 1816, see Bayart (1991) and Sank (1980), on Liberia in particular; Foner (1985:253,290–303), and for founding of ACS, Foner (1985:291–293); Fox (1919); Kinsler (1983); McArthur (1992), chapters I and III; Miller (1975:54ff; Sank (1980 and 1980).

⁸ Jordan (1968:342) dates the beginning of 'an increasingly coherent colonization "campaign" in the 1770s. He adds that the staging of such proposals must owe to The Negroes in Virginia [copyrighted in 1731–1732, published in 1787], 'which seem to have been merely miscellaneous in inspiration and purpose' (Jordan 1968:346). My analysis of Jeffersonian letters compels me to suggest that, by the 1780s, a coherent notion of colonisation has already taken shape. Foner (1975:580), who ignores the magnitude of Jefferson's contribution to colonisation, dates the origins of the debate among freeholders over colonisation at the late 1780s, but also presents evidence of black colonisation proposals being discussed as early as 1770 (Foner 1975:575). See Miller (1975:3–57); Moses (1996:6–13) and Shick (1980:2–5).

key, the genealogical questions we must consider here: how did 'freedom, equalitarianism', 'lead directly' to colonialism? How did colonisation come 'to be regarded' as 'the logical outcome of racialisation'? Those, in effect, did colonisation come to be valued 'directly', 'logically', and self-evidently as emancipatory? When Walker wrote of 'some friends to the sons of Africa' being drawn 'imperceptibly' into colonisation, he was referring, I would argue, to precisely this self-evidence that emerged before 1816. Our task, then, is to sketch a genealogy of this 'striking' self-evidence of 'emancipatory colonialism'.

Walker's *Appeal* also urges an analysis of what can be called the imperial form of colonisation's articulation with emancipation. The full title of Walker's *Appeal*, as well as the persistently global terms of his analysis¹⁴, illustrate the two interrelated levels, domestic and foreign, on which early pro-colonialists operated. As I have mentioned, a crucial aspect of colonisation during this period was the concern of its advocates with the status and development of African Americans in their new location, particularly when that new location was imagined to be Africa. The emphasis of colonisation was not on returning Africans who had been taken from Africa to their 'homeland', as much as it was on establishing settlements of Christian African Americans in 'uncivilized' and 'undeveloped' regions of the globe. This imperial vision sought not only to form a racially and nationally particular, white American nation, but also to begin spreading that which was understood to be universal and exemplary about white America: its Christianity, its capitalist economy, and its governmental system of national citizenship. Thus, colonised African Americans were represented not only as racially particularised subjects to be separated from white America, but also, paradoxically, as abstract bearers of American national form to be sent out as global agents of American universality and exemplarity among Africans from whom African Americans were also in some sense distinct. I will examine this dual role in more detail later in this essay. For now, however, I simply want to emphasise that the term 'colonization' also carries the trace of these dual, interrelated roles—racial 'purification' of a domestic space and imperial power over foreign spaces—and that these roles give colonisation a complexity that the terms 'deportation', 'transportation', or 'exile' fail to capture.

Unfortunately, most twentieth-century historians of colonisation have neither addressed the genealogical question of colonisation's articulation with emancipation, nor examined the imperial form of colonisation, nor considered the specificity of pre-1816 colonisation discourse in any detail.¹⁵ Instead, they have been most concerned with determining whether post-1816 colonisation, considered in a domestic

framework, could be characterised as either essentially racialist and emancipatory, liberal and abolitionist, or conservative and pro-slavery. The question is not an easy one to answer, however, because the proposed 'brought together an odd, shifting, and uneasy coalition of free black, pro-slavery white, and abolitionist white advocates'.¹⁶ In the face of this complexity, most historical accounts have offered what might be called 'political interest' based explanations of colonisation. That is, they have explained colonisation by dividing its advocates into distinct groups—such as pro-slavery whites, black nationalists, and abolitionists—each of which is said to have viewed colonisation as an effective means of realising its particular political interests. These historical accounts differ only over which group tended to dominate the characterisation and the actual efforts at colonisation. As a result, colonial and ante-bellum colonisation has almost invariably been represented in one of two ways. Firstly, as a tool of racial without, substantial or genuine support among African Americans, which was a tool of pro-slavery or racially nationalist whites who managed to dupe some naive free blacks and anti-slavery whites into co-operating with them, and whose real interest was to depopulate free black population to keep them from 'inciting' a desire for freedom among enslaved blacks;¹⁷ or secondly, as a proposal of early or proto black nationalists who, out of their desire for autonomy, worked tactically and secretly with pro-slavery whites.¹⁸

These historical accounts are not quite 'wrong'. There certainly were pro-slavery forces who advocated colonisation as a way to depopulate free blacks whom they saw as a threat to the slave system—equally, as I mentioned above, after 1816. Many

¹⁴ The question of whether free enslaved blacks supported colonisation, and to what extent and in what manner, is of course extremely difficult to document, given their strictly tabularian position. There was certainly some support, given the fact that African Americans who went to Africa had been slaves, though certainly colonialist forces might have gone primarily because it was their only means of obtaining freedom from their masters. The efforts Walker went through to disseminate his *Appeal*, particularly throughout the South, would seem to suggest that he had indications of support among slaves for colonisation—support he faced his life to discourage. On these efforts, see Aptheker (1963: 143–51); Baron (1956); Harding (1981: 92–94); Hinks (1994); Pease and Peace (1974).

¹⁵ See Berlin (1973: 172–188); Beyan (1991); Horton (1993); Kinsella (1998); McMillen (1918).

¹⁶ See Satch (1980); Moses (1996); McCartney (1987); Miller (1995); Olney (1972: 1–29). Satch offers an extended study of the multiple 'motivations' of the blacks who emigrated after 1816 under the auspices of the American Colonization Society, without dismissing the importance of black opposition to emigration. There is another group of early twentieth century histories that offer ecologies for colonisation. They argue that pro-colonialists were self-interested and benevolent but technically unsophisticated enough to realize the proposal—see, for example, Hanchett (1957); Foster (1953); Fox (1919); Fredericksen (1971); Ogden (1972); Sturges (1915); Staudenmann (1980). There is also much scholarship on colonisation and its white and black as imperial spectacles from the mid nineteenth to the mid twentieth centuries, though this period of interest is outside the scope of my study.

¹⁷ See for example, Walker (1995: 1–3, 7, 12, 16–18, 20, 33, 37, 46, 63, 79).

¹⁸ Only Moses (1975: 524–591, 1983: 299–303); Jordan (1968: 542–519) and Miller (1975: 1–29) discuss pre-1816 in any detail, and only they struggle to evaluate the self-interest among the white interests of colonialists (though they still conclude the interests to be disinterested and the common concern is between 'emancipation' and 'colonization').

anti-colonialists as well as some colonialists, pointed this out at the time. In addition, black colonialists such as Olaudah Equiano and Paul Cuffe were well aware of these pro-slavery interests, and their tacit or 'discreet' advocacy certainly influenced earlier colonialists such as Martin O'Leary.¹⁰ Nonetheless, these contemporary historians miss something of the texture of pre-1816 colonisation, firstly, by reducing colonisation to the rational pursuit of self-evident interests by autonomous political actors, such explanations fail to consider what it was about colonisation that rejoined contradictory interests. Perhaps more importantly, however, such explanations also fail to consider carefully the articulation of colonisation with emancipation. By seeking to determine whether colonisation was genuinely emancipatory or not, these histories re-allegorise and de-historicise 'freedom' by suppressing its historically specific articulation with colonisation. These historical arguments thus fail to address the questions Walter posed in 1829: what notion of 'freedom' is rendered by colonisation, and how does that rendering become self-evident to non-colonialists? Jefferson's private correspondence and published writings can help us begin to form answers to these crucial questions.

'mutilated however in it's freest parts' – Jefferson's enlightenment in the eyes of Europe

Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) writes in his 'Autobiography' that on February 7, 1779, as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, he supported an amendment to a slavery bill calling for 'the freedom of all [slaves] born after a certain day, and deportation at a proper age'.¹¹ Query XIV of the 'Notes on the State of Virginia' (composed 1781–1782, published in 1785), entitled 'The administration of justice and description of the laws', also offers an expanded description of 'deportation' – which in a few years he would refer to as colonisation – to an account of the same amendment:

an amendment ... was proposed ... directing, that [slaves] should continue with their parents to a certain age, then be brought up, at the public expense, to tilage, arts or sciences, according to their capacities, till 18. Females should be eighteen, and the males twenty-one years of age, when they should be educated to such trade as the circumstances of the time should render most proper, sending them out with arms, implements of household and of the handicraft arts, tools, and of useful domestic animals, &c. to settle them in free and independent people, and extend to them our alliance and protection, till they shall have acquired strength, and so send vessels at the same time to other parts of the world for an equal number of white

¹⁰ Equiano eventually abandoned all the former work out against it, and Cuffe only began widely advocating it after years of struggling for the emancipation of African Americans in the U.S. On Equiano, see Brading (1995: 325–351). On Cuffe, see Harris (1972); Heath (1986).

inhabitants to feature when to migrate. Fides, paper, encouragement was sent to development. (Jefferson 1984: 264)

Between these 'Notes on the State of Virginia' and a letter written to Miss Fanny Wright just before his death (7 Aug. 1823) (Jefferson 1899X: 343)¹², Jefferson wrote repeatedly in his published writings and private letters about his strong belief in and desire for colonisation, making it arguably his most consistently articulated policy proposal¹³. He would eventually add to and alter the plan – variously suggesting Africa, the West Indies and western North America as sites for colonisation, proposing different ways to raise money for the project, altering the requirements for emancipation, calling for 'Germans' or simply 'white liberators' to replace colonised blacks. Yet the essential structure would remain the same from the 'Notes' to the 7 Aug. 1823 letter: gradual, full emancipation of all slaves followed by their forced deportation from the territorial boundaries of the United States and their subsequent incorporation into a formally independent nation-state that would nevertheless be economically and politically dependent upon the United States.

Jefferson began advocating colonisation at a crucial moment in U.S. history, a moment during which elite U.S. nation-state builders were struggling to formalise in theory and formalise in practice the ideas and projects of the Enlightenment. In his writings, Jefferson consistently represents colonisation as part of this greater struggle to respond to the call of reason, to capture and render or represent the 'light' of the Enlightenment in philosophical, political and juridical concepts and institutions. In fact, Jefferson consistently emphasises his representation of colonisation in a very precise rhetorical structure. He first figures 'freedom' as the light of the Enlightenment which has been passed from Europe to the U.S., but which has been inexplicably refracted and reflected, such that it has arrived impure and incomplete and has left slavery intact and unenlightened. He then worries about Europe watching over and judging the face of this refracted and impure light, and responds to this worry by advocating colonisation as a technical, governmental scheme through which the U.S. could gain enough control over that light to purify it at home and press it on to African Americans. Finally, he figures the future relationship of the U.S. to colonised African Americans as one of the

¹¹ All references to Jefferson's letters refer to Ford's (1999) annotated edition unless otherwise stated. I have given the page number of the original text in parentheses in the text, and the page number of the letter in parentheses before the citation. Since this is a new edition, people who read earlier editions of Jefferson's letters

¹² According to Wilson, Jefferson's enormous correspondence consisted of approximately 19,000 letters (1997: 7), and this could be exhaustively represented by a 500-volume edition. I cannot just cite letters dealing explicitly and substantively with colonisation and write between 1785 and 1823, as well as in the 'Autobiography' (Jefferson 1899 I: 66–69) and 'The Notes on the State of Virginia' (Jefferson 1984), which also contain important discussions of colonisation.

U.S. itself washing over and judging the new nation-state. In the final three sections of this essay, I will consider each step in this rhetorical sequence. I do so, begin, then, with Jefferson's representation of the relationship of Europe to the U.S.

Throughout his lifelong faith in the possibility of fully representing Enlightenment truth – figured, paradoxically as the 'light' of the Enlightenment – Jefferson struggles with its effect on how the moment of its emergence in Europe, and with the possibility of its non-arrival or imperfection in the U.S. A letter Jefferson wrote from Paris to English abolitionists Dr. Richard Price in 1785¹ first introduce us to the rhetorical texture of this ambivalent attitude toward Europe. The letter evaluates a pamphlet Price wrote about slavery in the U.S. by positioning the pamphlet's reception in various states and regions. Jefferson begins by positioning Price and himself as allies attempting to get a complete view of justice:

In Maryland I do not find such a disposition to begin the redress of this enormity as in Virginia. This is the next state to which we may turn our eyes for the interesting spectacle of justice in conflict with avarice and oppression; a conflict wherein the sacred side is gaining daily numbers from the influx into office of young men grown and growing up (7 Aug. 1785) (Jefferson 1899, IV:82).

The struggle for what elsewhere in the letter he calls 'emancipation' is figured here as something one can see, as a 'spectacle' the outcome of which will bring 'justice' into the light and into full view. At this point in the letter, Jefferson and Price see the same 'conflict' – both understand which is 'the sacred side' and which is the side of 'avarice and oppression'. This passage offers not an inkling of miscommunication or misunderstanding, nor any hint that some aspect of the 'spectacle' might be obscured, not of view, or other than what it appears to be.

Yet Jefferson cannot help but qualify his alliance with Price and Price's English abolitionism by the end of the letter:

The country is getting in a ferment against you, or rather has caught it from you. God knows how this will end; but I am really in one extreme or the other. There is a benevolence between those who have loved so much. I think the decision is in your power as yet, but will not be long (Jefferson 1899, IV:81).

Suddenly, Jefferson looks warily, even anxiously at Price, registers his ambivalence about the 'ferment' and the play figures a distinction between himself and Price. 'Our eyes' – Jefferson's and Price's, the U.S.'s and England's – appear not to have 'turned' yet that to view it a 'spectacle' from which 'justice' would emerge into the full view of Enlightenment. It is rather to have turned toward, and even threateningly against, each other. Their 'level' seems to have exceeded 'natural' bounds, to have seceded and perhaps to have been infected by England, but certainly to be on the verge of slipping, unspontaneously, out of their grasp. Previously professed to be a controlled, non-social alliance or hook to Enlightenment, and a volatile opposition threatening to become a

'[ex]treme', between a 'powerful' rendering of 'emancipation' and an anxious, fearful, scene of watching and being watched, Jefferson here sets the terms for what will be a life-long, ambivalent relationship to the figures of Europe and Enlightenment.

A letter written just six months later to James Madison, again from Paris, expands upon this ambivalent mixture of attraction for and distrust of Europe, coupled with anxiety over capturing and rendering the light of the Enlightenment (8 Feb. 1786) (Jefferson 1899, IV:192-197). As if to foreground this very ambivalence and anxiety, the letter opens with an enumeration of letters exchanged and expected, an implicit acknowledgement of the intricate lines of communication across the Atlantic:

Dear Sir, My last letter, once been on the 1st & 2nd of Sep. and the 28th and Oct. Yours reached me on the 20th of Aug. 1786. I & Nov. 1786, and this the first safe opportunity of making a return to the kind letter I received. I look & bow to hers for your remembrance of William Burghes, for the attorney which will, may yet to know. (Jefferson 1899, IV:17)

This recognition of the possibility of communication across between Europe and the U.S. – that is, of the possibility that Madison may never even see this letter, that 'the first safe opportunity' may not be safe enough – from notes throughout the entire letter a vague sense of impossibility.

Nonetheless, Jefferson places great weight on certain trans-Atlantic communications, particularly those involving structurally unequal exchange of prestige, knowledge, technical skill, the arts and primary goods. He continues:

I thank you for the communication of the remonstrance against the assessment M'azel who is now in Holland promised me to have it published in the Leyden gazette. It will do us great honour (Jefferson 1899, IV:11).

For the rest of the letter's opening paragraph he elaborates on the importance of 'honourable representations of the U.S. in Europe. After telling Madison of his 'great pleasure' that the Virginia Assembly has agreed in principle to federal regulation of their commerce², Jefferson writes:

The politics of Europe render it indispensably necessary that with respect to everything external we be one nation only. Annually hooped together, later on government is what each state should keep to itself. (178) could be seen in

¹ The reference here is unclear.

² Jefferson may be referring to a 1786 decision that sent Virginia delegates to a meeting in Annapolis with delegates from Maryland, Delaware, New York and Pennsylvania to discuss interstate commerce. It was at this meeting that some of the country's most powerful and famous decided to call a constitutional convention in 1787 to revise the Articles of Confederation.

Europe, but all our senses will be brought to concert, in what the Virginia assembly has done, it would produce a total revolution in their opinion of us, and no good thing, and it should ever be held in mind that our safety & welfare, the consequences of any act of respectability in the national character. As long as the states exercise separately those acts of power which respect foreign nations, so long will there be no more to be feared, an overbearing tyrant, one or other of them which will constantly keep us on an ill footing with foreign states. (Jefferson 1899, 13-15)

The revolutionary tactics on which Jefferson places so much importance here are quite different from those of 1776 – though both seem to be part of one process, one movement toward 'total revolution'. The task is now to fabricate a singular 'national character', the absence of which threatens not only armed conflict, but also 'insult'. This character is first and foremost an 'external' one, an outward appearance or surface which, though not self-standing, is nonetheless neither autonomous nor intensive. It is not autonomous because it only exists to the extent that it is 'seen in Europe', to the extent that it shows 'foreign' respect and 'opinion', and it is not intensive because an unspecified realm of 'interiority', 'interior government', is reserved for 'each state to [keep to] itself'. The revolutionary goal is still, as it was in 1776, to differentiate an internal political, sociopolitical, and ideological space from an external one, to forge an 'independent union', and yet the very nature of that differentiation, the fact that it has fallen short of being 'total', calls forth new and different tactics. Jefferson holds out hope here that the business introduced by the actual, political revolution, that which kept it from realising 'total revolution', could be completed on the level of organisation and representation. Yet the true test of that completion, the eyes in which it will be interpreted, ironically lie in a 'Europe' which threatens 'our states' and 'national character' with law, opinion, lack of respect, insult, and war. The ambivalent exchange of glances figured in the letter to Prince now appears to represent not simply a mutual watching and being watched, but rather a powerful and threatening European surveillance and judgement.

Jefferson displaces this threatening sense of European observation and judgement to the next paragraph, in which he turns over the tale of a lost, rough draft of his 'Notes on the State of Virginia':

It, when in circulation here with the public, I gave out a few copies only, & to confidential persons, with the express copy & retained the original in publication. Amongst them I gave a copy to a Mr. William, the dealer, who immediately took every occasion I could to recover this copy. But by some means or other, a considerable part of it, having played a cunning translator and was about publishing it in the most injurious form possible. An Abbe Morellet, a Frenchman, here to whom I had given a copy, got notice of this. He had translated some passages for a particular purpose, and he compounded with the bookseller to translate & give him the whole, on his deciding he first published it. I thought it necessary to another tale, and it will be published in French, still mutilated however in its French parts. I am now at a loss what to do as to England, I everything, gave on hand, I ought with publishing there:

and I recommend a translation back from the French, and a publication there, rather believe, it will be most eligible to let the original come out in that country, than an only a second" (Jefferson 1899, 157-58).

Despite his most rigorous efforts, Jefferson fails in Europe to control his representation of the U.S. One chance mishap, Mr. William's death, triggers a chain of chaotic events, sending his 'Notes' careening down a dangerous and notorious path: the death, a lost text, a futile pursuit, the violence of translation, and the uncontrollability of mechanical reproduction overpower 'every precaution', all 'confidence' and 'restraints', and put Jefferson utterly 'at a loss'. The intensity of his concern evinces precisely the degree of both power and threat he grants to Europe – were France and England simply as inept and amateurish as these booksellers and translators, Jefferson would hardly concern himself with this trifling.

However, no sooner has Jefferson laid out his anxieties and fears about a generalised European surveillance and judgement than he allows it to inguarded desire for 'great honor' in the eyes of a Europe reading about him and Madison in the *L'Esprit public*, expressed in the first paragraph, to return and usurp the rest of the letter:

I have purchased little for you in the book way, since I sent the catalogue on my former purchases. I wish first to have your answer to that, and your information what part of those purchases went out of your plan. You can easily say buy more of this kind, less of that &c. My want is to perform much to you. I can get no you the original Paris edition in folio of the *Encyclopedie* for 620 livres, 25 vols., a good one in 30 vols 8vo, for 350s, and a good one in 39 vols 8vo, for 280s. The new one is not so superior in the greater number of articles, but not much. And the possession of the edition, one has moreover the advantage of supplying himself. I have bought none for myself, but wait your orders as to go. (Jefferson 1899, 159-73)

This almost giddy excitement about the consummated embodiment of the Enlightenment's promise, the 'Encyclopedie', seems to displace the anxiety and fear of the previous paragraph. Here, France is the mambour's home of knowledge, source of Enlightenment, and fount of truth. Yet this excitement shares much with the previous anxiety and fear. It is as if, because Madison must still send for the 'Encyclopedie' from Paris, the U.S. must still be judged in 'Europe's' eyes. For it is on the 'superiority' of the 'Encyclopedie' that Jefferson's 'Europe' would base its right to 'invent, interpret, and judge' 'our states'. The Enlightenment has indeed passed from Europe to the U.S., and yet not fully, it is passing, in a sense, still arriving and not yet resuming, in the absence of 'total revolution'.

⁵⁴ Jefferson did in fact publish the first edition of 'Notes on the State of Virginia' in England, in 1787.

This anxious excitement becomes even clearer in the rest of the letter's third paragraph. Continuing from the passage above,

I remember you purchase of a waite in Philadelphia. If I should not have proved quickly and out, probably sell her. In this case I can get for you here, one made as perfect as him or an one made for about 24 louis. I have had such a one made by the best & most faithful hand in Paris. It has a second hand, but no repeating, no day of the month, nor other useless thing to impede and injure the movement which are necessary. For 12 louis more you can have in the same cover, better the back side & absolutely unconnected with the movement of the watch, a pediment which still renders more exact account of the distance you walk. Your pleasure hereon shall be obeyed (Jefferson 1899, I:74–86).

Here, modern technology and craftsmanship are also placed firmly in Paris, to the implicit embarrassment of Philadelphia, the supposed home of the most enlightened of revolutions. The letter then proceeds to add politics and the arts to the list of Europe's claims to the light of Enlightenment. A long discussion of the statue of Louis, a French sculptor who made of George Washington (Jefferson 1899, I:87–110) is followed by a further recommendation that a bust of Count Rochambeau be placed in the 'new capital' next to that of Gates, Greene, Franklin in honor of his similar contribution (Jefferson 1899, I:123–143), and an excited description of 'our new invention ... a measure of the art of engraving and printing ... rendering both cheaper' (Jefferson 1899, I:158–170).¹⁰ Jefferson also makes a recommendation that the Marquis de Lafayette be given land in the U.S. in honor of his contribution to the Enlightenment.¹¹ In fact, Jefferson justifies this gift of land on the grounds that 'the day may come when it might be an useful system to him' (122a). That this day, in which the U.S. would be the new home of such enlightened figures as the Marquis, has clearly not arrived—that it is still to come—is precisely the source of the letter's ambivalence over the traffic of Enlightenment from Europe to the U.S.

Jefferson's next comments to Madison, given in a post script, only deepen this ambivalence:

P.S. Could you please to send me an hundred or two parts of the period

¹⁰ Count Marquis de Rochambeau de Veilleux, a French soldier who served under Washington in the Revolutionary War, came to the U.S. in 1780. He got through the British blockade in 1781 and eventually encouraged French troops in the battle that led to the surrender of Lord Cornwallis. Made a Marquis of France in 1791, he was then imprisoned and almost gillotined during the Terror, but his police later restored his rank and estates.

¹¹ In recognition of Lafayette's many activities in a variety of support of revolutionaries in the U.S. and France, and his travels to France after the Terror, the U.S. Congress gave him a one hundred acre tract of land in 1800, as well as \$200,000 as a pension for his services in 1824.

they would enable me to oblige some characters here whom I should be much glad to oblige. They should come packed in sails. The seeds of the sugar cane's roots could be a great present (Jefferson 1899, I:173–178).

Still an economic satellite of Europe, sending primary goods to France and receiving knowledge, the arts, and political luminaries from the same, Jefferson's U.S. is very much still struggling to capture its share of Enlightenment, and Jefferson is still quite convinced that any such capture will need to be seen and judged by European eyes.

This European surveillance and judgement is particularly powerful in Jefferson precisely because it is inseparable from Enlightenment. The light of Enlightenment seems to figure and be figured by the watchful and judgemental gaze of Europe. The letter to Madison thus allegorises a fear inseparable from admiration, a surveillance inseparable from freedom, a sovereign judgement inseparable from non-Jeffersonian corruption. Subjected to this ambivalence, completely 'for a loss', as he writes about the missing copy of 'Notes on the State of Virginia', just as that missing text is found to be infiltrated however in its 'free' parts (Jefferson 1899, I:522), so too does Jefferson seem to become most anxious at precisely the moments of his closest proximity to, and his deepest experience of, Enlightenment.

Figuring governmentality

Jefferson is not, however, content to circulate perpetually within this ambivalent and paradoxical scene of Enlightenment and surveillance, of anxious excitement, of 'mutual freedom'. Devoted as he is to his vocation of nation-state building, he works hard to capture and render the light by which he is simultaneously watched and judged. Consequently, as persistently as this ambivalence resurfaces throughout his correspondence, so too does a meticulous formulation of its resolution. Consider, for example, a letter Jefferson wrote to the Marquis de Lafayette in 1820 (26 Dec.) (Jefferson 1899, X:179–181). This exemplary speech act—in which a representative of the U.S. responds to a representative of France about the way Europe strikes the U.S. and the way both have been struck by the light of the Enlightenment—is shot through with moments of 'infidelity', or what J.L. Austin would call 'non-serious', 'parasitic', or 'non-ordinary' interruptions of ordinary, direct communication. On the one hand, Jefferson declares that he knows just what is 'going on' in France and in the U.S., evincing a confidence here which pervades the letter. And yet, in the process of tracing out many of the rhetorical conventions of Enlightenment discourse, Jefferson stages a figural drama in which the trope of national unity and power emerges to offer a coherent and Jeffersonian resolution to the conflict among Enlightenment, European judgement, and slavery.

In his letter to the Marquis, Jefferson attempts nothing less than the task of representing the Enlightenment. The letter has five general sections. First, Jefferson's lament about his failing health (Jefferson 1899, I:14–9). Second, Jefferson's concerns with the state of affairs in France, and European general (Jefferson 1899, I:9–10). Third, Jefferson's attempt to reassess Marquis's about conflicts between Spain and the U.S. over

Spain's colonies in the Americas (Jefferson 1899:126-18); fourth, Jefferson's assurance that things are going well in the U.S., and that the resolution of the Mission to entrench into the Union as a slave state will in fact further the cause of emancipation (Jefferson 1899:149-65); and fifth, a discussion of some diplomatic business, and a salutation reminding once again on his failing health (Jefferson 1899:166-83). From the fixed and Endog body of the opening lines, through myriad metaphor or to the anxiously wished-for emancipation of the closing lines, the apparently coherent and optimistic tone of the letter is crested with parasitical ambiguity, disease and struggle.

This complexity is especially evident in its unsteady metaphors. In the second section, and in the span of less than 200 words, Jefferson shifts through six distinct tropes, moving from light to the wind to volcanic rumblings to powells to capstones and finally to disease and infection, all in an effort to understand the twists and turns of enlightened truth. To begin this section with the classic trope of light in a conventional paragon to Europe and America's civilising mission:

In the mean time your country has been going on less well than I had hoped. But still light. The light which has been shed on the mind of man through the civilized world, has given it new direction, from which has come a power and force of (Jefferson 1899:19-15)

The last sentence couples the most lofty goals and desires with utterly ambiguous references and syntax. The source of the light of the Enlightenment—so often cited by Gen. as in the Declaration of Independence ('Laws of Nature and of Nature's God' 'endowed by their Creator' 'protection of Divine Providence')—is here passive and unknown, though implicitly non-human given the last phrase of the sentence. Also, the light's rays are immediately bent and refracted, their proper course almost indecipherable. Does the light pass from this unknown source to 'the mind of man' and then 'through the civilized world', or 'through the civilized world' and then onto 'the mind of man'? And what of the force and brilliance the light might lose as it passes 'through' the mind of man? A tick second, how can we know that the light is pure and uncorrupted? The antecedent of 'it' in 'has given it new direction' is also ambiguous. It apparently refers to 'your country', i.e. France, and yet 'the light', 'the mind of man', and 'the civilized world' are also potentially 'given new direction' by the Enlightenment. It's possible to give the light new direction, in other words if the light has the potential to be misdirected, then surely the source of that light or the light itself is imperfect—capable, at the very least, of being corrupted and misdirected by 'the mind of man' or civilisation through which it must pass. And if the source of the light itself is capable of being corrupted and misdirected, then how could we possibly determine what that truth is beyond the shadow of a doubt? How could 'the people' be represented in perfect accordance with 'self-evident truths' if those truths could always already be refracted?

Despite Jefferson's confidence in the progressive development of 'things' (Jefferson 1899:19) and the steady dilation of 'evil' (Jefferson 1899:160f), this

second section of his letter suggests that the light of Enlightenment truth is always capable of being newly and more perfectly directed as well as misdirected. The light of truth emerges coextensively with imperfect non-truths, each new direction with other potential misdirections, every proper destination with improper arrivals. Jefferson's language suggests that the light itself, not God or Nature, has the non-human power to direct the truth of Enlightenment, to give it a new and more proper direction. For he does not invoke an all-knowing figure who directs the light as an supplement or tool, as an official would a flashlight to illuminate 'what is going on'. The light sustains itself in directs and misdirections (see 1).

Toward the end of section two of the letter, the tropic movement slips into the violent and unpredictable language of revolution. Jefferson lectures the Marquis a war:

The volcanic rumblings in the bowels of Europe, from north to south, ... [which] threaten a general explosion, and the march of armies like fiery cannon and a simple march (Jefferson 1899:117-21)

Here the source of Enlightenment remains underground, deep within the entrails of the earth, powerful because it is hidden from sight. And Jefferson adds to this the ambiguous power of disease and infection:

The disease of liberty is catching. These armies will take it in the south, carry it thence in their own country, spread thence the infection of revolution and representative government, and raise its people from the prostrate condition of slaves to the erect altitude of men (Jefferson 1899:121-26).

This fast tropic movement brings the sureness of 'the light' down to the dobleness of revolution figured as that which both poisons autocratic evil and immunizes the body politic, allowing healthy representative government to grow.

This wild tropic movement—'from pure and impure light to invisible breeze to hidden rumblings to eruptive disease'—captures precisely the difficulty of rendering enlightened representations of the 'good society'. With characteristic eloquence and early nineteenth-century rhetorical verve, Jefferson gives us a representation of political truth that disseminates far beyond his confident tone. Perhaps most importantly, this letter exposes Jefferson to the possibility that the pure light of emancipation might be corruptible and diseased from the start.

But what of the context of this speech act, its addressee and its addresser? Jefferson delivers this ambiguous and unwieldy interpretation of politics, Enlightenment to the Marquis, but also as a representative of the U.S. he delivers it to Europe in general. That is, he expresses a need to respond to Europe. Jefferson certainly envisions Europe as one for the purposes of the Enlightenment ('The volcanic rumblings in the bowels of Europe, from north to south'). His tone is in part paternalistic. 'In the mean time your country has been going on less well than I had hoped. But it will grow.' and in that paragon of official, deictic, as we saw in the letter to Madison, Jefferson underestimates the civilizational world. Europe first. His paternalistic paragon of the about Europe returns us once again to the 'infidelities' of the

part 100

The light which has been shed on the mine of man through the darkness of world has given it a new direction from which a human power must vainly

Now more than ever we wonder whether the U.S. or Europe is prey to the light. Certainly Jefferson thought of the U.S. as improving on, by breaking from, Europe. And yet he does seem to address Europe with a special reverence, as a rebellious child who can never fully leave his family behind.

In the next paragraph of the letter, however, Jefferson quite suddenly dispenses the ambivalence figured with this wild tropic movement in general, and the 'disease of liberty' in particular, by offering a historically absurd but ideologically confident allegory of American unity. He begins with a remark that counters section one's 'your country has been going on less well than I had hoped' (Jefferson 1899.I.100): 'With us things are going on well' (Jefferson 1899.I.101). The 'things' to which he refers are the acquisition of Florida in 1819 and the pending entrance of Missouri into the Union as a slave state. Both events were fought over bitterly during the period, and ended up as victories for pro-slavery forces.²⁰ Thanks in part to Jefferson's support—Spain under Spanish control Florida had become a refuge for escaped slaves, and with Missouri on the inside the slave states would hold their own against the free states in Congress and in Presidential elections.²¹ Yet Jefferson offers a different picture:

The boisterous war of liberty which is now with our wave and ebb from Missouri is now rolling from us, and we shall emerge as it as we have over all the land. It is a merely question, but one merely of power. Its object is to make a geographical principle for the choice of a President, and the issue will be very small, that is nothing. All know that permitting the slaves of the South to spread into the West will not add one being to their miserable condition. But it will increase the happiness of those existing, and by spreading them over a larger surface, will drive the evil everywhere, and thereby the means of getting finally rid of it, an event more anxiously wished by those on whom it presses than by the noisy pretenders to reason who merely in the transactions of a ladder, divide it between power (Jefferson 1899.I.48-49).

The confident unity represented repeatedly by 'we' and 'All' makes it possible to figure the U.S. as a powerful and sturdy ship riding the 'boisterous sea of liberty', and as an

²⁰ Bob Miller (1992:231) and Patterson (1960:193-197) represent Jefferson's support of Virginia's entrance into the Union as a slave state as an 'betrayal' (1975:232) would 'mark[ing] the strange death of Jeffersonian liberalism'. As I have both argued, however, reading of Jefferson's correspondence suggests the world was such a pro-slavery body within the 18th or 19th America.

expert or scientist knowledgeably formulating the elements of a 'finally' solution. 'It will increase the happiness of those existing, and by spreading them over a larger surface, will drive the evil everywhere'. These figures displace the difficulty of the moral question with the calculable clarity of questions 'merely of power'.

If this representative of the U.S. must thus represent its country to a representative of Europe in the most potent, confident, and powerful of disfigurements—terms, then, Europe must be something of a judge in Jefferson's imagination. That is, if Jefferson's enlightened country receives the light of the Enlightenment as refracted through its intellectual ties to Europe, then any development of the Enlightenment in the U.S. can only be carried out under the watchful eye of Europe. The eyes, he and Dr. Richard Price focused on 'justice' and now trained on Jefferson himself. Subjected to this field of visibility, then, Jefferson figures a unified and powerful national identity as a coherent and faithful response to the intelligibility of refraction and surveillance he nonetheless ideologically produces.

This moment in the letter to the Marquis represents a crucial transformation in Jefferson's work. This transformation is locatable not so much diachronically, say, in the year of this letter, 1820—as it is thematically at nodal points referenced ritually throughout Jefferson's correspondence from the 1780s through to 1820s—particularly his correspondence on colonization, as we will see below—when the ambivalent oscillation of light, surveillance, and judgement gives way to a power/knowledge problem, to problem of power and of knowledge.

It is not a moral question, but one merely of power. . . . All know that permitting those slaves of the South to spread into the West will not add one being to that miserable condition, that it will increase the happiness of those existing . . .

That is, the ambivalence of 'mutilation' however in its finest period of the 'disease of liberty' gives way not to an indigenous 'moral question', but rather to a confident and calculable figuration of national power and unity. Mobilizing what L.L. Harrison and his research group have called 'l'esprit géométrique' or 'the quantifying spirit' of the late eighteenth century,²² Jefferson's text here turns the 'moral problem' of slavery into a tactical problem of discrete, manipulable populations, the solution to which is

²² These historians of science have argued that 'the later 18th century saw a rapid increase in the range and intensity of application of mathematical methods, a factor that remains to this day the firmest and surveying the tools by which . . . what may be the quantification of time of modern thought first appeared widely through society' (Franssen *et al.* 1992:17). For an overview of their research, see Harrison's introduction to the volume; for essays relevant to the Jeffersonian context considered here, see essays by Eder, Harrison, and Lemmonson (in Frangou *et al.* 1990). For a kindred study of the U.S. in particular, which places emphasis on Jefferson's colonization (1777). On Jefferson's role in and status under, forming a government, see also Appleby (1993:70); Shapiro (1985:152).

calculably and transparently knowable. Although the text suggests that 'All know' slavery is a calculable and transparent problem, it is in fact the calculable and transparent representation of slavery that produces the figure of a powerful 'All' who can know in the first place. That is, the 'All' who 'know' are themselves effects of the calculable rhetoric of the predicate phrase—

that peopling the shores of the South by spreading into the West will not add one being to that of miserable condition, that it will remove with it happiness and those existing.

This predicate reactively renders a problem transparently knowable to the confident, powerful, and unified subject, 'All'.

Jefferson's correspondence proliferates detailed and systematic figurations of national unity in the face of his ambivalent fascination with and fear of European enlightenment, surveillance, and judgement.⁷⁷ He also makes clear that the proper object of this organised government is 'the people' figured very precisely as a 'population' of countable and manipulable units. Consider just two examples. In a letter to William Short (3 Oct. 1801) Jefferson justifies a tactical embrace of 'false principles' in U.S. foreign relations with Europe in the following terms:

To be strangled with [Europe] would be a much greater evil than a temporary acquiescence in the false principles which have prevailed. Force is not most important in crisis and a recovery point is lost. We feel ourselves strong, & daily growing stronger. The census just now concluded shows we are equalled in population... (Jefferson, 1899, VII: 971).

Tactical governmentality here functions for Jefferson as a method of managing, or disposing, the new 'American' nation considered as a unitiform population concerned with growth, strength, peace, and 'national security'. Jefferson's persistent privileging of the census has been well remarked by scholars, and the letter to Short offers just one of many such references.⁷⁸ Yet the implication this persistence has for Jefferson's representations of 'the people' has been nearly unremarked. His public and private advocacy of and faith in the census as the most important law representation of 'the people' offers a precise image of both the object and the subject of governmental organisation: a calculable image of abstract, discrete, and manipulable units.

In a letter to Baron von Humboldt (6 Dec. 1815), Jefferson reiterates his faith in the technical means of representing a coherent and enlightened 'American' population. Anxious this time about conflicts with Spain and the future of Mexico, Jefferson declares,

but whatever government the countries of New Spain and they will be American governments, no longer are involved in the never-ceasing broils of Europe. The European nations constitute a separate division of the globe from facilities make them part of a distinct system... America has a monopsony in itself. It thus forms its separate system of interests, which must not be subordinate to those of Europe. The combined state in which Europe has placed the American continent should be forever excluded from the company of war, and that the other quarters of the globe should be washed across the seas oceans which separate us from them. And it will be so in fifty years more the United States alone will contain fifty millions of inhabitants... the number which will then be spread over the other parts of the American hemisphere, catching long before the principles of corruption of it, and conforming with us in the maintenance of the same system... (Jefferson 1899, IX: 211).

Filled with imperatives and modal commands, this letter reads more like a manifesto than a personal communication with the 'dear friend' to whom it is addressed. And yet precisely the anxiety which gives to an opinion the syntax of a command suggests that however much Jefferson wants to see 'America' as unique, he cannot think the U.S. except in relation to Europe. Faced with this relationship, Jefferson offers a representation of the U.S. as a discrete 'system', within a separate 'quarter of the globe', made up of abstract and calculable 'inhabitants' or 'numbers'.

Such nodal points—represented in the letter to the Marquis by the figures of the 'All' who 'know', the well designed ship, and the clever expert or scientist, in the letter to Short by the figure of the enumerated American 'population' and in the letter to the Baron by the figure of a discrete 'system' of abstract and countable 'inhabitants'—translate the ambivalence of light, surveillance, judgement, and mutilation however in its finest parts' into an ordered, systematic practice of government. These nodal points indicate that Jefferson responds to the anxious ambivalence of Enlightenment by subjecting the U.S. to 'the quantifying spirit' of transparent, calculable, and tactical power, a subjection that paradoxically subjects the U.S. as an 'All' who 'knows' how to calculate 'the means of finally getting rid of slavery. In effect, Jefferson turns his anxious ambivalence generated at the moment of his closest proximity to Enlightenment—his 'loss' at the very of the publication of his 'Notes on the State of Virginia'—his fear of the 'Notes' inevitable mutilation however in its finest parts', and his cathartic infection with 'the disease of liberty'—into a representation of the U.S. as a powerful, unified population by reducing 'America' to calculation and quantification.

Yet how can we account for Jefferson's turn from the ambiguities of light and vision, with which he seems to be plagued in his correspondence, to the rhetoric of calculation and quantification? As figured in the letters to the Marquis, Short, and the Baron, this turn raises the question of a power that simultaneously subjects and subjectifies, that is both productive and reductive, and that actively erases what it subjects. As sites of active, transitive, transformative textual work, the nodal points in Jefferson's letters reflect less an oppressive, centrally controlled, and unidirectional identity than the reflexive move of power and knowledge's detached concern for the naked

⁷⁷ Consider, for example, a letter he wrote from Paris to Joseph Jones (14 Aug. 1787) (*ibid.* IV, 1899-4131).

⁷⁸ For example, see Cohen (1971).

in *Discipline and Punish*. They raise the question, that is, of how a mode of power 'produces reality', 'produces discourses of objects and rituals of truth' (Foucault 1979:194).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1979:7) glimpses this productive mode of power in the late eighteenth century realm of criminality, when 'the entire economy of punishment began to be redistributed' in Europe with the 'disappearance of torture as a public spectacle' and the emergence of 'a new fiction of law and crime, a new moral or political justification of the right to punish'. 'Punishment', Loomish (1979:181) argues, went from being the most visible and spectacular aspect of criminality 'to become the most hidden part of the penal process' as 'a whole set of assessing, diagnosing, prognostic, normative judgments concerning the criminal [became] lodged in the framework of penal judgment'. Foucault's (1979:24) effort

is to study the metamorphoses of punitive methods on the basis of a political technology of the body ... in which punitive measures are not simply 'negative' measures but, made it possible to repress, to prevent, to exclude, to eliminate; but ... are linked to a whole series of positive and useful effects which it is then task to support.

creates a reflexive mode of power in which punishment came to create a uniform, systematic field of 'discipline' which itself would 'reform' and 'free'. Subjects subjected to discipline became subjects at precisely the moment of their subjection.

One of Foucault's central figures for this mode of power is Panopticon's Panopticon, an 'architectural apparatus' for which

power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible, the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall straight profile of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so (Foucault 1979:201).

The Panopticon figures the 'composition' of 'mechanisms of power' in which

a real subject is born and actually lives a fictitious relation ... The man who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection (Foucault 1979:199-201, 232).

Thus, for Foucault (1979:200) the Panopticon is 'the architectural figure' for a mode of power that creates subjects as reflexive structures which allow power to take effect.

Already in the final chapter of *The History of Sexuality: Volume I*, Foucault begins to move from the panoptic modality of power in the sphere of criminality to other spheres by shifting 'from the "microphysical" realm of bodies to the

"macrophysical" realm of populations'. That is, in the words of Colin Gordon, Foucault begins to suggest that

the same style of analysis ... that had been used to study techniques and practices addressed to individual human subjects within particular, local institutions could also be addressed to techniques and practices for governing populations of subjects at the level of a political sovereignty over an entire society (Burchell 1996:4).

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1980:136,138,136,139) argues that the seventeenth century marks a shift in mechanisms of power from the era of sovereignty, in which 'the sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing' and thus practised a 'right to take life or not live', to the 'modern' era that witnesses a 'power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them', 'a power whose highest function was perhaps no longer to kill, but to invest life through and through'. This 'modern' era is thus characterised by

an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations, marking the beginning of an era of 'bio-power' (Foucault 1980:149).

Explaining this notion of 'bio-power', Foucault (1980:144) continues:

... a power whose task is to take charge of life needs continuous regulatory and corrective mechanisms. It is no longer a matter of bringing death into play in the field of sovereignty, but of distributing the living in the domain of value and utility. Such a power has to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize ...

This 'bio-power', in Gordon's (Burchell 1991:46) words, refers to

forms of power exercised over persons specifically in so far as they are thought of as living beings in politics concerned with subjects as members of a population.

¹⁰ As Ann Laura Stoler (1995:36) reminds us, Foucault finished *Discipline and Punish* (1979) the same day he began the last chapter of *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction* (1980). Stoler cites James Miller on this biographical information, and Miller (1991:240) quotes David Gauntlett as his source. It should be noted that long before Foucault's analysis of the Panopticon Karl Polanyi, in *The Great Transformation* (1957) proposed the 'technique of biopower' as a characteristic of 'biopower', suggesting that its employment of 'power' was not limited to the sphere of criminality and the institution of the prison. Polanyi argues that, 'as an infrastructure of governmentality across a range of governmental discourses and practices, as does Foucault' (1980:142) implicitly when he writes of a general 'panoptic modality of power' and explicitly when he develops this argument in his subsequent work, as we will see below. Of course, for Foucault, and for Polanyi, a principle no woman or minor is necessary for 'control' to be 'effective'.

and in Ann Laura Stoler's (1995:41) words, his power signifies 'the regulation of the life processes of aggregate human populations'.

In a series of lectures delivered in 1978 entitled 'Security, Territory and Population' and 'The Birth of Biopolitics', or as he later retitled them in one of the lectures, 'The History of "Governmentality"', Foucault refigures this historical shift and develops his analytical shift. The emergence of a codifiable and calculable category of 'population', and the attendant professionalisation of knowledge which produced that codifiability and calculability, puts into effect a diffuse, active, and multidirectional form of power. Foucault suggests, in effect, that the problems which fields of knowledge such as statistics were said to address were themselves given a particular 'problematic' form by those very fields of knowledge (Burchell 1991:98-100). The 1978 lecture on governmentality argues that the very idea of political discourse underwent a massive restructuring at precisely the historical moment in which Jefferson is writing. As he did in the last chapter of *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, Foucault argues that the period between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries in Europe marks a shift in the idea of governing and government whereby political treatises giving governmental advice to the prince or king give way to political treatises which are not yet self-proclaimed works of political science, but rather are searching for a new mode of legitimisation for government. Foucault suggests that the idea of government 'explodes' onto the scene during this period as a problem, in new and pressing ways. The new treatises emphasise the *a priori* and self-generating justification of the prince or king's legitimacy and his consequent sovereignty over a certain territory which contains his subjects. Instead, they theorise a differentiated 'art of government' capable of legitimising itself via its ability to rationally govern 'things'.

The emergence of a 'government of things', Foucault argues, entails a shift in the object of government, from a territory containing inhabitants to 'things' with multiple and varied needs (Burchell 1991:97). Whereas the family previously served as a model for governing a state itself legitimised by the figure of the prince or king, the new treatises recognise a need for a more flexible and complex model of government, a model within which 'the family', for example, would be just one among many objects of address for the government. Foucault refers in particular to the metaphor of the ship – popular in this period of governmental treatises, as we saw in Jefferson's letter to the Marquis – as a figure for this new object of government:

What does it mean to govern a ship? It means clearly to take charge of the sailors, but also of the boat and the cargo; to take care of a ship means also to reckon with winds, rocks and storms and to conduct a total activity of establishing a relation between the sailors who are to be taken care of and the ship which is to be taken care of, and the cargo which is to be brought safely to port, and all these various things like winds, rocks, storms and so on, this is what characterizes the government of a ship ... What counts essentially is not complex of men and things, property and territory are merely one of its variables (Burchell 1991:73).

This redefinition of government thus involves the emergence of a new kind of finally

or a new goal of governing:

For instance, government will have to ensure that the greatest possible quantity of wealth is produced, that the people are provided with sufficient means of subsistence, that the population is enabled to multiply, etc. ... In order to achieve these various finalities, things must be disposed ... and this term, dispose, is important because with sovereignty the instruments that allowed it to achieve its aim – that is to say, obedience to laws – was the law itself, law and sovereignty were absolutely inseparable. On the contrary, with government it is a question not of imposing law on men, but of disposing things; that is to say, of employing means rather than laws, and even of using laws themselves as means ... (Burchell 1991:75).

By shifting his analytic focus from the study of structures and institutions (such as the state) with essential and inherent 'properties and propensities', as Gordon (Burchell 1991:6) writes, to practices and deployments of power with a 'plurality of specific aims', Foucault locates a governmental realm within which power operates diffusely and reflexively.

If we pry Foucault's analysis of diffuse and reflexive power in the realm of governmentality loose from its European context, and let it help us read Jefferson, we can in turn read Foucault's tendency to undertheorise the relationship of racism and of nationalism to governmentality. Foucault's study of a general panoptic normality of power allows us to interpret Jefferson's paradoxical figuration of power, as that which subjects and subjectifies, more precisely than a theory of oppressive and multidirectional ideology or theory of hegemony and counter-hegemony could. Jefferson's correspondence in effect dramatises subjection to a field of visibility characterised by the visible and unverifiable gaze of the Enlightenment which is simultaneously subjectification within a calculable pursuit of that light. That is, subjected to the visible and unverifiable gaze of Enlightenment, Jefferson rhetorically subjectifies 'America' by rendering it as a calculable and controllable population. The novel points in Jefferson's texts which translate the ambivalence of 'inclusion' however in its freest parts' into an enlightened 'question ... merely of power' and calculable national unity can thus be interpreted as figures for what Foucault will call 'governmentality'.

Jefferson's preoccupation with Europe evinces his effort to define the conditions of possibility for governing the U.S. as a legitimate nation-state, for he is concerned, in other words, with giving the U.S. the same status as the lofty European polities, but also with defining its essential difference. Responding less to a consistent critique of Europe than to a persistent anxiety over the meaning of Europe and of America, and to the exact nature of the difference between the two, Jefferson turns to this art of government to deliver the U.S. to the Enlightenment. Gone is the self-assuredness of absolute difference defined by revolution, so forcefully presented in the Declaration of Independence – a difference in kind. Having joined the world of burgeoning nation-states by the force of revolution, as a nation-state built by Jefferson begins to understand himself by tactically facing differences in degree, differences to be interpreted by means of a new art of government. If it were in this shift of interest, this

rearticulation of emancipation by a revolutionary bourgeois nation-state builder, that we can locate Jefferson's efforts on colonisation.

Jeffersonian colonisation and racial governmentality

Jefferson's discourse on colonisation addresses itself directly to the disposal of 'populations'. More than that, his discourse on colonisation paradoxically renders the very idea of a racially and nationally codified population as that which it seeks to address. On this occasion, by teasing a crucial passage on colonisation from Jefferson's 'Autobiography' along with the many letters on colonisation edited by that passage, I will trace a racial governmentality addressed to 'the problem of population', running through four Jefferson's writings. It is this racial governmentality that conjoins a discourse of emancipation and freedom with a discourse of racial and national codification. For as we will see, a power that, in Foucault's (1980:144) words, 'distributes the living in the domain of value and utility', that 'invests life' with quantifiable, measurable, appraisable, and hierarchisable value, can be said to render a freedom both conditioned upon and limited by the articulation and calculation of 'race' and 'nation'.

Writing in 1821 about a debate in the Virginia House of Delegates in 1779, Jefferson offers an extremely condensed summary of his pro-colonisation discourse in this passage from his 'Autobiography':

The bill on the subject of slaves was a mere digest of the existing laws respecting them, without any intimation of a plan for a future & general emancipation. It was thought better that this should be kept back, and attempted only by way of amendment whenever the bill should be brought on. The principles of the amendment, however, were agreed on, that is, to say, the freedom of all born after a certain day, and deportation at a proper age. But it was found that the public mind would not yet accept the proposition, nor will it do, at least at this day. Yet the day is not distant when it will bear and adopt it, and war will follow. Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free. Nor is it less certain that the two mixed, rapidly rising, cannot live in the same government. Nature, and opinion has drawn indelible lines of distinction between them. It is still in our power to shut the means of emancipation and deport them peaceably and in such slow degrees as that the evil will wear off insensibly, and their place be well supplied by a flock of free white laborers. If on the contrary it is left to force itself on, human nature must flutter at the prospect held up. We should not wait for the example of the Spaniards in the colonies of the Moors. This precedent would fall far short of our case. (Jefferson 1984:11)

As we have seen throughout this essay, Jefferson is again concerned with the fact that 'slavery in the United States is held up' for the world to see as a most glaring challenge to the promise of universal freedom. The reference to Spain tells us that the United

States at once exceeds Europe, even when analogies suggest themselves and yet, in very act of referring to Spain suggests that Jefferson is looking to Europe again and finding no light or suggestion of a solution, but rather surveillance and judgement of the 'prospect held up'.

How, then, does Jefferson respond to this 'prospect held up'? In the 'Autobiography' passage, he articulates a dilemma: 'Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free'. The fact of emancipation for slaves has the structure of something already written in the future, something that 'will have been' – the structure, that is, of the future anterior. Jefferson is familiar with this structure, for he made use of it as the tense of resolution when he wrote in the Declaration of Independence, 'we ... solemnly publish and declare, That these United colonies are, and of right ought to be free and independent States'. Both the Declaration of Independence's 'are and ought to be' and the 'Autobiography's' 'written in the book of fate' that these people are to be free figure what Derrida has called the 'fabulous of necessity' of the people inventing themselves in the very other face of their independence: 'we will have been free once we say "we are free"' (Derrida 1989:197).

Jefferson is, however, not willing to consider this means of emancipating the slaves – in fact, we know he was terrified about the prospect of a black revolution. In the 'Autobiography' passage, he prophesies that 'war will follow', and that 'human nature must flutter' if colonisation is not adopted and slavery 'is left to force itself on' – a fearful prophecy that resonates throughout his writings. In the 'Letter to the State of Virginia', for example, he recognises that two discrete revolutionary possibilities exist in the colonies, and registers his terror of one:

The whole combination of master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting exertion on the one part, and degrading submission on the other – of the proprietors of a race a very small portion indeed are ever seen to labour. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are a gift of God? Can they be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his punishment cannot sleep for ever; that conflicting numbers, races and nations means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation – a mingling possible even by the way become probable through supernatural interference! The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest. (Jefferson 1984:288ff.)

Here, Jefferson figures freedom for enslaved African Americans as the inevitable but

²⁰ Many of Jefferson's letters on colonisation mark this scene of comparison with, and surveillance and judgement by, a generalized 'Europe'. For example, see a letter to St. George Tucker (28 Aug. 1797) (Jefferson 1899, VII:168).

terrifying effect of a just and wrathful God and 'the wheel of fortune'. Paradoxically, the previous turn of that wheel made possible his own climb to the 'my country' for which he trembles at the 'inevitability of another turn'. Jefferson thus prophesies emancipation as a civil war, a 'contest' pitting white Americans against justice, the Almighty, and African Americans. In a letter to Monroe (14 July 1793), Jefferson again evokes that other revolution which he cannot count on to avert:

I become daily more & more convinced that all the West India Islands will remain in the hands of the people of colour. A total expulsion of the whites sooner or later take place. In the meanwhile we should foresee the bloody scenes which our children currently and possibly ourselves (some of the 'Potentates') have to wade through, & try to avert them. We have no news from the Continent of Europe later than the 1st of May. (Jefferson 1809.VI.249-553).

Thus, the Haitian revolution authorises Jefferson's prophecy of a dangerously revolutionary response to freedom's non-arrival in the U.S. His vision of 'bloody scenes' seems to prompt him to listen to Europe in the very next sentence, and the silence with which he is met suggests that Europe too is poised to watch and 'judge the 'bloody scenes' to come. As to the 'Autobiography' passage, Jefferson counsels himself to 'averting' this prophecy.

Yet again, in the letter to Tucker mentioned above (28 Aug. 1797), Jefferson writes about two mutually exclusive revolutions:

You know my subscription to it's¹ doctrines, and to the mode of emancipation. I am satisfied that that must be a matter of compromise between the passions the prejudices & the real difficulties which will each have their weight in that operation. Perhaps the first chapter of this history, which has begun in St. Domingo, & the next succeeding wars, which will recount how all the whites were driven from all the other islands, may prepare our minds for a peaceable accommodation between justice, policy & necessity; & furnish an answer to the difficult question, whether shall the coloured emigrants go? and the sooner we put some plan on foot, the greater hope there is that it may be permitted to proceed peacefully to it's ultimate effect. But if something is not done, & soon done, we shall be the murderers of our own children. The 'mercenary voracious anti-republican venues' has already rechartered, the revolutionary storm, now sweeping the globe, will be upon us... (Jefferson 1809.VII.167f).

Jefferson here shifts the grammar of his commitment to 'justice' away from the 'fabulously retroactive' 'ave and ought to be' of the Declaration of Independence and the 'Autobiography' passage. Instead, Jefferson offers, on one hand, the prophetic

threat of the Haitian revolution and, on the other hand, the practical and technical aims of 'something, soon done', a compromise between the passions, the prejudices, or the real difficulties, and a 'peaceable accommodation between justice, policy & necessity'. Emancipation is here not the effect of revolutionary force; it is not rendered by the 'fabulous retroactivity' of a speech act the utterance of which invents the alterer. Rather, 'emancipation' is a practical question to be 'furnished' an answer — 'whether shall the coloured emigrants go? — and a mode', 'plan', 'provision', or 'operation' to be put into 'ultimate effect'.

In the 'Autobiography' (1821), the 'Notes on the State of Virginia' (1781), and the letters to Monroe (14 July 1793), and Tucker (28 Aug. 1797), we can trace a concerted refiguration of 'freedom' from the future anteriority of the Declaration of Independence to the problem of a fearful prophecy, on the one hand, and the solution of colonisation as a practical, governmental project on the other. Rhetorically, then, the very refiguring of the Declaration's 'fabulous retroactivity' as, in the case of slavery, a prophetic problem to be practically solved, gives the danger Jefferson is seeking to 'avert' a form quite different from the 'long train of abuses and wrongs' to which the Declaration of Independence responded with a claim to the 'right ... to throw off such a government'. Derrida (1985:91) has argued that the 'fabulous retroactivity' of a revolutionary declaration is an ethical act because it embraces and maintains the undecidability and undecidability of its 'right'. The Declaration of Independence thus maintains within itself a trace of the ungroundability of its formulation, a trace one can read in the conjunction of a constitution, 'ave', and a prescription, 'ought to be'.² In his writings on colonisation, however, Jefferson can be said to 'avert' that ethical scene by figuring the 'future of justice or vice' propagandically and practically. That is, for this prophecy to figure a strictly decidable, solvable problem, a problem avertible given enough effort and 'foresight', the prophecy itself must have been given a form amenable to being strictly decided and solved. In effect, the solution formulates the problem. What, then, is the form of that formulation? What is the problem colonisation produces?

In lieu of a revolutionary solution, Jefferson attempts to achieve emancipation from a governmental system, a technical 'institution of government'. 'The two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government', he says in the 'Autobiography' passage cited in this essay's epigraph. This solution, this act of government meant to capture freedom, involves the practical manipulation of discrete, racially and culturally calculable and codifiable population units; consequently, this act of government must

¹ See also a 1820 letter to John Holmes (22 April); Jefferson 1809.XI.157f).

² For Derrida's (1990) argument that the process of retroactively bestowing upon the U.S. its origin, namely, the founding act of a constitution, must be 'violated' for the 'law' and thus commits the same unethical act, that is, an act of judicial law, is strictly impossible, judgement is required of the law and thus characterized by internal filigree. On racial coloniality in general, see Derrida 1985, especially pages 11–118.

¹ Jefferson refers to Tucker's abolitionist pamphlet entitled 'Dissertation on Slavery'.

itself render the inevitable and endless racial and national form of the population to be manipulated. Again in the 'Autobiography' passage, he writes of 'indebity' separated 'races'—colonised African Americans, imported white laborers—the 'indebity' giving the population units a visible and discrete form subjectable to manipulation. In a letter to Monroe (24 Nov. 1801) he asks, 'Could we procure lands beyond the limits of the U.S. to form a receptacle for these people?' (Jefferson 1899, VIII:104), and, answering himself in the next paragraph, writes:

The West Indies offer a more probable & practicable retreat for them. Let them remain by a power of their own race & color different from ours, and with their natural constitution, isolated from the other descriptions of man, nature seems to have formed these 'Shades' to become the receptacle of the black-transplanted into this hemisphere (Jefferson 1899, VIII:104).

This question and its answer not only 'objectify' African Americans, but more precisely render them as abstract, 'naturally' and 'practically' manipulable units of a discrete population.

The famous letter on colonisation to Jared Sparks epitomises the 'problem of population'. Jefferson imagines himself addressing with his proposal (4 Feb. 1824; Jefferson 1899, X:280–295). He begins: 'In the disposition of these unfortunate people, there are two obvious objects to be distinctly kept in view' (Jefferson 1899, X:280). Immediately, the clarity and practicality of the solution is the measure of its feasibility. But this clarity and practicality reflects the calculability of 'the problem' itself:

And yet I am repeating the other arguments which have been urged by others. I will appeal to figures only, which admit no controversy. I shall speak in round numbers, not absolutely accurate, yet not so wide from truth as to vary the result materially. There are in the United States a million and a half of people of color in slavery. To send off the whole of these at once, nobody can pretend to be practicable for us, or expedient for them. Let us take twenty-five years for its accomplishment, within which time they will be doubled. Their eating and wearing property, in the first place, if the actual property has been lawfully vested in that form, and who can lawfully take it from the possessor? At an average of two hundred dollars each, young and old, would amount to six hundred millions of dollars, which must be paid or lost by somebody. To try, and the rest of their transportation by land and sea to Monrovia, a year's provision of food and clothing, implements of husbandry and of their trades, which will amount to three hundred million more, making thirty-six millions of dollars a year for twenty-five years, with insurance of passage for time, and it is impossible to look at the question another time. I am aware that at the end of about sixteen years, a gradual deduction from this sum will commence, from the gradual diminution of breeders, and going on during the remaining nine years. Calculate this deduction, and it is still impossible to put at its completion a second time (Jefferson 1899, X:290).

The letter continues incessantly in this vein. While this discourse certainly borrows

from that of the 'business' of slavery, and represents African Americans as non-human commodities, this de-humanization also overlaps and interacts with a certain 'populizing' discourse:

The establishment of a colony on the coast of Africa, which may introduce among the aborigines the arts of civilized life, and the blessings of civilization and science. By doing this, we may spare to them some relief on the long course of injuries we have been committing on their population. And considering that these blessings will descend to the third, fourth, and fifth generations, we shall in the long run, have reaped their perhaps more good than evil (Jefferson 1899, X:290).

African Americans are no more granted 'humanity' in some general or simply positive sense in this passage than they are only reduced to commodities as in more traditional pro-slavery discourse, in the previous passage. Rather, Jefferson's discourse here invests African Americans with a common, racial identity to the level of their existence as aggregate, abstract beings—on the level, that is, of their existence as a racial population. It is this discursive production of a calculable black population which allows Jefferson to find the de-humanising force of the traditional discourse of slavery: 'The estimated value of the new-born infant is so low, say twelve dollars and fifty cents, that it would probably be yielded by the owner gratis—with the Enlightenment discount of universal freedom—' By doing this, we may make to them some retribution for the long course of injuries we have been committing on their population'.

What is more, colonisation takes on an imperial form in this letter when it writes to Sparks that 'a colony on the coast of Africa' will grant 'retribution' both to 'aborigines', in the form of 'the arts of civilized life, and the blessings of civilization and science', and to 'people of color in [U.S.] slavery' in the form of 'an asylum to which we can, by degrees, send the whole of that population from among us' (Jefferson 1899, X:290). On the one hand colonisation discourse gives reparation value by positing a hierarchical racial difference between African Americans and white Americans in the process of representing African Americans as objects of expulsion, on the other hand, colonisation discourse also gives U.S. colonisation in Africa value by positing an abstract equivalency between colonised African Americans and white Americans in the process of representing African Americans as abstract bearers of American imperialism. That is, on one hand, colonised African Americans are racially different from and subject to white Americans, and thus equated with 'aborigines', on the level of racial particularity; on the other hand, colonised African Americans are also represented as equivalent to white Americans, and thus different from 'aborigines', on the level of formal and abstract equality. Colonisation discourse rests in this paradox consistent, self-evident and 'racious':

* The Sparks letter is not unique in its representation of colonization as the governmental control of a calculable population. See, for example, a letter to Monroe (2 June 1822) (Jefferson 1899, VIII:152).

These manipulable representations are indeed at the heart of an analogy Jefferson draws repeatedly between colonial and African Americans and 'impaired' white laborers or often 'Germans'. In the 'Autobiography' passage he writes that 'the [colonial African Americans] piece he [paragon] filled up by free white laborers'. This analogy simultaneously constructs an abstract equivalence between 'free white laborers' and colonial African Americans, and certifies a racial and national difference between white and black populations. Jefferson thus again figures the paradox, however 'fictional', 'that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government'. That is, he calculates what, precisely, 'the two races' share 'equally', or what form of being 'free' is common to both, and what, precisely, their governmental difference – 'that two races ... cannot live in the same government' – consists in.¹⁷

In sum, I am suggesting here neither that Jefferson is a benevolent liberal who could not quite overcome antiquated prejudices, nor that Jefferson's representation of colonisation as genuinely emancipatory is simply a false ideological surface masking a traditional, de-humanising and objectifying discourse of slavery. Rather, I want to suggest that we read both his liberal language and his more traditionally objectifying language as overlapping and interacting to produce a hybrid, liberal racism driven by the governmental investment of subjects with life as populations to be enumerated, regulated, and manipulated – 'we shall in the long run have rendered them perhaps more good than evil', Jefferson writes to Sparks.

Finally, colonisation discourse allows us to read a historically specific system of racialisation and rationalisation into Foucault's conception of 'modern technologies of power', a conception which, as many critics have argued, has little to say about racial and national forms.¹⁸ In particular, colonisation discourse allows us to interpret what Foucault (1979:138) called the 'modernity' of these technologies. For Foucault, 'modernity' does not refer to a simple, progressive development from sovereignty to bio-power. In fact, the *History of Sexuality* suggests that different configurations of power necessarily overlap:

... in actual fact the passage from one [regime of power] to the other did not come about (any more than did these powers themselves) without

overlappings, interactions, and erases' (Foucault 1980:1497).

One of his few accounts of 'race' actually takes note of such 'overlappings'. In the last chapter of *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, Foucault (1980:138) suggests that the shift from an 'ancient' regime of power organised by sovereignty to a 'modern' regime organised by 'a power to foster life' – or what he would eventually call governmentality – produced racism in the modern sense (Foucault 1980:1496). Foucault (1980:1497) writes, 'racism in its modern, "biologizing", statist form ... took shape' in the mid nineteenth century with a shift in the mechanisms of power from 'the symbolic of blood' – in which 'blood constituted one of the fundamental values' and 'power spoke through blood: the honor of war, the fear of famine, the triumph of death, the sovereign with his sword, executioners, and tortures: blood was a reality with a symbolic function' – to 'the analytics of sexuality'. That is, through new 'technologies of life' concerned with disciplining the body and regulating populations, 'sex' was produced as a crucial field for 'the deployment of power'.

Sex was a means of access not to the life of the body and the life of the species. It was employed as a shield for the disciplines and as a basis for regulations ... Through the then and has to, purgery, race, the future of the species, the vitality of the social body: power spoke of sexuality and to

condoned of its utilization, even to deflect anxieties, and responded precisely to this claim. For Foucault, racism is more than an ad hoc response to crisis; it is a manifestation of permanent possibilities, the expression of an underlying discourse of permanent social war, motivated by the biopolitical technologies of 'biopower'/'biopolitics'. Racism does not merely arise in moments of crisis, in periods of emergencies. It is internal to the biopolitical state, woven into the web of the social body, threaded through its fabric. Yet Stoler does not specify this 'transnational', 'expressive', 'transmitting', 'internally', 'weaving', or 'blending' beyond these historical moments. In fact, this feature complicates Foucault's rejection of scapegoat. I am not with David Rodiger's work on whiteness, works whose much more of racialisation shows much with 'scapegoat' themes. Stoler does effectively point out that Foucault's conception of race is already country. Foucault's response to racism and his notion of race is more a response to the idea of 'the most menacing and the most concrete ... of the fantasies of "God's will" the purging and of disciplinary power' (Foucault 1979:1496) founded here in the course of the world's classes and the lines of earlier racial forms (Stoler 1995:38). The racial governmentality of Jefferson's colonisation proposal, as one of these earlier, and even Jeffersonian and prior, forms, thus erases a sweeping off Foucault's account, as I find more below.

This is not to say that all of Foucault's answer and greater volume of argumentation overviews in biopolitical language of governmentality. After all, he even defines governmentality as the Western overwriting of sovereignty and 'non-Western forms of power' (Foucault 1980:1496). Foucault's 'biopolitical' discourse, for governmentality, does not completely escape them. Out of the Western world, Foucault exists, on a global scale, even in the biological make-over of the species as a 'scapegoat' or 'biopolitical' material, that he once in his biopolitical logic, but, would not be called a society's 'biopolitical' of modernity' has been reached when the social body is wage and is a 'biopolitical' of modernity' (Foucault 1980:1496).

¹⁷ See also letters to Dr. Edward Baneriot (26 Jan. 1789) (Jefferson 1899.V:66 nks; Rufus King (11 July 1802) (Jefferson 1899.VIII:162f), and J.P. Beibet (21 Dec. 1805) (Jefferson 1899.VIII:402f).

¹⁸ Stoler has argued recently that the lectures which Foucault gave in 1976 at the Collège de France – only some of which have been published and even fewer translated – center upon race and racism as much more central role in the deployment of governmental power and knowledge. I have not been able to examine these lectures. Stoler's (1995:18) own reading of these lectures intriguingly suggests that Foucault's account of racialisation 'is no scapegoat theory of race. Scapegoat theories posit that under economic and social stress, pariahs, sub-populations are

sexuality, the latter was not a mark or a symbol, it was an object and a target, something far from being represented in the society of that period. On the contrary was constantly abused (Foucault 1980: 143-148).

However, this shift also involved 'overlappings, interactions, and echoes' between the two mechanisms of power, the older 'symbolics of blood' and the newer 'analytics of sexuality':

It was then that a whole politics of settlement (peuplement), family, marriage, education, social hierarchicalization and property, encompassed as a long series of permanent interventions on the level of the body, conduct, health, and everyday life, resumed their color and their justification from the mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood and ensuring the triumph of the race ... (Foucault 1980: 149).

For Foucault, then, governmentality's racial form involved displacing the symbolic, sovereign value of blood and revaluing 'blood' as one term in an array of terms to be calculated, codified, and manipulated in the interest of a concern with the value of sex—a concern, that is, with practices of disciplining bodies and regulating populations. Thus 'racism' is not simply an atavistic remnant of feudalism, nor is it in contradiction with newly emerging, regulatory conceptions of equality. Rather, 'race' is revalued through its interaction with 'equality' just as 'equality' is revalued through its interaction with 'race'. However, because Foucault's account situates 'race' as one term in an array of terms to be calculated, codified, and manipulated, it also fails to specify the form in which 'race' in particular overlaps, interacts, or actively relates to formal equality. Foucault leaves open the question of the precise form or modality of overlapping, interaction, and active relation between 'race' and formal equality. As a result, the specific histories and discourses of 'race', a term he introduces so suddenly in the last chapter of *The History of Sexuality*, are never examined.

Foucault offers a somewhat more extended though still cryptic account of this interaction in *Discipline and Punish*. In an effort to relate his study of 'technologies of power' to Marxist studies of 'the economic take-off of the West' and 'the techniques that made possible the accumulation of capital', he argues that technologies of power can be understood as 'methods for administering the accumulation of men', and that they

made possible a political take-off in relation to the traditional, ritual, costly, violent forms of power, which soon fell into disuse and were superseded by a newly calculated technology of subjection (Foucault 1979: 225f).

This partly analogical and partly historical characterization of the relationship between 'the economic' and 'the political' leads Foucault to sketch another, partly analogical and partly historical, relationship between two forms of power: the micrological and disciplinary, on the one hand, and the macrological and formal, on the other. The former form of power he calls 'technologies of power', and the latter he alternately calls 'the

great juridico-political structures of a society', 'an explicit, coded and formally egalitarian political framework, made possible by the organization of a parliamentary, representative régime'. '[T]he general [juridical] form that guaranteed a system of rights that were egalitarian in principle', 'the will of all', 'the formal, juridical liberties', '[t]he "Enlightenment"', 'the contract [as] ... the ideal foundation of law and political power', 'the general forms defined by law', 'the law', and 'the juridical norms according to which power was redistributed' (Foucault 1979: 221-223).

These two forms of power are mutually related for Foucault. The former seems to emerge out of the latter, in the same way that the 'political take-off' emerged out of 'the economic take-off'. Yet the two also seem to articulate together in a manner about which Foucault remains being precise. 'The "Enlightenment", which discovered the liberties, also invented the disciplines', he writes at one point (Foucault 1979: 222), suggesting that the two forms or modes of power emerge coextensively. Foucault also writes that

the perceptible modality of power,—at the elementary, technical, merely physical level at which it is situated—is the same: the immediate dependence or direct extension of the great juridico-political mechanism of a society: it is nonetheless not absolutely coincident (Foucault 1979: 221f).

thereby giving the disciplines a certain priority since they are more 'elementary', 'technical', and 'physical'. A few sentences later, he writes that formal legalitarianism is

supported by these tiny, everyday, physical mechanisms, by all those systems of order-power that are essentially non-egalitarian and authoritarian that we call the disciplines (Foucault 1979: 222).

The disciplines 'provide, at the base, a guarantee of the submission of forces and bodies' for egalitarianism, 'allowing to work in depth, so and for egalitarianism' (Foucault 1979: 222). The disciplines are 'integrated' into the formal law, but exist 'as a sort of counter-law' or 'non-law' on a different level. Both the 'formal law, the infinitesimal level of individual lives' (Foucault 1979: 222), this 'non-law' or 'counter-law' is 'the same type of law on a different scale', hence analogous and non-identical from formal law (Foucault 1979: 222). Foucault's figuration of this relationship as one of level, scale, size, fundamentality, physicality, depth, intensity, and interpenetration reflects the speculative and historically general perspective of his own discourse. While his account of 'formal law' and 'formal law' suggests that the two modalities of power both relate actively and contractively, he remains tentative about the form of their articulation. How might particular discursive or calculations of power, such as Jeffersonian colonization, work to compare these two modalities, the disciplinary and the formal? What might the specificity of such a particular discursive articulation tell us about the relationship between the disciplinary and the formal? Is this relationship always indiscriminately one of level, scale, size, fundamentality, physicality, depth, intensity, and/or interpenetration, as Foucault seems to suggest, or

could Foucault's diverse figures actually obscure the specific interaction of the disciplinary and the formal mode of power in particular iterations? What might a specific perspective on a particular discursive articulation of that relationship tell us about the relationship between regulation or control and formal egalitarianism that Foucault's general perspective does not tell us?

Foucault adds another figure to his already formative constellation when, in the midst of his account of the relationship between these two modes of power, he describes the disciplines as 'the other dark side' of formal egalitarianism (Foucault 1979: 205). The specificity of this figure could certainly be observed or dismissed as incidental, since it comes in the midst of a stream of other, quite diverse figures, as we saw above. Yet the dismissal of a distinctly racial figure—the 'otherness' of a 'darkness' which simultaneously opposes, threatens, and supports formal egalitarianism—as incidental actually means the very dismissal of race and racism as incidental aberrations from the tradition of enlightened freedom which we saw above in scholarship on Jefferson and slavery. Although one could hardly imagine Foucault articulating an interpretation of racism as incidental to enlightened freedom—in fact, as we have seen he argues quite the opposite at the end of *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*—Foucault's general perspective on, and diverse figurations of, the relationship between micrological and macrological modalities of power have precisely the effect of making the racial figuration of the former as an 'other, dark side' seem incidental. When he figures that 'other side' as a 'dark side', he implicates his study of this relationship in a history of racial formation—a history from which he nonetheless shies. I would like to use Jefferson's governmental discourse of colonisation to pry Foucault's racial figure loose from its apparent incidentality and suggest a more precise interpretation of the racial form of governmentality.

Unlike illuminations that represented hierarchical cultural differences as differences in 'cultural strength', differences in degree that could be assimilated and incorporated, the discourse that gives value to Jefferson's 'indelible lines of distinction', from the 'Autobiography' passage with which I began this section, codifies a difference in kind. Jefferson's art of government articulates 'race', 'nation', and 'equality' by offering a solution—the emigration, emancipation, deportation, and resettlement of African Americans—to a problem—the conflict between formally and abstractly equal populations with hierarchically ordered racial particularities—retroactively created by the terms of the solution itself. Colonisation is thus not only an utilitarian response to racial conflict; rather, colonisation is embedded in a discourse which also produces that very conflict as one between racially codifiable and readable population units whose formal and abstract equality conditions and is conditioned by their hierarchically ordered racial and national particularities. Colonisation paradoxically responds to and creates the racial calculability of populations. As a specific governmental discourse, colonisation can thus be said not simply to interact with formal equality, nor to interact in the form of a relationship of different levels, scales, sizes, depths, or colors. Rather, colonisation articulates a supplementary relationship between formal equality and racial codification, one to one enabled by the imperial form of U.S. citizenship—its simultaneous inclusion and exceptionality.

Yet colonisation discourse does more than respond to and create the racial calculability of populations. One of the most distinctive aspects of Jeffersonian colonisation is that which distinguishes it most radically from a project to deport or transport African Americans out of the U.S. As he says in the 'Autobiography' passage quoted above, Jefferson does not adopt to a U.S. context the kind of deportation practiced by the Spaniards against the Indians. Rather, he expresses a need to survive and to regulate colonised African Americans after deportation, and he represents that need as absolutely necessary, self-evident and realistic—a representation that many abolitionists shared with him up until the 1820s.

The 1824 letter to Sparks mentioned above exemplifies Jefferson's concern that the U.S. keep watch over African Americans long after their deportation and emancipation. When Jefferson writes that by establishing

a colony on the coast of Africa, which may introduce among the aborigines the arts of cultivated life, and the blessings of civilization and science ... we shall at the long run have rendered them perhaps more good than evil,

the 'rendering' to which he refers also includes a continuing system of surveillance and control:

In the disposition of these unfortunate people, there are two national objects to be distinctly kept in view. First ... Under this view, the colonization society is to be considered as a missionary society, having in view, however, objects more humane, more justifiable, and less aggressive, for the peace of other nations, than the others of that appellation ... The second object [of colonising African Americans], and the most interesting to us, as concerning home to our physical and moral characters, to our happiness and safety, is to provide an asylum to which we can, by degrees, send the whole of the population from among us, and establish them under our patronage and protection, as a separate, free and independent people ... (Jefferson 1899, N 290)

In this letter, colonisation displaces older, missionary practices due to the former's 'rational', 'more humane, more justifiable, and less aggressive' objectives. These objectives paradoxically involve, on the one hand, granting colonised African Americans formal equality and independence—treating them as a 'free and independent people'—while, on the other hand, maintaining a system of regulation and control over them—

to provide an asylum to which we can, by degrees, send the whole of that population from among us, and establish them under our patronage and protection, as a separate ... people.

Yet this passage secures the modernity of those objectives—their quality of being 'more humane, more justifiable, and less aggressive' than missionarying—by repeatedly

declaring their visual self-evidence, "are ... to be distinctly kept in view". "Under this view" "The self-evident rationality and modernity of colonisation thus depends on the declarative reiteration of its clarity or 'distinctness'". This rhetorical reiteration of colonisation's self-evidence turns the paradoxical minimisation of formal equality with control and regulation into a 'rational' formula for freedom". This regulatory sentiment is captured in a letter to Deane Thomas Humphreys:

I consent entirely to your leading principles of gradual emancipation, of establishing on the coast of Africa, and the purchase of navigation, until the emigrants shall be able to provide themselves ... (8 February 1803) (Jefferson 189: X, 26ff).

Jefferson's vision of continuing regulation and control casts America's proposed 'gift' to African Americans as less an ethical and just act which expects no return, than an unequal exchange in which formal equality would be paid for in perpetuity by the maintenance of a system of hierarchical racial and national particularity.

Jefferson also represents this conjunction of formal equality with continuing regulation and control in economic terms. For example, in the letter to Rufus King mentioned above, from 13 July 1802, he writes:

We might for this purpose [of paying for the colonisation of slaves from the U.S.], enter into negotiations with the natives, on some part of the coast, to obtain a settlement, and by establishing an African company, combining with it commercial operations, which might not only reimburse expenses but produce profit also ... (Jefferson 1899 VIII: 163).

Similarly, Jefferson writes to Monroe on 2 June 1803,

...and if save can be obtained to send black emigrants there, in future to take whether the regulations of the place would permit us to carry or take there any mercantile objects which by affording some commercial trade, might defray the expenses of the transportation (Jefferson 1899 VIII: 163).

By bringing independent African Americans in Africa into the economic orbit of the U.S. as a peripheral nation-state, these continuing 'commercial operations' would construct and maintain both a separation of Americans from Africans, and a continuing dependency of Africans on Americans.

The fact that colonisation must continue beyond deportation, that it must proceed 'in such a slow degree' as he says in the 'Autobiography' passage, suggests that it not only produces and responds to, but also maintains the very terms of the crisis it represents. Colonisation can be said to demand the iteration and reiteration of the calculable difference, the production and maintenance of a difference in kind, between

discrete, racialised populations. That is, when Jefferson argues that the U.S. must keep a watchful political and economic eye over the new African American state, it seems that colonisation must continue to work trans-Atlanticly after deportation so that it can maintain this calculable difference. Colonisation thus institutionalises its claim to complete the emancipatory promise of the U.S. revolution in a continual, systematic, trans-Atlantic ritual of racialisation. This iterative and reiterative aspect of African colonisation indicates again, as I mentioned earlier, that imperial U.S. citizenship does not demand the assimilation of difference to a homogeneous national norm, but rather depends on the active production of a particular kind of difference – the calculable racial difference of a population. Yet this reiterative aspect of colonisation also indicates that imperial U.S. citizenship is not motivated simply by the desire to rid America of racial others. Rather, African colonisation schemes precisely sought to keep alive the very racial distinction they colonised in the first place through post-deportation surveillance and control. Colonisation's reiterative act of governmentality continually enjoins the formal and abstract equality between populations with the racial and nationally codified particularities of those populations.

Thus, colonisation's governmentality consists not only in centred power and control (buying slaves and land, deportation), but also, and more importantly for Jefferson, in a systematic, reiterative, decentralised, diffuse political reason, a calculation of merely whereby people would come to be understood as discrete, calculable members of a racially and nationally codified population. In effect, colonised African Americans are to be objects of an experiment in Enlightenment governmentality: they are to be rendered, represented, and maintained 'free' by the U.S. When Foucault (1980: 152) writes in *The History of Sexuality* that

I do not envisage a 'history of mentalities' that would take account of effects only through the manner in which they have been perceived and given meaning and value, but a 'history of bodies' and the manner in which what is most material and most vital in them has been invested ...

the 'manner' of 'investment', in the case of colonisation, is this reiterative and calculable political reason. In Jefferson, then, colonisation can be understood not as an abrogation of liberal principles of freedom, but rather as a liberal, governmental accumulation of formal and abstract equality with racial codification by means of a well-regulated, diffuse, and responsibilised society. This results not in a withdrawing of government from civil society, but in a disposition of governmentality across a society itself created by governmental political reason. When he writes in the 'Autobiography' passage that

No King's more certainly written in the book of life than that [of enslaved] population. Nor is it less certain that the two great sources of the future greatness of the new government,

he suggests that formally and abstractly, as population units, African Americans and

* See Jackson 1812, letter to David Barrow (Jefferson 1899 IX: 515).

white Americans are equally free. White nationalist racism (no less certain), however, because the freedom of black population units is conditioned upon the production and maintenance of their indelible racial codification and hierarchicalization.

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De Mist, Race and Nation

David Johnson

The 'Future of the Past' Conference at the University of the Western Cape in July 1996 drew vigorous prescriptions from a range of eminent scholars as to how a post-apartheid history-writing should proceed.¹ Rather than engage in detail with these arguments, this article is offered as an attempt to re-read one particular historical figure – Jacobus Abraham De Mist – through the dramatically-adjusted lenses of the 1990s. My argument is that whilst concern with race filtered commentaries on De Mist during the apartheid years, his writings might now be re-read with an eye to how he understood nascent forms of nationhood.

Writing about literary criticism, Mikhail Bakhtin (1986:7) has described criticism as a dialogue between different cultures:

We raise new questions for a foreign culture, one that did not raise itself. We seek answers to our own questions in it and the foreign culture responds to us by revealing to us its new aspects and some depths ... Such a dialogue ... neither of two cultures does not result in erasing or mixing. Each retains its own traits and open to being, our time is a culturally enriched.

Extending Bakhtin's suggestive formulation to the writing of history, new questions in the present might be raised for a particular past moment, and the hope is that this past moment might in turn reveal to us new aspects and semantic depths in our present. To apply this to the writings of De Mist, we in 1990s South Africa seek answers in the Cape Colony of 1802 to our present concerns.

Two central questions in contemporary South African debates over the nature and forms of nationhood structure my discussion of De Mist's principal work, *The Memorandum Containing Recommendations for the Form and Administration of Government at the Cape of Good Hope* (1802). The questions are:

- 1) what is the relation between revolution and the post-revolutionary political settlement?
- 2) what is the relation between the nation-as political-community and an expanding capitalist economy?

¹ These contributions have been collected in a special issue of *South African Historical Journal* 35 (November 1996).

Before moving on to these questions, however, it is necessary to set out briefly the interpretations of De Mist from the apartheid era.

De Mist under apartheid

De Mist, the son of a Reformed minister in Zeist-Bommel in 1749, Jacob Abraham De Mist, went to high school in Kampen and to university in Leiden. At Leiden he was strongly influenced by the patriot movement, and also commenced his lifelong association with Freemasonry. Upon graduating, he returned to Kampen first to work as an attorney and then to serve as secretary to the government in Kampen. With the revolutionary upheavals in the Netherlands in 1795, he rose rapidly, being elected to the National Assembly in 1797. His political allegiances in office were moderate: he defended the traditional Dutch legislative bodies and procedures, and in particular supported autonomy for the provinces. Outflanked in 1798 by a radical faction in the National Assembly, De Mist after a short spell in comfortable incarceration moved on to a senior position in the state bureaucracy. In 1800, he was selected to serve on the *Afrikaanse Raad*, the colonial governing body, and it was this appointment that saw his deployment to the Cape in 1802. After the Cape was returned to the British in 1805, De Mist remained in the Dutch colonial administration, serving in other parts of the Dutch Empire until his death in 1813.

De Mist was for the most part treated kindly by historians writing during the apartheid era. By far the most influential interpretation of his three years at the Cape version has even the one reproduced in school history textbooks.¹ De Mist and his Bavarian colleague, the governor Jan Willem Janssens are described in these textbooks as Enlightenment figures thwarted by the intractable realities of life at the Cape. A. N. Boyce (1960: 50) in *Legacy of the Past: Sid VII* notes that '[b]oth men were firm believers in the principles of the French Revolution – liberty and equality – and these, as they were practical men and able administrators', and he concludes with the judgement: '[t]he commissioner and the governor were anxious to improve conditions in the colony, but their ideas were too advanced for the conservative burghers'. A. E. van Rensburg et al (1960: 1) in *Academic History: Sid VII*, which was written specifically for black school syllabuses, make a similar assessment:

Although they were, by modern beliefs, strong government, and though much hampered by the ideas of equity and brotherhood, they were broad-minded and fair.

In a later edition of *Academic History* for the new standard five syllabus, Van Rensburg et al (1987: 50, 129) repeat these general judgements of De Mist, making the remark that, but for the fact established by De Mist that 'not one of the kind of day-labourers', and

conclude that 'Jacob de Mist did much to improve the political and judicial conditions at the Cape'.

While the textbooks hover between praising De Mist's European refinement and condemning his liberal ideology, University of Cape Town philosophy professor A. D. Murray is unequivocal in his embrace of De Mist's efforts to find enlightened and rational solutions to the perplexing challenges of the Cape. Murray's work on De Mist approaches hagiography, as he praises De Mist's modernising impulse so sensibly tempered by respect for tradition: 'he preached the doctrine of Law and Order, Liberty, equality and fraternity were for him not political institutions but moral duties incumbent on man' (Murray n.d.: 14), though at the same time:

[h]e was a political fundamentalist in upholding the old principles and the continuity of historical institutions. De Mist was prepared to accept the old versus the new conditions, but not integrated by the old ideas (Murray n.d.: 18).

Also exemplary for Murray is De Mist's pluralism, which he describes approvingly as an early form of apartheid:

[De Mist] advocates that a separation should be maintained strictly between the native peoples of the Cape settlement and the farmers, thus acknowledging the treaty rights and the sovereignty of tribes.... In spite of his support of free trade and the fact that he had recommended a small amount of free trade with the natives in the Memorandum, there is no mention here of intermarriage and of mingling of populations for the purpose of trade and commerce and to spread the light of civilisation. Indeed the policy of separation was so basic to De Mist's plans that trade between sections of the population is strictly forbidden in an instance. 'Natives employed in the colony, and particularly native children, were to be returned to their homeland' (Murray n.d.: 119).

De Mist's resistance to extending the franchise is also applauded by Murray. After quoting a statement by De Mist criticising public political meetings, Murray notes that 'De Mist's aims did not allow for indiscriminate universal suffrage' (Murray n.d.: 121). In his conclusion, Murray argues enthusiastically for the continuing historical influence of De Mist:

South African political experience marches on after 1806, when the first glimmer over the Colony in the Cape, but even in all the vicissitudes, loses sight of De Mist in her principles, institutions or policy.... De Mist's institutions

¹ For a survey of how South African history textbooks nationalised the early South African history, see Janina Doolan (1987: 53–64).

² Also sympathetic to De Mist is G. D. Schabert (1907–1910), and then in another period, J. van der Merwe (1926). The abolitionist J. C. Mulder (c. 1925/1926) is even more effusive. Concerning De Mist, he 'one of the ablest officials, states and educational reformers who ever set foot in South Africa'.

and ideas were carried from a distance by the settlers from the eastern parts of the Colony during the third decade of the century. Continuity was maintained, and the principles of De Mist's political philosophy were woven into the texture of the political institutions and precedents which are incorporated into the Republic of South Africa and. 133).

Sharing Murray's fear of 'interpenetration and mingling', Saskia Gertrude Millin in one of her novels of the 1950s presents De Mist as an enlightenment man, who is nonetheless sensitive to the imperatives of racial purity.¹ In *King of the Bastards* (1950:169) De Mist is described as 'an eager friendly man whom it liked to be laughed', and he weeps at the sight of starving Bushmen pastoralists. In *The Burning Moon*, Millin creates the following conversation between De Mist and Janssens, in which De Mist explains how the two of them differ from the missionary Johannes van der Kemp:

'[Van der Kemp] has captivated his heads on our own path. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity! he exclaims, while we are not absolute in his requirement of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. We close eyes on the savages of the land and our senses revolt from accepting them as our free and equal brothers, as indeed, as our brothers at all. Considering European politics, van der Kemp may be reactionary and we the revolutionaries—'

'Assuming he remains an Orangeman.'

'They say he does. But humanity he has ennobled the bourgeoisie, which will certainly' (Millin 1952:257).

De Mist's position is endorsed in the novel, as Van der Kemp suffers endless hardships because he transgresses the racial boundaries which contain De Mist and Janssens.

A more critical picture of De Mist is presented in the work of historian W.M. Freund. In a chapter on the Cape governments from 1795-1814, Freund (1989:325) notes that many historians have extolled the Batavians, but suggests that they in fact achieved very little, with '[b]oth De Mist and Janssens ... quickly disillusioned with the Cape'. In his unpublished Ph.D., Freund gives due emphasis to De Mist's political conservatism:

He was no democrat. He was the son of the regime, and, rejecting democracy and democracy, he naturally opted for oligarchy. (Freund 1971:138)

As regards De Mist and Janssens's racial attitudes, Freund summarises as follows:

In such view of the non-white colored peoples, Batavian officials indisputably sentimentally, sympathy for abolitionism and a benevolence.

¹ For a critical discussion of Millin's novels of the 1950s, see Michael Green's *White Heretics* (1997:115-137) and J.M. Coetzee's *White House* (1988:136-162).

that marked a real lack of regard for the potential of non-white indigenous as citizens ... The attitude, which parallels exactly the feeling of the contemporary white South African who expressed a preference for the 'low native', shows the strength, even in Janssens, of the belief in the victory of 'humanity' ruled by western culture (Freund 1971:272n).

The conclusion that De Mist's reforming zeal was moderated as in the course of his experiences in the Cape, with the result that

the powerless non-white continued unable to participate in administration and justice and remained at the disposal of their white employers and masters (Freund 1971:272).

Taken together, these versions of De Mist produced during the apartheid era share an understandable pre-occupation with race. With a substantial degree of consensus, the history textbook writers Murray and Millin all see De Mist as the exemplary European confronted by abject Africa. His racial attitudes—often extrapolated by elaborate conjecture from his writings—are used to justify the policies of segregation and apartheid. Freund's criticisms of De Mist's racial attitudes by the same token might be read as an attack on the apartheid ideology dominant in South Africa at the time. In Bakhtin's terms, the 1960s and 1970s in South Africa were dominated by questions of race, and in looking back at De Mist, these different writers accordingly raised questions, at times obsessively, about the connections between racial ideologies in the Cape of 1800 and South Africa in the 1960s. In the next section, I look at De Mist afresh, with nation rather than race functioning as the organising trope.²

Freund writes at this time in detail about notions of race in the Cape in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in his 1976 article 'Race in the social structure of South Africa, 1652-1836'. Freund's main argument is that modern forms of racism cannot be traced unproblematically back to the eighteenth century, and to illustrate this argument he cites numerous examples of black people in positions of authority at the Cape in this period. His target is L.D. MacCrone's *Race Attitudes in South Africa: Historical, Economic and Psychological Studies* (1937), but much of his argument applies with equal force to the likes of Murray and Millin.

Historians of the Batavian period in the past twenty years have reassessed De Mist's generation in more critical light. Whereas historians of an earlier generation like Leonard Leys (1972) were sympathetic to the Batavian reformers, recent historians have paid particular attention to the connections between the Dutch Enlightenment and slavery and racism, and I have also called into question the democratic credentials of the patriot movement. On the relation between the Dutch Enlightenment and slavery, see Johannes Vervaeke Pastoor's *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade 1600-1815* (1990), and Ger. Bestink's collection *Fifty Years Later*, especially the contribution on the Batavians in the Cape by Robert Ross (1995:129-151). Allison Blakely's *Slaves in the Dutch World* surveys the Renaissance and Enlightenment roots of racism in Dutch culture (1993:1-38). On the limits of Dutch republicanism in the eighteenth century as understood by the patriot movement, see Martin Plak (1991:23-127), Wynne de Bruin (1991:5-27), Wynne de Bruin (1997:137-143), and Margaret C. Jacob and Wijnand W. Mijnhardt's co-edited *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century: Dutch Enlightenment and Revolution* (1992). What all these historians emphasise is the need to distinguish between the exclusive Dutch notion of citizenship of the eighteenth century, and the 'universal' concept of republican citizenship after 1789.

De Mist in the 1990s

De Mist's claim on our attention in South Africa in the 1990s rests upon his oblique, a half-truth, sensationalist commentary on the emergent and competing definitions of nationhood in Europe after the French Revolution. He has a direct appreciation of the connections between European nationhood and colonial expansion, and his political experiences in the Netherlands bring a different perspective to bear on the community at the Cape. Furthermore, he lived through a particularly interesting period of Dutch history. Simon Schama wryly summarises the sequence of calamities for the Netherlands during this period:

Between 1792 and 1811, when all the Netherlands was despoiled of its colonies, it itself was invaded no fewer than twice unsuccessfully, driven to the edge of bankruptcy, and finally forced to drain the mugs of its resistance by becoming more dependent on the French Empire (Schama 1997:161).

Throughout these perilous times for his nation, De Mist was never far from the action.

As regards the first question, namely how De Mist understood the relation between revolution and post-revolutionary settlement, it is clear that it was the French Revolution which dominated his thoughts. Though by nature a conservative man, De Mist saw in the French Revolution and its aftermath certain benefits:

In addition to common, with a legal intention, we deplore the institutions, usages and limitations which were our portion during the late war, and although none can have a greater horror of it, so called revolutionary measures than ourselves, we feel that this is perhaps the most important of all the happiest outcome of periods of anarchy, a quaking of ancient usages, that at such times, as if by an electric shock, the whole order of things is changed, and sweeping reforms which have been needed for many years are immediately executed, whereas fifty years of peace and prosperity would not have brought us within reach of (De Mist 1920:170f).

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, De Mist therefore approved the salutary effects of the French Revolution, not only because his own personal elevation owed much to the Revolution, but also because by 1802 it was clear to him that its most radical impulses had been contained. It was also a consequence of the Revolution that the Cape government had been transformed from the Company's inefficient administration to 'the more advanced forms of Republican government' (1920:171), a process as saw the new modernising Batavian government accelerating. Indeed, while the value of 'liberty, equality and fraternity' in the post-revolutionary settlement is duly acknowledged, it is the modernising effect of the French Revolution – the 'electric shock' – that appeals most strongly to De Mist's Enlightenment sensibility.

As regards De Mist's attitude towards revolutions more generally, he is on occasion sympathetic towards rebel causes. In the case of the Graaff-Reinet and

Swollenendam settlers challenging the authority of the Dutch West India Company (D.W.I.C.), De Mist is forgiving. The blame for settler uprisings is mostly due to the *afkonding van onafhankelijkheid* ('De Mist 1920:171-2), or the Company's Directors, and the actions of the rebels are therefore justified:

Was't niet een, of very onverschillig, hat desiggening persone, welk boemende in d'arm, dat't ons te bevoordelstet at de Cape and in de Mollelandt, om't o advantage their own interests by means of the discontent of the colonists, and misguided disaffected feelings and rebellion? We knowingly render these feelings to the Dutch Government Government to investigate the cause for such a general war of dissension, ... They restore the happiness of the community by establishing just laws and institutions, and that plan is the humane course (De Mist 1920:178).

An efficient judicial system (including a modern legal system) and the freedom to trade are seen as the appropriate means to redress for the legitimate grievances of the settlers. In much the same way, as the French colonisers and populists were justified in the migration by the despotic handling of the *noir* in the colonies, so too for De Mist did the settlers have every right to demand a more efficient government attuned to their needs.

While we understand the settler rebels in their dealings with the Company, De Mist is less sympathetic when they plunder their Xhosa neighbours. He is critical of the 'barbaric stealing and petty thieving, which the settlers of Graaff-Reinet have lately become accustomed to perpetrate against their Kaffir neighbours', and sees it as inevitable that the Xhosa should have changed from being 'docile and peace-loving' to being 'a nation whom we should fear because we have embittered them' (De Mist 1920:246). Accordingly, he also shows sympathy for the rebellious feelings of the slaves and native inhabitants towards white settlers and criminals: 'Slaves, he argues, must be well-treated, with a higher code of morals ... instilled into the masters' (De Mist 1920:252), and further, responsibility for the conflict between white settlers and native inhabitants lies historically entirely with the former:

On what grounds did these poor creatures deserve the persecution and ill-treatment meted out to them by the Company's servants from the very founding of the colony? Even the caves of their fathers, they watched a foreign nation take possession of their coasts, offering not the slightest

The histories of Dutch settler uprisings during this period are traced by Herman G. Hoozee (1975:31-37,51-54,70-80). Also interesting in this regard is Gilhever and André Du Toit (1983:230-242). Ross (1981:8-10) explores the connections between the uprisings in the Cape and those in the Netherlands and the Thirteen Colonies.

The most recent studies of slavery at the Cape are Robert Shell's *Catchment of Bondage* (1998) and Nigel Worden and Christa Crain's collection *Breaking the Chains* (1994). For more detail on the Batavians at the Cape, see Worden's earlier work *Slavery in Dutch South Africa* (1985).

There were a number of violent Xhosa rebellions during this period, which are comprehensively traced by Shula Marks (1977) and Susan Newton King (1987).

...apparently, these primitive savages before the advance of the stranger, and perceived them with mildness, peace, and good, but all this would not do the whole people in peace. Government is with our European, it is with the Spaniards in America, it is the colonists brought down these kind of people, because of their lands and villages, state the earth, raised rice and sugar and refined them in a state of subjection and slavery. (De Mist 1920: 357)

In order to accommodate the aspirations of the slaves and native inhabitants, De Mist argues for their gradual integration into the colonial order. In particular, rather than plundering their resources, he argues that efforts should be made to draw them into the colonial economy:

the inhabitants of that remote district are a gradually be civilised ... It is no weapons and captives can be sold to these people, what they could have to in leading them the use of knives, shovels, hammers, large hoes, thread, cloth, soap, tobacco, and all sorts of small wares and women's ornaments ... [A]n increase of the necessities of life helps in the progress of civilization. By means of barter and exchange, the Kaffirs can be taught to trade in elephants, cows and furs. (De Mist 1920: 249)

Slaves and native inhabitants rising up against colonial rule in the Cape are never accorded the same status by De Mist as the revolutionaries in France, or indeed the settler rebels. However, like both the French revolutionaries and the settler rebels, they too can find their place in a modern, post-revolutionary settlement if they learn the lessons of free trade and assimilate the 'civilised' ways of the European.⁸

The central place De Mist allocates to free trade in cementing his post-revolutionary settlement is of course of direct relevance to the second question posed in re-reading his *Memoirs*, namely how does he understand the relation between the nation-as-political-community and the expanding capitalist economy? Under the V.O.C.'s rule at the Cape, a mercantilist economic dispensation had dominated a stultified political order, but with the V.O.C. going insolvent in 1795, a new form of colonial governance was needed. De Mist (1920: 183) recognises this opportunity for innovation:

⁸ It is quite clear from these passages that Munro's interpretation of De Mist's policies is inaccurate. Rather than anticipating the sequence of policies from indirect rule to segregation to apartheid (as Munro suggests), De Mist's assimilationist impulse should be seen as a precursor of the Cape system of direct rule introduced by Sir George Grey later in the century. In De Mist's benign version of this policy, there is the gradual assimilation of millions of the local inhabitants into the ranks of the Dutch citizenry. While direct rule meant in practice in the Cape was something quite different. Mahmood Mamour (1996: 66) explains the direct rule legitimised by 'appropriation of land, destruction of communal authority, and establishment of the "freedom" of the individual to become a wage worker'. The very few Africans who were 'civilised' in the coloniser's terms employed European land disposers for the vast majority. Even legal status as second-class subjects was withheld.

upon restoration [of Dutch rule] everything starts afresh, and never did a more favourable opportunity offer itself for the institution of an improved system of government in place of the former constitution.

For De Mist, there were two fundamental pressures to consider. First, the monopolistic practices of the V.O.C. had been undone as a result of free trade, and the new political order therefore had to embrace the modernising energies of free trade in order to survive and second, the political revolutions in France and the U.S. had made an equal claim to equality (in whatever limited form) as a due portion for any modern nation, and demands for equality in the Cape likewise had to be welcomed as markers of progress and success.

Looking first in more detail at De Mist's attitude towards the principle of free trade, it is clear that he sees future governments at the Cape no longer confined to protecting the interests of the Company and its employees; rather, the economic interests of all who lived in the Cape would have to be served. The *Affirmation* accordingly embraces the principle of free trade enthusiastically:

That in future the political government of the Cape should be wholly distinct from the commercial government, which has hitherto regulated affairs in the Colony, and that the inhabitants of the Cape, under reasonable conditions should be allowed the unrestricted exercise of free trade and occupations, in so far as these can be reconciled within the interests of the Mother Country. (De Mist 1920: 190)

Although the final qualifying clause retains the allegiance to Holland, his commitment in these passages to free trade echoes precisely the defining principles of the new economic order being established at the same time in the thirteen Colonies.

As regards the need for a novel political system to supplant the Company's imperfect efforts at political administration, De Mist approves the political form of republican democracy. What distinguishes De Mist's position from the likes of Jefferson, however, is the continuing attachment to a monopolistic power. In an important passage, De Mist sets out the relationship between Batavia and the Cape, giving due attention to the overlap of political and economic rights:

Let Capetown primarily be considered as a dependent portion of the Batavia Republic, the welfare and prosperity of which are connected with its own and which, with all the dependencies of our Republic, together form one and the same government. It is only distinguished from the other category of members of this community by the fact that owing to the distance separating its inhabitants from the Republic, it cannot participate in the decisions and

⁹ The tension between mercantilist and free trade ideologies continues under British rule. For a useful summary of the economic policies of Governor Charles Somerset, see de Klerk (1989: 109) and John P. Fouché (proponent of Free trade), see Fouché (1997: 35-39).

deliberations of the State Parliament. It must be regarded as having reached a completed contract with the rest of the citizens of the Netherlands, which, on the part of the colony, is embodied in the condition *do in facere*, and on the part of the Netherlands, *facere in de*. That is to say, we will protect and help you if you will bring your produce to our market and provide our cities with whatever they need. But these citizens, on the other hand, are privileged by possessing not only the same definite rights of freedom in all things and religion as are enjoyed by all citizens of the Republic, but also many other advantages, such as smaller taxes, the benefits of mutual free trade with the mother country, facilities for acquiring freehold properties and other privileges which we have not the space to enumerate (De Maat 1928 156-61).

The Mist acknowledges that the symmetry between a capitalist economy based on the principles of free trade, and a political community based on an elastic definition of nationhood stretching from Amsterdam to the Cape and beyond, cannot be achieved without some effort. It is especially aware of the constructed nature of national identity, and of the need for ideological labour to be directed to this end.

It will be the work of years to transform the citizens of Cape Town once again into Nederlanders, and unless the national spirit is regenerated, and a pride fostered in national ideals, customs, dress, manufactures, etc., etc., it will be in vain to hope that any good will result from political reforms (De Vrijf 1920:201).

In the Cape, the settler community, the native inhabitants, and the slaves had proved fractious and difficult to control, a state of affairs De Mist attributes to the combination of mercantile monopolies and articulated political institutions. His fervent belief is that a negotiated political identity based on Dutch citizenship, in conjunction with a laissez-faire capitalism, would produce a more efficient dispensation.

There is a vast literature on the relation between race and nation. Three of our major interest for this period are Eric Foner and Franziska Wollenstein's *Race, Nation, Class, Ambiguity, 1863-1868* (1991), David G. Roediger's *Kinder des Chaos, Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (1992), and Martin Thom's *Republique, Nation and France* (1994). Wollenstein offers the following definition, emphasizing the economic dimension of definition of race and nation: 'The concept of "race" is related to the axis: division of labour in the world-economy, the corresponding authority. The concept of "nation" is related to the post-liberal capitalism of this historical system. It is a foreign state that comes and departs from the international system' (Wollenstein, 1991: 179). Martin Thom's (1993: 119) central theme is on 'the shift from the city-state to the nation after the French Revolution; the privileging of the ancient city became a privilege of the aftermath of the French Revolution, and ... the marginal qualities of the noble savage were marginalised, characterised, then consumed by the Christian nation.'

conclusion

The relation between 'race' and 'nation' in all contexts is a complex one.¹² In De Mota's own time, both terms operated in important ways, as Nichols, Thuesen (1996:258) explains:

Yet over the period of the [eighteenth] century, 'race' gradually mutated from its original sense of a people or a single nation, linked by origin, to its later sense of a biological sub-division of the human species. 'Nation' began to be used as a substitution of 'race', or even more concretely as a term denoting a culture, or a political system of a certain subordination.

And in the mid-nineteenth century, Hudson continues, they changed fundamentally once again.

['Race' meant an individual's physical and intellectual make-up of different peoples, 'Nation', in turn, was more than a group of people living under the same government. It was the very 'birth' of personal identity, the very lifeblood flowing through an individual speaking a particular dialect in one of Europe's innumerable regions. From the often violent coupling of 'race' and 'national', re-fashioned in these new lands, were spawned the most virulent forms of nineteenth-century racism, and finally the political barbarities of our own century. (Hudson 1996, 258).

Although *De Mist* refers to issues of race, his more direct concern in the *Memorandum* is with questions of nationality, and he deploys the late eighteenth-century sense of 'nation' as denoting a 'cultural or political group of a certain sophistication'. His desire to transform the citizens of Cape Town – he does not distinguish between them on the basis of race – into *Nederlanders*, is symptomatic of this understanding of nation. The apartheid era apologists for *De Mist*, however, read back the nineteenth-century coupling of 'race' and 'nation' to the start of century, and produce an ahistorical encounter between past and present, in which (to return to Bakhtin's terms) the racism of apartheid merges with the quite different racism of the Dutch Enlightenment. In the process, *De Mist*'s distinctive articulation of nation and race, his ideas on post-revolutionary negotiated settlement, on nation building, and on unenclosed capitalist trade, are subsumed.

Finally, as to whether De Mist's *Memorandum* answers questions in our present, a couple of suggestions. First, the *Memorandum* shows quite clearly the ability of a conservative imagination to contain the radical idealism of a revolutionary moment, and the intellectual resources used by De Mist to effect such containment remain potent: democratic citizenship (with exclusions excluded), free market economics, and a relentless rhetoric of modernisation and progress, are coded as continuous with (never as distinct from) the revolutionary impulse. Second, De Mist's simultaneous commitment to the political discourse of nationhood and the economic imperatives of free trade produces contradictions which continue to resonate. His efforts to nurture a Dutch national spirit at the Cape while at the same time promoting free trade came to be sought as a more powerful imperial power displaced the Brazilians.

Current Trends in the Production of South African History

Martin Legassick and Gary Minkley

The future's clear sketch, it's the past that's uncertain.

One of us is regarded as one of the founders, in exile, of 'revisionist' historiography in the early 1970s, and dropped out of the academy for ten years in the 1980s.¹ The other's formation was in the 1980s, initially under the influence of 'structuralism' in the economic history department at UCT, subsequently practising 'social history'. This paper gives our reading of the state and trajectory of the contemporary production of history in South Africa. It is the first time we have worked jointly, and this paper represents an unfinished dialogue between our different pre-conceived ideas on the question. We are more concerned with raising issues and problems for discussion than with providing complete answers. We try to situate the contemporary production of history against the background of a past trajectory: of the birth in exile and subsequent rise to hegemony of revisionism-radicalism-Marxism (some academics accept one label; others another) in the English-speaking academy, and (within that) the rise to hegemony in the 1980s of 'social history' as promoted by spokespersons of History Workshop.

¹ Eem Bezuidenhout (Pieter Dirk Hys) at the launch in Darling of Lester K Born's *When Menelaus Came: The Coming of South Africa's Second Revolution* (Cape Town, 2002) 197.

The implicit reasons for Legassick's leaving the university were spelled out in his 'Academic Freedom and the Workers' Struggle', written as the T.B. Davie Memorial Lecture which the University of Cape Town invited him to return to South Africa to give in 1979. When he was refused permission to enter the country by the government, UCT at first agreed to distribute the lecture in absentia, but the Acting Principal subsequently wrote that 'the university has received legal opinion to the effect that we would risk prosecution if we were to publish your lecture... Thus only extracts have in the future published - in some student newspapers.

Fidda (1997:157) writes recently of 'the theoretical hegemony of Marxist theory over the past three decades - i.e. since 1967'. In South Africa this is a vast exaggeration. In English-speaking white South African universities, the hegemony of liberalism only began to be challenged by Marxism in the 1970s, and Marxism could be said to be hegemonic at the earliest in the 1980s - and was being challenged by the start of the 1990s. A piece in 1990, in fact, writes of 'the ideas of the revisionists - historians - rapidly becoming hegemonic within the academy in the 1980s' (Wills & Landman 1991:192, n.1).

Politically, the 1990s has been a dramatic decade for South Africa, opening with the unbanning of the ANC, CP and PAC and proceeding to the establishment in 1994 of an ANC-dominated government following the first democratic elections in the country. With this abrupt transition from white minority rule to democracy, one might have expected a huge upheaval in both academic and popular historical perception, a rush to uncover and re-understand the history of society from the point of view of the oppressed majority. The major point we want to make about the recent and present production of history in South Africa is that there has been no sudden 'rupture' or 'explosion' since 1990, at least in academic historiography. Nothing, in other words, corresponding to the birth of African history in the 'decolonisation' period of 1956-1966, or to the rise of the Derris-Salazar school associated with the growth of 'socialist' states in Africa, or to the rise of nationalist Indian historiography alongside the struggle for the independence of India.

This paper takes this point as one that requires explanation, and our discussion of past and present historiography will be oriented and ordered accordingly to provide this. We are at the same time conscious of gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the subject.

the social context of 'revisionism'

The cutting edge of South African history writing, as situated among exiles and in predominantly white (English-speaking) universities, moved from liberalism to 'revisionism' and Marxist Marxism at the start of the 1970s. In doing so, it could be said to have 'dropped over' an African nationalist phase. Or perhaps those who participated in the revisionist paradigm shall assumed (as certainly did the one of us involved) that there already existed a nationalist historiography, and that the real issue was to burrow below this. It is perhaps significant that this was the period in which 'black consciousness' was the dominant political ideology among black students. It is also significant that academic history writers in South Africa have remained, and remain predominantly white (and male). Logically, this nationalist historiography was most familiar as presented by white writers, for example, in Fédre Ruz's pioneering *Time Longer than Rope* (1948), later to be given more substance in the four volume collection edited by the Americans Thomas Karis and Gwren M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge* (1972-1977) of documents collected in South Africa in the early 1960s. The

Few academics in the 1990s had read works by Phiso Mofuna, or Obioma Okonkwo. In comparison with Ruz's work, these are minor details. Ruz's work establishes a periodisation for the history of African nationalism that has not been seriously challenged by subsequent writers. Significantly, it mainly omits any treatment of the failure of revisionism, a main topic of revisionism. 'Africanist' ideas affected some white South African academic historians in the 1950s (e.g. Landman Thompson and John Guma-Cooper), but these would hardly claim to be nationalists. Indeed, 1990s historians' evaluation of nationalist consciousness in ANC writings and distributed is to the 'anti-imperialism of the ANC's transformation' (nationalism not much). Many work seems to be done to use the content and historiography of African nationalism as they.

same is true of the 'materialist'—in fact, more strictly nationalist—also—historians produced by members of the Non-European Unity Movement: Ussien Jaffe ('*Mangan's Three Hundred Years*') and Don Taylor ('*Nosipho Majekwa's The Role of the Education in the Congress*') were also both white.

The significance of revisionism lay in importing ideas of class into academic discourse on South Africa. In this, revisionism could be said to have merely 'made respectable' a common currency of the liberation struggle.¹ Lodge (1990: 173) has argued, however, since the 1950s in the ANC, 'the ideas supplied by Marxism' have been more attractive to historical writers than pure nationalism. With respect to the CP, of course, its 'Marxism' has often taken the form of barely-disguised nationalism'. However, the main setting work in the liberation movement has tended to be written by CP or other Marxist voices containing ideas of class as well as of race. Directly or indirectly, it was these ideas which underpinned the birth of revisionism. It is perhaps not accidental that Harold Wolpe's (1972) well-known Marxist explanation of apartheid in terms of the articulation of modes of production harks back to analysis by the early CPSA activist David Ivor James'. Moreover the fullest history of the debates over 'class and race question' within the liberation movement—H.E. and R.J. Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1930* (1969)—appeared shortly before the onset of revisionism. Though their concluding chapter contains its own version of the liberal argument of the incompatibility of apartheid and capitalist economic growth (shortly to be assailed by the revisionists), the revelations of a history of controversy

— represents a genealogy for revisionism rather different from that argued by Bhebe and Durr (1990).² They hint at this particular genealogy at several points in passing, but do not develop it.

This is not a critique of the theory of nationalism of a special type³ which, if not fetishised, is defined by its characterising in any society of segregationist and apartheid South Africa. (There is a later part of the book's 1990 critique of CSE). The CP's 'nationalism' comes in stating that what is required is a 'two-stage revolution', i.e. a national-democratic revolution⁴ conceived as separate from the taking of power by the working class. It is equally possible to deduce from CSE the idea that 'the working class must lead all the oppressed to achieve national liberation and democracy by taking state power and establishing a worker's democracy—achieving the same ends as nationalism by nationalist means'. After all, as Lenin wrote, 'the bourgeoisie is the imperialist enemy of the proletariat as a democratic force, and is certainly in the interests of the proletarian class struggle, which is advanced and directed by a working class on the national question'. But to go any and these are clearly 'limited and historical functions helping bourgeois nationalism means betraying the proletariat and siding with the bourgeoisie' (quoted by Comrade Mzila in VanDyke, 1988: 52).

See James (1971: 5). This, then, is the function of 'the native territories, to serve as dumping grounds for black labour, the repositories of the reserve army of native labour—stocking it in order to bring it out according to the demands of industry. By means of these territories, capital is relieved of the obligation of paying wages to cover the cost of the labour of reproducing its kind'. See also Potluge's election address in the *Transfer* in 1979 (in J. & R. Simons 1983: 413).

within the movement of resistance over the analysis of South Africa undoubtedly in the need revisionists.

In parallel with revisionism is the academic group who class analysis in the liberation movement. Joe Slovo's 'South Africa: No Middle Road', published in 1976, is a well-known example of this.

Since race discrimination is ... the *main* aspect of South African capitalism, the struggle to destroy 'white supremacy' is intimately bound up with the very destruction of capitalism itself ... It is just as impossible to conceive of workers in SA separated from national liberation, as it is to conceive of true national liberation separated from the destruction of capitalism (in Davidson *et al* 1976: 118, 161).

The pervasiveness of such class analysis is illustrated also by the following passage published in 1978 by Thabo Mbeki, today regarded as the ANC's High Priest of Africanism and rapprochement with capitalism:

To understand South Africa, one must appreciate the fact and its tendency in our minds that, however we deal with a class society in South Africa, the capitalists, the bourgeoisie are the dominant class. Therefore the state, other forms of social organisation and institutions are conditioned by the one fact of the supremacy of the bourgeoisie ... The condition of the black workers in South Africa, the place, is surely a local one by the capitalist class, namely, that we must also have a general revolution ... Consider the circumstances in which we might position black capitalism as a method to work capitalism ... black capitalism, instead of being the artefact of a culture uniformity of production with no concerning them, is what is so, without any extraordinary circumstances to reverse its existence (Mbeki 1978: 77).

The concern of revisionism (initially at least) was with the interrelationships of race and class. Revisionism in our view reflected the reality that without developing both concepts it is impossible to get to grips with the History of South Africa. In addition, as we have seen from Bhebe & Durr (1990) or VanDyke (1990) have reminded us (as we return to below) it is equally impossible to get to grips with this history without the concept of gender. Revisionism became divided into 'structuralist' and 'social history'.

On 'National Education in its true, essential function imply the expropriation of the owners of the means of production (monopolized by a bourgeoisie drawn from the white group) and the consequent destruction of the state which has arisen' (in Davidson *et al* 1976: 141). Other examples of 'structuralist' works influenced by revisionism are Wolpe (1988) and Parpart (1991).

He argues that the methods and practices of primitive accumulation have not been the same in (Europe) but are a dominant South African capitalism.

scribes. But through the 1980s it was probably 'social history' that had the dominant influence.

The period of revisionism's hegemony, from the late 1970s and 1980s, coincided with the rise of a revolutionary social movement in South Africa demanding national liberation, democracy, and an end to capitalism. It was the consonance between ideas on the ground and those of 'revisionist' academics (all white) that lent apparent force to social history. In the townships and the workplaces, the general understanding was—in the words of an NLM resolution—that apartheid and capitalism were 'two inseparable evils that must be smashed'. Equally, an early Eastern Cape consumer boycott leaflet was titled 'Industry and Government – Two sides of the same bloody coin'.¹¹ Surfacing sporadically in written sources is this interconnection made in the popular mind. At a 1985 Johannesburg May Day demonstration meeting, *The Star* reported:

Most speakers spoke in Zulu and identified capitalism as the enemy of the Black working class in South Africa. . . . A speaker from [Pretoria] . . . brought most of the audience to its feet when he said capitalism was the enemy of the workers, and sang and hummed 'Capitalism, capitalism is our enemy'. (*The Star* 7/5/1985).

Thami Maki, one of the organisers of the two-day November 1984 Transvaal stayaway, asked what the goals of the struggle were, said entrepreneurship, onevite in a unitary South Africa.

'No, that's not enough. It must be a 'workers' state' based on the principles of the Freedom Charter'.¹²

'So you want socialist South Africa?'

'Exactly', he replied (*Sunday Express* 11/11/1984).

¹¹ See *South African Labour Bulletin* 12/3 (1987) 48. Some of the rest of this paragraph is taken from a forthcoming review article by Martin Legassick in *JSA* 2.

¹² *Workers Progress* 19, October 1985: 13. Incidentally, these quotations call in question the following claims of Witz and Haridass (1991: 190). 'The focus on class and class analysis, which was at the heart of revisionist scholarship, failed to tap its successfully to many popular perceptions of oppression in South Africa'. In the 1980s racial oppression remained the central form of anti-apartheid struggles, despite their strong anti-capitalist rhetoric'. Thus, in our view, it is wrong to refer to apartheid, in much more far consciousness, national oppression was seen as the work of the whole bourgeoisie.

¹³ See also Mkhize Mayekiso, MAWU General Secretary, *COSATU Workers News* (October 1989). Phoziso Gqobela, President of COSATU, *The Worker* (October 1989), 12 October (London), 1989, or its publication in *COSA*.

The Financial Mail in 1985 reported an opinion survey that 77% of blacks in selected urban areas expressed a belief in socialism (1981: 2109-1985). Another survey conducted at this time showed that more than three quarters of shop stewards interviewed favoured socialism over capitalism; 90% in the Eastern Cape (O'Brien 1986: 52). The position of workers organised in COSATU was reflected in General Secretary Jay Naidoo's (1986) speeches:

apartheid racism has gone hand in hand with our exploitation and suffering in the hands of the boss. . . . Despite the desperate attempts by organised business to distance themselves from the present discredited regime we have remained important to them, that fact took a toll in that apartheid free is the exploitation of workers in South Africa. . . . The alliance between big business and the apartheid state is soaked in the blood of the workers'.¹⁴

A COSATU delegation told the ANC and SACTU in exile in 1987 that:

The general feeling among workers is against reform and in favour of restructuring and creation of a new society reflecting the interests of workers. . . . the majority of workers want fundamental change. (Meeting with COSATU 23/1987. Preliminary minutes, ANC, Johannesburg, May/June/Centre—Edna Adams 1998: 105).

All these sentiments signified a widely apparent organic, revolutionary crisis of South African society. Professor Colin Bundy's (1987: 71) inaugural lecture at UCT analysed what he saw as a revolutionary situation¹⁵ existed in South Africa, and concluded that 'some but not all of the preconditions for revolutionary change exist'. Bundy, he continued, 'something has got to give. Restructuring is unavoidable. But what form will it take?' (see also Bundy 1989). The 'form' that restructuring in fact took – to the surprise of many activists – was the so-called 'miracle' of a negotiated settlement. In retrospect some might argue that this represented the consummation of the revolution – or perhaps of its 'first stage', though the SACP with its slogan of 'deepening democracy' implies that the first stage is not yet reached. We would argue rather that the revolution is *incomplete, uncompleted. The Revolution Deferred* is the title of a recent book by Martin Murray, though nowhere in the book does he explicitly refer to or explain the title.¹⁶ Completion of the revolution would involve the working class

¹⁴ See also *SALW* 12/4 (1987) 73-15; 12/5 (1987) 60.

¹⁵ Significantly, at this stage, the ANC delegation (including both Joe Slovo and Thabo Mbeki) strongly argued against putting forward 'the socialist perspective', i.e. they were for separating fighting for national liberation from the struggle against capitalism and the workers' power.

¹⁶ Murray (1994: 147) says that 'During the 1980s, the popular upsurge against white minority rule and the apartheid system spilled over into genuine grassroots rebellion against the state and the rules of the capitalist marketplace'. Yet with the onset of and the struggle for in a 1990-1990 period, the profound political realignment through which political power might finally be returned to those was in the changing circumstances of post-apartheidism, and with the declared 'Transition' or moderating this in a future 'working out of the form'. Murray refers to the 'anticipated collision of the capitalist economic order' 'the modernisation', however, and a post-revolutionary 'negotiation' 'the modernisation' 'the modernisation'.

Looking up the incomplete democratic and social tasks in a struggle for workers' power. Just at the second century of the 1980s affected the climate of "stagnography" we do not understand revolution context of the 1990s.

Coexisting with the *life* in the 1980s, social history has attracted powerful compliments. Terence Ranger (1991:5) though critical of aspects of its 'truthfulness', has nonetheless attributed its 'dynamic and committed and honest'. Shula Marks (1992) has called the rewriting represented in the work of revisionist scholars a 'revolution in narrative shaping of South African history'. Eric Foner (1992:166), the leading editor of *Social Historian*, has described South African social history as having produced 'one of the world's most historicist scholarship' in his view. He argues that the social historians have rewritten South African history to emphasise the experience of black labourers in mines and in urban mines and industries and that in particular, 'one now [would] be surprised to find traditional historians, often through oral histories that allowed ordinary people to relate their lives and express their aspirations'.

The dominance of public history and the popularisation movement in the academy in the 1980s introduced some home ideas. It was believed that academic history, as social history, could become popularised: translated into the conception of history held by 'the masses'. The atmosphere was captured by Colin Duncy (1987: 250) in the following terms:

the very latest and already been embraced by popular mass new groupings and movements such as *gospel* novels, and as new of academic attention is being undertaken. In South African cultural historians a major concern that makes comprehension of the past seem particularly important. Their society's history has not presented itself readily for examination. It is rugged, bare, and feverish, having no deficiencies, and demanding immediate attention.

The attendance at Wits History Workshop 'open days', the support of the ABCD for people's history projects, and all encouraged such a belief.

The turn to negotiations in the 1990s and the resultant demobilisation of a mass movement has transformed the conditions for the 'popularisation' of history. With nothing in the 1990s more concerned with the 'teaching of elites' rather than eruptions of the masses, once again 'history' is made 'from above' rather than 'from below'. The ANC has become transformed from the vehicle through which the masses sought transformation of society in the 1980s into the staunch defender of neo-liberal capitalism in the 1990s. In parallel, there has been a huge erosion in popular interest in academic presentations of the past. As Paul Mayland (1995) observed at the 1995 SAHIS conference at Rhodes, social history has largely been banished to the site of the professional historian and the university. Leslie White and Chris Raftoy (1992) have described how, despite near 'missionary work' of popularisation, social history has remained 'on the margins' of popular and public domains. Shaul Marks (1996) has commented on the 'disappointed expectations' as a result of the limited recognition in school history textbooks of 'the great historiographical advances of the last thirty years'. Another character of the 'popular history' being presently made, we return below, for the moment, what we are concerned with is the effects of the 1990s.

"subject to secularisation on the construction of history and reality".¹⁰

Consciously or not, the urge to 'popularisation' of revisionist history constituted an intervention in the political arena. In this respect, in our view, spokespersons of History Workshops can be criticised and labelled in the 'militant' role of the intellectual (or 'ideologue'). In a final five-page article at the end of the 1980s Bozzoli contrasted the 'Gramscian' concept of this role with what she regarded as the 'Adhossocratic':

Forging an alternative set of historical reference points would challenge hegemony on a high level but making these new representations popular would provide the already-consciousised masses with greater insight and understanding of the structural continuously confronted. The essentially educational aim of raising the capacity of the mass of the people for self-manipulation – so that the popularisation of history involves a process of empowerment of the people themselves – run against the APH association. The central question was if cinema could move beyond the APH. Cinema understood somewhat as between a belief in the subordination of the final contents to the movement, and one in the subordination of the movement to history (Bozzoli 1990:241; see also Bozzoli 1985:8).

What Bozzoli here calls 'Atheism' is that misinterpretation of Lenin's *What is to be Done?* which is held by Communist Parties and many Trotskyist groups on the idea that workers are capable only of 'trade-union consciousness' and that 'socialism' must be brought to them from outside by intellectuals.¹ In fact Bozzoli's characterisation of the 'Gramscian' approach does not entirely escape this. What even an 'intellectual' is

* In these paragraphs we have benefited from reading Gourevitch (1994: 1935) and Greenwald (1996). In the original version of the paper we also offered some criticism of Rousseau and Greenwald's standpoint, which we have dropped from this version because it is not central to the argument. We still hold to the general conclusion of our criticism of them, however. Submission to the final draft of this paper was of Shidlo Melnik is yet unpublished writing for their "Racial" History course in South Africa and "Racism" (other) which makes the points.

As with other centres of Villa History Workshop, we had our own fiction in the tradition of its chief spokesperson of the 1990s, Roberto Bazzani, in his introductions to collected volumes. This of course begs the question as to how far he proceeds in the collections, not only for reasons of time and efficiency, but also for the sake of the collection (Mukherjee 1980).

2. See Long (1994: 175) who has argued that the history of the working-class movement shows a lack of non-voting "bureaucratic" leaders of working-class organizations doubling "leadership" structures by the working class. Bozzoli (1983: 14) argues that the "long tradition of leadership" was a reaction to "long" class domination of the middle classes of the dominant class to develop "people" class consciousness. Long also views different class hierarchy as a question of "faith" of the oppressed class in the development of a "people" class consciousness, and that the so-called "middle" leadership is not at all a mere "collection" of "class" or "industry" or "social" consciousness to the degree that it is a collection of "middle" class consciousness.

regarded by the Communist Party, the Trotskyist group(s), and Bozzoli alike as *conscious intellectual* rather than, as Lenin intended in *What is to be Done?* as a cadre recruited in the Marxist party, a worker-intellectual.¹⁹ The 'academic' can masquerade as the purveyor of 'objective truth' (which is in reality only an interpretation) because of her or his claim to inhabit a privileged 'zone of knowledge'. The party-activist-intellectual, on the other hand, is considered a reveal-er, his or her 'party-situation'—though this does not thereby preclude her or him from expressing 'truths'. For scholars, however, purely on the basis of a position in the university, to claim to be asserting 'truth' to the populace has strong elements of patronizing paternalism.

The second criticism that may be, and has been, used of History Workshop's 'populisation' politics is that it came to privilege class over race. It is true (and conceded by Bozzoli) that there was a tendency to 'workerism' in the History Workshop of the 1980s.²⁰ In the early 1980s the proponents of History Workshop may

well have come along with many other white (and black) intellectuals who believed that a workers' party could emerge immediately which would displace the ANC.²¹ Many of these whites who held this belief were shattered by the emergence of COSATU and its incorporation with the ANC in 1993-1996, and many swiches to which can be seen the seeds of later more dramatic abandonment of socialism.²² For Bozzoli, the explanation lies in the nature of South African popular culture which is nation first

popular culture is not strictly narrowly class-conscious. It is mainly articulated through communal, regional, ethnic, home-garden, or new categories, but it complexifies in various, not entirely deterministic, ways the significant elements of cultural formations. It thus repeats other themes to engender and sustain ideologies of a national, popular, 'moderate', or racially-defined identity (Bozzoli, 1999: 739; cited in Bozzoli 1997).

She adds: 'This is not, of course, to deny the analytical value of class as a concept.'

Where, in our view, this conception of Bozzoli's analysis is failing is in seeing that the 'culture' of the working-class is never of a pure class character.²³ 'Workerism' erred in identifying the 'working-class' with the working class at the point of production. The Communist Party's notion of 'workerism' erred equally on this point, failing to regard the overwhelming majority of women, youth and poor in the townships and countryside as part of the working class (see Fisher & Munroe, 1998). But the search for judging the character of the culture of this broader working class cannot be a comparison with the character of class culture in Europe. The black working class in South Africa is a colonised working class, subjected to racial and gender oppression as well as class exploitation. Its culture reflects all these concerns. To try to put the culture of the working class in South Africa into a 'racial' bag, a 'national-democratic-two-stage' bag (the SACP) or a (mostly) 'nationalist' bag is to impose preordained limits on it.

¹⁹ 'Old party party meetings, slushy gossip, will show the negative pull between those who are from townships and those who bear the label of "Bozzoli 1983/1986". In fact, in this is the idea that a scholar's talk about capitalism is somehow immune from detrimental effects from its "gossip".'

²⁰ 'Class', equally, would not have regarded an 'intellectual', particularly an organic intellectual, as coming within university, but primarily as a party cadre. His writings are not so regarded in new-class, anti-party, anti-gossip because written in prison, and he may also have been affected by the statist observation of the emerging Trotskyist belief as to *bourgeois*.

²¹ Any history that were later, in one of the words, that this does not preclude it from considering the universality of human, or of the experience of 'ordinary people', as demonstrating by itself to some postmodernists. The issue for them lies in the subjection of any individual interpretation to collective attention. As Bageet or reports of her sovereignty [i.e. activity] of thought is received as a number of extremely misperceiving human beings, the know any work has an unconditional claim to truth realised in a number of relative, unqualified or (possibly) true knowledge, not universal thought] can be fully realised as such through one volume many of human existence' (see *Bozzoli*).

²² 'We are to have workerism in the 1980s because it was in the 1980s, as a form of critique by the SACP, that the new wave of the regime in the 1980s was a critique of a position. We would argue the form for the decade is a critique of socialism with a critique of class character for the period and dependence of the working class (not to be confused, as the SACP does in its tendency to alliance with the middle class, particularly evidence of the working class and the compatibility with an alliance with the middle class for economy and socialism). This is a guarantee of the nature of the conservative and the technocratic with the class character of the system. See Fisher and Munroe' (1998: 47-53).

²³ Nkomo (1991: 16). However, since, for Bozzoli, and Fisher, the shift toward the 1980s placed a focus on the class of 'workerism' not on 'nationalists and one or two other regional or national production centers'. She also argues that the 'historical and political importance of race, gender, and class for the first time in the history of South Africa' and 'the racialised and classed experience of the people' (1998: 47).

²⁴ Among black worker-intellectuals who believed this at the time were Moses Maseko, James Muthisi (then vice-president and now President of the NDM) and Cyril Ramaphosa. Contraries in the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC addressed various white lists, putting the position that the ANC could not be by-passed, and that the need was for its transformation into an organisation led by the working class. All subsequently joined the ANC.

²⁵ See for example Alex Deacon (1985) 'refused article which...to paraphrase as a combination of... against transformation politics through the leading role of the working class in the ANC and... the individual... of the ANC... Corporate, at this point Ramaphosa (1994: 691) (cited in...).

²⁶ Bozzoli and Deacon (1990: 58), by the way, are incorrect when they would the 'regional'... subsequently came to reject any consideration of national and... consciously... movement Trotskyist politics... As a spokesman of the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC, Legatsek was concerned with...ing, and...ing for, the most path to... national oppression in South Africa because national oppression was at the... of popular consciousness... consisted of *people's education*... (1981-1990).

²⁷ Thus, Ramaphosa (1994: 114) criticises Bozzoli's privileging of the common class in the face of the population's diversity.

The new conditions of 'uncompleted' revolution' remove a national unity-principle of revisionist ideas. Anti-capitalism and ideas of class have become very marginal in official society. But what is to take their place in historiography? Does not this transition from the revolutionary climate of the 1980s to the bland climate of 'reconciliation' of the 1990s go a long way to explain why the argument has not (as yet) anyway been associated with any 'crisis' or explosion in historiography? A contributor to the *Journal of the Peace Conference* in 1994 wrote here:

'The Mayibuye theme was welcomed to undermine the professional history producer's establishment, including their colleagues in the History Department, for not writing the history of "The Struggle" and for not listening to the "voices" of the people who struggled (Lundin 1994: 44).

But, what kind of history of the struggle is being demanded in this critique? Is it a people's history 'from below'? Or is it a triumphalist nationalist history? Or a 'reconciliation of history'?

There are certain common features between the approach of South African social historians and the 'subaltern studies' school in India. Both have stressed 'history from below' and popular agency. Both have expressed themselves hostile to 'nationalism and to a triumphalist, nationalist history of 'great men'. To say this, however, disguises their differences. 'Subaltern studies' arose in a quite different context. It represented a challenge from 'within the nation' to the hegemony of an 'enlightened' and 'liberalist' which were in fact nationalist ideas in post-colonial Indian historiography.⁸ South African social history arose while society was still 'colonised' to challenge first liberalism of the 'colonisers' and then a nationalist presentation of the history of the colonised. It ought to be considered merely a branch of the historiography of the colonisers'. In this case, particularly under conditions of an 'uncompleted revolution', the historiographic break might express itself as a nationalist reaction to it. At the same time, the challenge 'from below' represented by social history to 'nationalist' ideas cannot be wished away. To move from a concern with nationalism to a concern with 'subalternity' seems a logical progression. To return from concern with subalternity and conflict to concern with nationalism and/or reconciliation seems a rather harder road to travel: more difficult, perhaps impossible.

recent 'social history' writing: its strengths and limits

At the same time academic history production in South Africa has continued to generate a range of new and divergent works. In recent years there has been a revitalisation of 'precolonial' studies; intense debates and new analyses of early colonial histories in southern Africa; reassessments of the role and importance of

mining and the mines in South African history in a number of new works; a surge of historical and political biographies; and a growing literature on the forms of race and nature of opposition to apartheid, and on others. We can do little justice to the range of topics, critiques and foci of attention that are visible within and about this growing South African historiography. Instead we will focus on what are variously regarded as three of the best histories produced in the post 1990 period.

To doing so we hope to illuminate aspects of: (a) the readership to subaltern perspectives within these histories; (b) the visibility of any theoretical shift comparable to the shift marked by class in the 1970s; (c) the implications these analyses have for a potential route back to concerns of nationalism.

The three books we wish to focus on are Charles van Onselen's *The Seed is Mine*, Isabel Uffindeler's *We Swear as a People that is True*, and Tim Krieger's *Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order*. All three are embedded in South African revisionist social history. As such, they are concerned with revising the past to emphasise the experiences and give voice to those previously excluded from traditional accounts, in order to provide a more inclusive, representative and suitable to perspective, while also attempting to deal with this meant for various forms of rule. At the same time, though, each of the three books moves beyond a social history 'from below' approach in different ways.

The first, Charles van Onselen's *The Seed is Mine* is an appropriate starting point. It has been received as the 'classic' of South African social history, as a 'seminal work' and one 'without compare in South African studies' (Bondy 1997: 561, 567). It is the massively detailed history 'from below' of a South African star-worshipper in the twentieth century and the product of nearly fifteen years of collating and individual research and production (Nasson 1996). Despite having emerged earlier as a historical subject in the work of Nkomo and Rabe (1983), Kae Mairi has been put on the historical map by this biography, facilitated through the research work of the newly-named Institute for Advanced Social Research with Van Onselen as Director.

In that sense *The Seed is Mine* represents a kind of 'trifurcation' of the social history approach that has emphasised experience, hidden history, and subaltern black agency in the making of the South African past, and is produced by someone widely regarded as South Africa's 'premier historian' (Bondy 1997: 263). The strength of the book is also seen to reside in its distinctive method and processes of historical recovery, in order to present this 'living alien' as a 'whole' (Nasson 1996: 3). Thus Van Onselen begins this extraordinary book with an equally extraordinary context: that Kae Mairi's life, with one minute exception, does not appear in the supposed main spring of national memory – the State Archives. It is a history without official record and of a family with no documentary existence. Of course, as Van Onselen shows over the next 555 pages, memory and the past have many other main springs, enabling the production of this monumental 'history from below' and thus equally demonstrating the possibility and necessity of its method. It is a work rich in thick description particularly relevant – at least on the surface – to the official collection and analysis of oral history and memory.

The book then, re-centres the role of Kae Mairi within the mass movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, brief youth and subsequent

⁸ See Gopal, collected in Prasad (1997).

declassification (after the 1980s) of a class of black sharecroppers in the southwestern Transvaal. He is a Samuel Smiles man, a self-made man – brought down in the end by apartheid. His trajectory is closely interwoven with the history, nature and production of white-owned and worked land, and ultimately with the development and entrenchment of white capitalist relations of production in agriculture. This is the narrative thrust of *The Seed is Mine*, although it is simultaneously a narrative in which Kas Mame and his productive wishes, strategies, engagements and forms of independence are mapped in all their specificities of locale and charge.

In addition though, as Bundy has suggested, there is also a second story interdefined with it and resting on the concern with the sharecropping family as a 'social entity' (Bundy 1997:366; drawing on Van Onselen 1996:9). Here is Bundy's description:

Kas Mame may have been heroic in his versatility as farmer, stock-breeder, craftsman, trader, speculator and traditional healer. Yet many others with whom he shared an husband and father, struggling to his children, struggling not to, marginalising his wife. With Van Onselen makes possible is an understanding of how two sets of demands – economic survival and domesticity – collided and collided (Bundy 1997:367).

It is in these intersections between propertive structure and peasant agency, and between sharecropper and patriarch, that Van Onselen parts company with much South African social history. The categories of 'history from below' and of subaltern agency, and evidence as distinct for and 'interminous' are problematised. The book details how relations of kinship and patriarchy were painful and violent, but also intimate and caring in their interactions between different categories of black and white people on the Highveld. This means that experience was a 'painful *shared* experience', not only determining many responses and thus a South African reality including racial identity and engagement with a nexus of complex relations between trust and betrayal, complicity and complicity, love and hatred. Thus Terry Ranger (1997:354) suggests that Van Onselen's biography enables us to see that 'Kas lives most of his life as an Africanised black on the land of Africanised whites'. Relationships between farmers and sharecroppers are much more fully interrogated than in the conventional social history. There is little place, moreover, for simple racial stereotypes when the men, oppressor and lived in the book is black.

The major new insights in *The Seed is Mine* are primarily those of context around the shared and indeed shared nature of an experience. At the same time, Van Onselen (1996:vi-ix) argues that 'the field [of] barely given way to the theory, the peasant to the production, and the patriarch to his family'; these changes, in other words are recent. This effectively inserts a peasant's voice into the centre stage of the history of twentieth century and apartheid South Africa. Revisionism (including, arguably, earlier work by Van Onselen (1976) admirably on Rhodesia, and not South Africa) consisted of the migrant worker as the central subject of crime and class division of the society and its history. Now, for Van Onselen, it is rather the mutual experience of the sharecropping peasant farmer. Migrant labour is the very antithesis of South Africanism, and what should be the model of social engagement of 'South

Africa's adolescent nationhood' (Nassou 1996:3). It is a book larger than itself, a model of the South African past, standing for lost past, its past moreover – in contrast to the old name of social history – is consistent with the idea of reconciliation. This rests not on a history of simple racial separation, exclusion and the repression of 'marginal difference' (and thus on forgetting) but also on a history of social assimilation, incursion, 'cultural osmosis', of 'paternalism and violence', of a shared, albeit uneven past of an 'inescapable inter-racial milieu'.¹⁰ The message of the book is thus ambiguous as regards the present of reconciliation. On the one hand it has a past promised on a reading of power relations and conflict that also involves social assimilation (within and beyond the categories of race). Making that past visible makes the politics of reconciliation a much more deeply embedded historical project than is connected by the TRC, for example. On the other hand, however, the book emphasises the dramatic shaping impact of a complex rural class conflict and transition to agrarian capitalism ('four below'). Those conflicts of class would be displaced and silenced if fail-remembering racial definitions (as defined by apartheid and resistance to it, and assumed in the TRC discourse) were taken as the categories to be reconciled.

Two areas are important in examining the production of academic history in South Africa. The first relates to methodology: of how peasants (and Kas Mame) speak in the book. The second relates to the ways that the empirical research is combined with theoretical analysis of social and economic change. As regards the first there is a significant paradox. Kas Mame's memory and his feats of remembrance validate the whole book as a subaltern 'peasant' voice of the past and of history. Yet, Mame's voice is not made explicit in the book, and neither is his or others' remembrance made explicit as memory. As importantly, though, Kas Mame's memory and his voice is seen to externalise 'history living on in the mind' where he 'never once ceased to amazed with the accuracy, depth and extent of his insights into the social, political and economic structures that dominated the south-western Transvaal'.

This shows, by the way, a different sense in which the book can be taken as reconciliation history. Colin Bundy (1997:369) has suggested that, in its combination of fine empirical research with analysis rooted in theoretical understanding of economic and social change, *The Seed is Mine* has 'unstripped or transcended the either/or formalists vs social historians' antinomies of the 1980s'. The evidence of memory then, not only tells the peasant or subaltern story but also that of structures, providing, he means to 'transcend the either/or antinomies of the 1980s scholarship'. What is startling, however, is that this is done without an engagement of memory, without

¹⁰ The relation of 'cultural osmosis' and of paternalism and violence are drawn from the titles of two previous Onselen articles (1992, 1992) which predate this book, and direct a sense of its theoretical and methodological underpinning. The notion of a reconciliationist history is our own, and is also related to the growing reorientation presented in official versions aimed at achieving political reconciliation, as in the TRC, for example. The current research's inter-racial milieu' – Nassou (1996:3), taking upon Van Onselen's analysis of a 'shared' inter-racial milieu that declares where Africanism was Africanised, and African 'Africanised' through processes of assimilation to

making the positions of historian-researcher, interviewee-researcher, and interviewee-subject explicit or problematic.

More generally, for biography, despite the far more suggestive concern with issues of how 'persons speak' linked as it is to earlier articles by Van Onselen (1993), does not substantially engage issues of the social constructions of language, memory and history. The conventional approach to memory as evidence remains firmly in place. *The Secret of Kas* is not just the story of Kas Maine, but it is suggested that it is how Kas Maine himself would tell it – it is representative of his southern viewpoint and interpretation, i.e. because of the nature of expression and translation of that memory. Kas Maine's actual 'voice' is silenced. Maine hardly makes it onto the 535 pages 'in his own voice', i.e. in extended quotations of his own words, yet the evidence from his memory enables a significant rewriting of the past.

inzwischen, Van Onselen (1996:8) ergreift man

Kim Marine, a young lady who had a moment in a top corner of a wider world that
 instances of black South Africa, a slave, oppressing families could go know on a
 journey to nowhere.

In this sense Kees Malsbe also stands for the subaltern voice of all sharerooters. Personal memory or memories also stand for collective ones. The paradox that this is really Van Onselen's story, his voice, his practice of writing history involving memory as evidence which is always, absently, sifted, checked, ordered, referenced and cross-referenced, evaluated and processed by him – the professional historian – into the remembrance of real collective subaltern experience of structure and of agency should also not be forgotten.

If Van Gerssen provides one model of contemporary history writing, then Isabel Hofmeyr's work provides a significantly different model. Her book, *We Spend Our Years as a Tale that is Told* (1993) is also enormously reliant on forms of oral history and of engaging varying foci of subaltern agency and domination. It also broadly covers a similar periodisation, and is also focused on the Highveld. It is, however, about a collection, rather than an individual shaman-opper. Hofmeyr is therefore concerned with broader patterns of oral historical narrative and with the nature and form of orality, literacy and intellectual meanings of the past in range of forums, including those of memory, manuscript and monument.

The study provides three criteria thresholds against which the wider study of anxiety and literacy in Mokoapan or Vellyn is explored". Rather than drawing the local

[illegible]

like the general (Karl Marx) standing for the existence of 'intercepting and Mainfr's
experience that of South African history and long (Helmreich) of literary literature
relevance and literary texts to be sought in the details of each particular context.
Thus, state or governmental bureaucracies, schooling and religion were 'totalised' in
important ways, where the platform and various agents within it, both controlled,
appropriated and transformed the meanings of writing and of identity. In other
situations, though, opposing notions of literacy and orality provided metaphorical
backs of images through which both historical life and political life [were]
concentrated and acted upon, as in the cases of legitimizing chiefly rule and of
engaging forced removals. Thus a central argument is that while it was overall the
'barbed wire' representative of the 'literary' interventions that urged the spoken word, the
interweaving and confrontations between orality and literacy, and of the oral
performance politics of chiefdoms and the control of literary institutions, was a major
source of political conflict on test (ignoring (Helmreich 1991: 9-15; Chs 2 & 3).

Hofmeyr's work moves significantly beyond the boundaries of racial history in her analysis of the form and power of language in shaping meaning and determining whatever subject positions in a South African society. Equally, she demonstrates the importance of new theoretical insights around concerns with language, intellectual histories and identity formation. These contributions of form and various technologies of the intellect, although emphasised as within particular acts of social and political violence and struggle, of homophobia, gender and place, for example, are also engaged by Hofmeyr as within the constitutive and 'cognitive' nature of language. The implications this has for subjectivity, agency and popular and political consciousness are variously explored in the book as are the relationships and entanglements between memory, tradition and history in the construction of local meanings, power and identity in the negotiations of past and present.

Two aspects stand out in Hoffmeyer's account. The first is the reflexive nature of the presentation. There is a conscious attempt to continually define her position as author and researcher, the narratives of her informants and the existence of differing views in a manner that is explained on the page¹¹. Her result is an engagement with history and memory that allows several different but interrelated themes to unfold, while the meanings and terms of their construction also remain visible, and part of the process of history making. This also means that, secondly, Hoffmeyer is able to challenge notions of tradition and of modernity. For example, through an analysis that situates 'oral' and 'written' worlds in differing cultural and intellectual contexts, or the process the very notions of modernity and tradition are rendered problematic, and once pushed through the different categories of reality and history, tradition becomes visible as

It should be noted that the emphases of the book contribute largely segments of the response to this significant part of the overall work. Impact of the main analysis and more serious implications are taken by these authors, albeit at a distance. A. the generalization that a social organization can be made to be (or should be) significant is clearly indicated.

lived modestly, and as complex and changeable. Her work also shows how 'the traditions of modernity' are equally present as variously violent, exclusive and conditional, not taken for granted and interdependent in settler and chiefdom worlds. At the same time, the nuanced interweaving of concepts makes problematic any easy or simple dichotomous conceptions of nationalism and political reconstruction.

It is to these concerns of 'orality' and 'literacy' as the central organising concepts of the book that we wish to draw attention. Hofmeyr demonstrates that any interaction between orality and literacy (rather than using notions of explanation between tradition and modernity) needs to be sought in the details of each particular context and that the impact of literacy has no automatic consequence and cannot be predicted. As the case studies illuminate, the relationship between the spoken and the written was simultaneously complexly interwoven in practice and symbolically ambivalent in the idea of orality (supposedly for tradition) and that of literacy (supposedly for the modern). She argues, though, that by the 1960s, historical tales had been transformed under social and political pressures, but also by the combination of oral and written historical accounts. In this context, and within the substantive changes between male and female, and between historical and fictional storytelling, the 'radical attribution of memory' has currently taken place alongside the amplification of a previously marginalised and patronised craft of storytelling.

Hofmeyr thus provides a rich and nuanced account of the ways in which words – spoken and written – have changed and woven, but also of the ways they are socially constructed and undergo line-shifting of change, decline, attrition and amplification. She might 'glue the social conditions that control text and audience', but also shows that attention to material structure is necessary to revealing the substance of ideas. Different, modernised traditions (of history and nation) and the different and changing meanings of the past, detailed in different dominant and subaltern, and modernist and nationalist accounts. Thus, for example, she is able to combine text and context in an exploration of the production of local or 'indigenous' forms of knowledge in the Mthembu or Viliya chiefdoms through looking at local historical tradition dealing with the story of the cave of Ukwazi (the story of Makamagazi in 1851). She argues that these historical tales are drawn from 'an intellectual tradition underpinning chiefdom' and not 'complex investigations into the meaning of chiefdom as a system of political authority and as a symbol of the entire social order' but also that the interaction between oral and written accounts of the story, and between chiefly and settler accounts were by no means separate entities. They influenced each other in significant ways so that the 'near distinction between chiefdom and settler civilisation is not possible' (Hofmeyr 1994: 14).

There is a clear, though not fully, an oral tradition history documents were based on oral tradition. Equally, chiefly accounts of the story were based on oral tradition fragments from the written accounts. In terms of their cultural function and purposes, the oral tradition accounts were more 'historical' in nature.

They may have also changed in relation to the changing functions of the chiefdom, and in

relation to the changes in the production, form and content of the storytelling. The story of the South African past, then, which draws on Hofmeyr's approach to social history and subalternity, is also much more nuanced and interconnected than previously imagined, and the possibilities of a radical nationalist break in academic history production is equally rendered as problematic if her work is held up as a model.

Focused through the concepts of orality and literacy, then, Hofmeyr's study has significant other implications. Not only does she suggest the need to attend to the quality of all written sources,¹¹ and thus the entire documentary bias that still ranks the written over the spoken in history, but also that to explore subaltern memory, identity and agency requires new cultural contexts and forms of analysis where language, translation and the 'evidence of experience' are engaged as material, social and narrative constructs. Thus, she says,

while there has been a lot of work in this area on orality's oral informed and oral sharing has meant to more testimony for its 'local' without paying much attention to the forms of interpretation and mediation of traditions that inform these 'facts' (Hofmeyr 1994: 8).

A third very different work that examines the tensions of race is that of Tim Keegan's *Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order* (1996). While Hofmeyr's work is situated in the meeting ground between text and context and between that of orality and literacy – and between social history and literary studies – and Van Onselen's between the structure and agency of 'history from below', Keegan's study sets out, explicitly to synthesise revolutionary writing on nineteenth century South Africa in opposition to liberal historiography. Keegan's book has a number of strengths and as the best syntheses are, is strikingly original. It traces 'the origins of modern SA racism and the racial state into the early period of integration of the Cape and the British Empire, re-assesses the relationships between Dutch slavery and British colonialism, tracks regional and imperial dimensions that have not been previously explored and compared, and reviews conventional interpretations of such key moments as the Great Trek. Here, for example, he presents a strong argument, backed with evidence, to show the deep involvement of leading English-speaking settlers in producing what are conventionally regarded as Afrikaner apologues for the Trek. This is breathtakingly daring! Moreover, the liberal tradition is revealed as not only being, long-faced, but as deeply embedded within the violent construction of racialised and subaltern subjects.

At the same time, however, Keegan's work reflects so much the tension of this kind of synthesis, it is largely a 'history from above'. It is about how the structures of dominance of accumulation, the colonial state and settler society were developed and how these structures of dominance necessarily and inevitably shaped the subaltern.

¹¹ Hofmeyr (1994: 130) gave 12 pages of discussion in relation to oral history in South Africa in two important papers.

agency of white officers, trekboers, administrators, politicians and intellectuals and the racialised structures of agency.

It is no criticism to say that what the book also highlights are the relative strengths of nineteenth century accounts of aboriginal and 'indigenous' agency in the construction of colonial society. In this sense, while Keegan's book suggests and explores the competing agendas for using power and the competing strategies for gaining and maintaining control of the colonial racial order, as well as the differing ways in which 'ravage or settle, subjects became equals or enemies', the related absence of engagement with these identified as 'the colonised' is problematic. Keesen Atkins' (1993) work on colonial Natal, for example, argues that a distinctly African work culture influenced and constrained the apparently dominant work culture of developing capitalism at this time. This made for a colonial encounter that was always contested, moving, and changeable, and not only for the colonised but also the colonisers. Hamilton's (1993: 231) work on Sierra also points to the 'historically conditioned dialectic of intertextuality between "western" models of historical discourse and indigenous facilities of narrative'. As Graustein (1993: 226) has argued further, for him 'this means amongst a range of arguments that colonialism is not a separate entity that simply acts upon indigenous societies and forms colonial subjects, but one that is either itself implicated in and inspired by indigenous voices, and vice versa. Equally struggles, trajectories and the 'indies' are formed by various engagements that interact, co-exist and modify each other, and cannot be seen as either autonomous agents or subjects simply defined 'from above' or 'from below'.

There is a further problem that the synthesis seemed structure apparent in Keegan's *Colonial Wars* highlights, when read in conjunction with works like that of Helen Bradford's *Women, Gender and Colonialism*: the problem of gender-blindness or 'white-centrism'. It is not good enough to argue that a

general history would pay at least as much attention to the role as to the rights of women as men. This book is more piled with shattering forces, with the forces of imperialism and colonialism, and less so with the peoples who experienced their effects. There is given greater attention to the powerful, than the powerless, the colonisers than the colonized, to men than to women. It tends to seem to some that the perspectives and worldviews of dominant nations seem to come out of the perspective and worldviews of dominant nations, and the powerless ... offer no manner, as the investigation of structures and events of profound significance (Bradford 1990: xiii).

Bradford has demonstrated just how different time, power and structure might be analysed when the agencies and relations of gender are taken necessarily seriously.

A similar set of criticisms apply to Van Onselen's biography. Despite Terry Ranger's (1997: 384) praise of it as a 'landmark in African gender studies'. Yes, the

is discussion of 'family' and of 'women', but there is very little on marriage, sexuality and child-rearing that crosses beyond the discursive, or the silence of 'memory' and the acceptance of particular forms of agency as representative of those it was for women. Although's work is very different. The important focus on gendered aspects of space, storytelling and intellectual traditions are just part of a much wider frame of engagement with the agencies of gender in her work. In the process agency becomes very more problematic, part of the necessary work of place and the politics of identity. However, as Bradford and others (e.g. Bezall; Maponya; Van Der Spuy; Marais; Marikany) have argued, and despite significant historiographical interventions that have demonstrated the importance of these agencies and structures of gender relations, South African social history remains markedly androcentric in many respects.

the retreat to examining 'whiteness'

Captured under a broad sense of retreat, a growing number of white historians have in the 1990s increasingly focused on the theme of 'whiteness'. This has a number of dimensions. In the first place, it was a theme in which early revisionism drew water from

White identity has been a history of culture, conquest and class struggle, and essential to the development of leading white classes—(French, mine owners, and industrialists)—has been the establishment of a continuous white community. These white communities and people are against such... though it has clear historical and objective roots, it is also an ideology and actual force which has had a bearing on the development of the country (1983: 12).

Equally, it represents a defensive response to more recent developments. One aspect, reflected in critiques by a range of black intellectuals and academics, has relation to the question of who speaks for whom and that 'Africans need to be able to speak for themselves'. The failure to reflect on and rethink the implications of the practice of history by predominantly white historians and the associated conceptual incoherency regarding who are accused of reproducing the power relations in the larger society to their practices and methods of research 'from below' has facilitated this retreat. It seems safer to have white subjects as objects of study, than to negotiate the varying forms of power and knowledge production that are commonly so readily recognised.

Others, faced with the politics of racialisation and a perceived decline in radicalism in the period of transition have interpreted ideas of 'forgetting the past' to mean a shift away from explicitly political history and the new wary anxieties this entailed. For this reason, the 1980s politics of history, of the mission of popularisation

¹ This is based on a very particular reading of gender relations, from a disciplinary commitment to a brief history. Not only does it appear to equate gender with 'womanhood' and 'sex' to equate gender studies with the existence of 'women' as such and bounded categories' but as historical agents in this sense.

² This was a theme often reflected in the Natal gender conference in 1991. See also Legassick (1992).

³ N. Mendebebe (1994: 96) (p. 105, 1995).

has given way in some circles to a more cultural and introspective historical engagement with the relative security of 'whiteness'.

Thirdly, there has been the influence of post-colonial studies, read in a relatively narrow sense as a space for the re-examination with the pasts of colonial and racial South Africa, and particularly with the ways that racial ideas of dominance were formed, articulated and displaced. This far-inward, in some instances, a relatively unimaginative focus on the agents and agencies of white race and racial discourses, without any conscious dealing with the construction of the 'whiteness' of such agents.

Strikingly absent from this recent work, in fact, has been attention to the questions of 'whiteness' as race and as social construction. Few studies have sought to measure the very racial hierarchies of whiteness. To speak of 'whiteness' in this sense means more than just a focus on race or on how white people thought of their relationships with black people or men, for example. It rather refers to a set of notions for race historically, socially, politically and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination.¹⁷ Naming whiteness should also displace it from the unmarked, unmarked status that is itself an effect of domination.

Among the effects on white people both of race privilege and of the experience of whiteness are their seeming 'normality', but structural neo-Britishness (1990: viii).

This is so because whiteness has come to be more than race: it appears to embody objectivity, normality, truth, knowledge, merit, motivation, achievement and respectability. It accumulates invisible aspects that contribute to acknowledged in the already accumulated and bolstered capital of whiteness. These contexts are not being systematically explored within this move to 'whiteness' by South African historians – or only to a limited degree and in very particular circumstances, mostly implicitly, and read through a binary opposition to 'blackness'.

Among the work that has moved in this direction is that on the construction of Afrikaner nationalism, particularly that focussing on women (although here the emphasis is on 'Africanness' rather than 'whiteness'), by Dan O'Meara, Isabel Hofmeyr, Elsabe Brink, Marijke du Toit; work on the critique of liberalism by Paul Richman aspects of colonialism and Apartheid by Clifton Craess, Tim Krieger, Andrew Davis; and on the re-examination of apartheid by Aletta Norval. What is especially lacking is systematic examination of the history of the construction of 'whiteness' among English speaking whites. Clive Derby-Lewis, murderer of Chris Hani, for example, was involved with the Stellan Krommard movement after the infamous Col Sturges, the SAAP member who chaired the 1922 Transvaal Local Government Commission which recommended that black presence could be tolerated in the towns only to serve the needs of

¹⁷ It was the case, for example, with the number of the papers of the UWC, considered on particular colonialism, January 1997.

Marion Egan and from Monday

whites. Sturges, an MP from 1920 to 1948 and leader of the Dominion Party between 1923 and 1929, was a graduate of Oxford and a pillar of the church: a

Victorian in the best sense of the word. A soldier, lawyer, politician, patriot and statesman he maintained a rigid code of life in which self-discipline and integrity were dominant features.

What examination of this white masculine – WASP – tradition has there for been made by today's so-called WASP historians?

where are the black historians?

In their analysis of the tradition of radical history, Bezza and Dolan (1990: 6) comment that 'black historians and social scientists have been few in number'. They blame this largely on the 'misery and ideologically loaded provisions of black education', including the 'tribal colleges' where conservative Afrikaner historians exerted a stabilizing influence. They point out also that black intellectuals have to some extent been excluded from libraries and archives, and inhibited from publishing.

This stabilizing context helped ensure that the genres of autobiography, fiction, journalism, photography and historical fiction were near the most common means through which the Black intellectual has found its voice.

Writing in 1990, they however conclude optimistically that 'within the next decade, it seems certain that the racial composition of South African historians will undergo a marked change'.¹⁸

From the perspective of 1997, it seems that they were unduly optimistic. While there may be more black postgraduate history students, the numbers of black history staff members at universities does not seem to have altered dramatically. Surveying the country, what one notices more than anything is an absence of black historians. Why is this? Specifically, how far does this fact remain a product of white

¹⁸ 'Apartheid history Lawrence from Ashbury to Sturges, 1966/1971. Sturges was born 21/5/1871. 13/7/1971. He served Sturges 1966/1971. Cape Town 11/6/1971. Born in 1871, he served in South Africa with the military in the South African war of 1899-1902 and was injured. In the 1960s he was still in a high-ranked position but brought into a medical retirement on his farm Hopewood in Ladysmith by a nervous breakdown. He died of a heart attack. In view of this his reported comment is interesting. "Civilisation and something more in the big water from a tap". Shortly before his death Dr. Engler reported that he was bitter to long extend over the years of the British Kelt, and by the way that the British Empire was being "brought". He was bitterly disappointed over the collapse of the British Empire which he attributed to Harold Wilson and the "moral movement".

¹⁹ For other comments on the absence of black historians see, for example, Pienaar (1988:1999), Weyers (1991), and Roussouw (1994: 65).

racism' Mahmood Mamour (1997), reviewing William Mxgoba's book on Wits, writes:

... colonial power does not easily tolerate the development of a native intelligentsia ... Post-apartheid South Africa ... has a vibrant, active intelligentsia, but that intelligentsia is, for the most part, to be found in the academy. Conversely, the academy is one of the most racialised institutions in South African society ... as much as being business, the arts of Science is that while big business is sensitive to this fact, universities are not. The university is generally insensitive, considering that inevitable consequence of the pursuit of excellence.

Do there remain pressures to exclude black historians from the academy?

On the other hand, to what extent is it a matter of choices. Historically, for whites, a career in the university has offered far fewer rewards than in business (or the civil service): it has been a case of 'madness' (or having an axe to grind) that has created white academics. Equally, for the black graduate in post-apartheid society the opportunities in business offer far greater rewards. Beyond that, activists of the 1980s, seeking to 'serve the community', find more productive outlets in national, provincial, or local government. At UWC we find the best third year history students tend to move to development studies to do honours. Two anecdotes. A postgraduate history student at UWC was interested in doing his M.A. on the reasons for the paucity of black historians. In 1995 he was elected to the Tygerberg council from Khayelitsha. He has become a statistic for his own anecdotal research!! Even closer to home, a vocal participant in the seminar to which these papers were initially given, black historian Tshidiso Moloka, has left UCT to become an adviser to Gauteng premier Moshabela.

To evaluate reasons for the absence of black historians one would need in the first place to establish the postgraduate pool from which black history staff could have been recruited and then discover the reasons why they have not been. Over the 1980s, for example, there have been several black interviewers associated with the Oral History project at the University of the Witwatersrand, yet they have not continued in history. One wonders why not? Even such a survey would not be sufficient. There are the questions of how the postgraduate pool is selected and how it selects itself.

One wonders, too, how far it is the syndrome of the 'uncompleted revolution'—the lack of radical change in the face of the expectations of radical change. In the 1960s and 1970s black South African social scientists such as Archie Mafeje (1971; 1988) and Ben Magalane (1977) had a project: combating colonialist notions of 'tribalism' and 'pluralism'. Where is the equivalent project today? There appear to be very few black historians championing a nationalist rewriting of South African history. Where are the historiographic equivalents of such 'Africanists' as Thabo Mafurwa (in journalism) or Mzi KJumalo (in business)?

A cursory survey of papers to the recent SASS conference in Pretoria (July 1997) reveals 15 and a half (one joint) papers by blacks, out of 56 delivered (27.5%)—probably higher than has been the case in the past.¹ For the first time we have not seen the papers themselves—suggest detailed localised studies rather than significant reinterpretations. In the Western Cape, a significant pole of attraction for black historians (and social scientists more generally) appears to be the reinterpretation of coloured identity, though others have also turned away from nationalism as equally from social history to pursue topics such as media history, the study of representations and geography.

the new official public history

If there has been any 'break' in the production of history since 1994, it has been in the public sphere. This has broadly entailed two seemingly contradictory processes. On the one hand there is the relative silencing of history, perhaps more particularly social history, in the schools as the result of Curriculum 2005 which dissolves history into the 'Curriculum and Social Sciences Learning Area' for grades 1–9. On the other hand, there is the presentation of a 'new history' in both institutional premises at the TRC or the Robben Island Museum. Simultaneously this 'new history' has also become visible in the growth of political biography in a range of forms, including film or television. Yet the one major television attempt to produce a comprehensive visual history of South Africa, in 26 one-hour episodes, with significant revisionist intent, by a company called Phila, collapsed, apparently sabotaged by a black nationalist reaction.²

We will mainly focus here on aspects of the drama of the TRC, and on the moment of the opening of the Robben Island Museum, in order to illustrate our argument. The TRC has been seen to reflect a massive official recording of counter-memories in apartheid's ending, for the first time. This apparent new history generated through the TRC relies primarily on personal memory and the telling of reminiscence to counter what are seen as official and documentary 'black holes' in South African history. The TRC is therefore seen to be a vehicle for the new histories and everyday stories of ordinary South Africans to be told, of revealing new pains, submerged underneath systemic racism and apartheid.

The TRC's public relationship to the past has been complex and changing over time in the period of its existence. It is itself seen as a historical event or series of changing events, and has unfolded around dramatic hearings which mark these differences and changes over time. At the same time the TRC has also been periodically identified as a significant producer of new South African official and public histories.

¹ Even so, the total number of papers given is certainly lower than in the past and may be at stake.

² See Memo from Phil Bogan and André Oudart to the Historical Commission for 'The Film History, 10–11/1995, "A new official revision of history", *Southern Voice* 26/3/1995.

² On these issues see for example Nkomo (1994) and Bhebe (1997).

The TRC thus constitutes a moment and a space where the field of history appears to be open to reinterpretation and meaning. Clearly the TRC has many different parts with different meanings and implications for history production. Giving testimony and participating in the public space of the hearings does provide a profound sense of 'giving voice' to previously marginal and silenced accounts of the apartheid past. In important respects these activities elevate subaltern accounts into those of society as a whole. These accounts then have the potential to break down divisions between subaltern and elite accounts, particularly where those divisions are drawn in racial terms. In this sense the TRC served to directly open up public historical discourse to members of formerly oppressed communities in ways that also move beyond the institutional sites of professional historical production.

The official collection of personal testimony within the TRC also provides for the construction of a national archive of subaltern experience on a scale that is enormously significant for the future production of history. Here people have spoken about their own historical initiatives and meanings as active historical agents in a past that will potentially attain the fullness of a national history. Official, public and academic relationships to this archive and understandings of this national history will however vary.

At the outset of the TRC, the media depicted the TRC as performing the larger role of new national and subaltern historian. 'From the outset, the principal aim of the commission has been to unearth South Africa's hidden history during the three decades which followed the banning of the liberation movements', said *Business Day*. Other newspapers produced similar interpretations. The TRC, they claimed would now 'tell the whole story' in the 'search for truth' by incorporating previously 'silenced voices'. This would open up the rewriting of South African history in ways which will 'set [ordinary black people] free from the prisons of uncertainty in which the ghastly events of the past have confined them for too long'. The TRC at the outset, then, was seen to represent

South Africa's real history ... it's most important: look at the past painful 30 years ... After the first time, all South Africa has the opportunity to learn the unremembered truth about its history.²

Through its collection of testimony at the various hearings around the country, history was being primarily rewritten through 'devastating testimony', 'police brutality tales',

² *Business Day*, 12/1/1996, 1/5/1996; *Cape Press* 1996; *Mail and Guardian* 10/1/1996, 1996; 1/5/1996; *Sunday Times* 1/5/1996; *Sunday Independent* 12/1/1996; *Sunday Star* 10/1/1996. For example, 'The South African SAHR provided extensive coverage of the TRC, and a number of similar television channels, oral programs and new often well insured, voices to give a sense of the impact of the TRC and its promises to reveal the truth and to achieve national reconciliation' (Klein, 2000).

'speaking the unspeakable', through ordinary words. The range of codes and modes is unusually explicit and normative in these accounts: 'hidden', 'ordinary', oral, marginal, real, objective and 'new' - told and heard for the first time. There is more than a historicists' take here to the explanations of social history 'from below', but in a way which simultaneously ignores the existing contributions of this social historiography to having already detailed important aspects of this so-called hidden history. Instead the public and official spaces of the TRC are represented as the key sites for the emergence of this new history at this time.

This early representation of the TRC hearings and activities as the new 'real' and 'hidden' history, though, also needs to be qualified in various ways. The TRC itself has explicitly argued it will be 'telling a history of a certain kind' which was to 'capture the perspectival nuances of the drama [of human rights violations]' in as 'comprehensive an account as possible'.³ The TRC's framework is the period 1960-1994 and its focus, then, is not simply the entire past of this period, but to obtain

as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights committed during the period ... emanating from the conflict of the past.⁴

This 'history of a certain kind' is also influenced by the concern of 'promoting national unity and reconciliation in a spirit of understanding which transcends the conflicts and divisions of the past'.⁵ This meant that the TRC accounts of the past would need to acknowledge '... some kind of compromise between those who want amnesia - to forget the past - and those who are saying "let us have revenge, let's hit back"'.⁶ All these are constraints on the TRC's mode of representation of the past.

Over the period of the TRC's existence there have been a range of further contexts which have influenced a range of changing focuses of attention from within the TRC, imposing further such constraints. These have involved families of victims, perpetrators, political parties, legal and judicial challenges and 'outsider' critiques and refusals of active participation in the process. The shift of TRC and public attention from victim to amnesty hearings, recently highlighted by the Winnie Mandela and PW Botha cases, has also meant a shift from ordinary narratives of the past to more legal, interrogative and status 'top-down' accounts which are increasingly concerned with conspiracy, silence and evasion about the past. This seems a far call from the initial media conceptions which celebrated hidden histories of ordinary people telling the whole story.

Most particularly for our concerns here, this means that the potential to 'fill

³ Caroline Villa-Venanzo, 'Structural Research in TRC Workday 1996', April 1996.

⁴ International National Unity and Reconciliation Act, *Government Gazette* 25 July 1995/2.

⁵ *TRC Regional Workshops Documented 1*.

⁶ Archbishop Desmond Tutu, *Workday 20/21 January* (1996).

version of framing and constructing a new national history from within the TRC is open to very different versions and subject to a range of interpretations and possibilities. Despite these tensions and futures, however, the TRC has continued to be identified as a key official site and publicly represented body which will frame and construct a new national history. The history of the TRC and the versions of history presented within the TRC are multilayered as much they are unfinished. It is therefore appropriate, in this context, to suggest that the TRC enables two further contradictory processes to become apparent. On the one hand it already provides a moment, or series of moments from the public outside, where we can gather

held up to view the always ambiguous and always incomplete relationship among sites and moments of production of historical knowledge, the sites, events and experiences represented in that knowledge, and the texts whereby those productions of knowledge become available to inspection (Gibson 1994:xxx).

But, and this is a significant qualifier, the forms of official and public history-making being aired and through and around the TRC, and in other arenas of public history around museums, monuments, heritage and tourism, as exemplified by the Robben Island Museum, for example, simultaneously appear to be much less about these anthropologies, localities and range of sites and productions. Here, the face of history continues to appear as much more narrow, more contained and more directed into the particular domains of re-fashioning modernity, narrating the new nation, re-writing the past as reconciliation and re-defining citizenship. What might this version of the past look like?

Consider the recent opening of the Robben Island Museum on Heritage Day. The dominant image was one of an address by Mandela against the backdrop of five faces from left to right: Govan Mbeki, Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko, Robert Sobukwe and Walter Sisulu. The *Cape Times* caption accompanying the photograph (which was also the dominant television image) read:

Shaped in Struggle. Let us confront ourselves to the ideals in our Constitution – ideals which were shaped in the struggles here on Robben Island and in the greater prison which was apartheid.

Linked to the image were two headlines: 'Stop Distorting our People as Lesser Beings' and 'Mandela's stark racist message'. The editorial report, though, despite these headlines, had a more tranquil message – that 'with democracy [Mandela said] we have the opportunity to create for our children and reflect history in a way that respects the heritage of all citizens'.⁴

⁴ *Cape Times* 20 September 1997. TV coverage, 24 September 1997.

During the years of apartheid, Mandela continued, 'people responded to the denial and distortion of their heritage with their own affirmations – as indeed Afrikaners had done in an earlier period'. Others worked 'the history of their communities into everyday artefacts'; others celebrated 'their heritage outside of the country's museums and monuments, in song and in ceremony, in festivals and in rituals, in the selling of their wares and in buying items associated with their heritage'. Here, history as heritage was apparently cleansed of the history of resistance, in the words of the primary symbol of resistance in South Africa! Elsewhere local historians sought to insert 'their history' into the new Robben Island Museum. The District Six Museum, representing 'all the people who experienced forced removals' drew out 'the strands of our heritage' by tracing ex-District Six residents who had been imprisoned or associated with the Island as part 'of the same story' of Robben Island being nationally imagined on Heritage Day. Still elsewhere, in the Castle, various symbols and reflections of the colonial past, which visually could have been mistaken for the meeting of the dinosaurs of the Natural History and the Cultural History Museums (from the uniforms of civilized violence to the criticised nakedness of tribes) took place in a spirit of 'our multicultural and multilingual society'. These traditional, pre new South Africa, apartheid South African images of the past thus became visibly and publicly part of the way that the Robben Island Museum could 'respect the heritage of all our citizens' (as Mandela said).

Of course, there are multiple strands to these depictions; we wish to emphasise only a few here. The claiming of the heritage of Robben Island as the 'prison of apartheid' under the watchful gaze of an elderly male leadership is significant. Its portrayal of national figures of resistance and of symbolic leadership as being a relationship between 1990 in nationalism traces a particular fictive map of the new nation. Under the guardianship of this experienced leadership, representing and standing up for 'the people' in the 'prison of apartheid', a model is provided to 'shrink off the chains of the past'⁵ and to embrace the heritage of citizenship on an equal footing, 'not as lesser human beings'.⁶ At the same time the violence of apartheid, as symbolised most dramatically by Steve Biko,⁷ is presented as part of collective experience of the five men: they know (and knew) and they symbolise the brutality of the apartheid past and resistance to it. The fact that Biko was never imprisoned on the

⁴ *Cape Times* and *Cape Argus* 24-25 September (1997). Televised coverage 24 September 1997.

⁵ A. Odendaal, Interim Director of the RIM, *Cape Times* 24 September (1997).

⁶ Nelson Mandela in his Heritage Day speech at the opening of the Robben Island Museum, *Cape Times* 25 September (1997).

⁷ Steve Biko was also symbolically important in representing the violence of apartheid through the almost simultaneous TRC amnesty hearings detailing his torture and murder at the time, as well as when taken together with his also current public memoirs on the 1980s (Cape Times) as a symbol.

between the Biko and Solomwe represent different political traditions, is forgotten through the promotion of this kind of national unity. It is a unity, a national re-orientation and national agency framed by national reconciliation. This version of past and heritage of struggle lays emphasis on perpetrators and victims in the prison of apartheid, and draws lines between good and evil as symbolically contained and 'exonerated' in the new figure of power. The leaders *would* represent the people; the majority; their experiences those of the majority, their prison that of apartheid, and their sense of the they, you past and reconciled present encapsulating the 'new democracy' and its markers of citizenship and the new nation.

At the same time it is these official knowledges and memorialisations – in a new sense of occupancy and definition of 'the public' – that are being marked as the 'real' place of 'black history' as against 'the kind of heritage that glorified mainly white and colonial history'. In this respect, this public history speaks for the 'innocent majority, unable to speak English and unversed in the language of politics',¹ as well as for the histories and participants in apartheid resistance and conflict. It is a history relevant much more on a public rewriting than it is on an academic one. And this is so despite the role of such key institutions as the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture. Set up to focus on 'all aspects of apartheid, resistance, social life and culture in South Africa' at the University of the Western Cape in 1991, and incorporating the visual and archival holdings of IDAF (Intermarinial Defence and Aid Fund), it has subsequently played a central role in the planning and implementation of the Robben Island Museum as well as in various forums of historical production in the 'new' South Africa'. This production, though meant to focus on hidden histories, and recover hidden parts of resistance and so-called agency, has tended to disavow academic history production as marginal and to significantly facilitate the generation of a new official national history along the lines elaborated above.

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¹ Nelson Mandela, Heritage Day speech, Cape Town 25 September 1997.

² Haphazard Notes from a Rethinking session, 29 April-3 May 1997.

³ Cf. *Comment* UWC, Vol. 3, No. 16, 22-23 July 1997. Mayibuye Centre Journal Reports 1995, 1997-2000 in particular, and Legassick 2000 for more detail on text.

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Alex la Guma's Politics and Aesthetics

Ἰεζουάνι ἑκ' αὐτῶν:

Alexis Khamu persistently reiterated his belief that the situation in South Africa was bound to change and that it would, hopefully be part of a 'post-apartheid South Africa'. His socialist and nationalist 'post-apartheid' vision is summed up in the following words taken from his last published article written under the pseudonym 'Khamu':

Can we not look into the future and see the barriers fallen away under the banner-flows of progress as our people, having emerged victorious over racist tyranny, national oppression, ethnic or community divisions, converge to build a new life? Can we not dare to bring within the horizon of our community Marx's and Engels's even stronger vision of the world of the future: "... something under the warm sun of the equality of all peoples, a more flame, art and literature of the temple of our shared power will blossom among us. South Africa is ours; we shall be read in South African literature, not what is described today as history from law. (from South Africa or South African Writing) (Cass 1988:42).

Regrettably La Grana was not able to witness the realisation of his dream for a non-racial and democratic South Africa, albeit achieved not through a revolution but by way of a negotiated settlement. He died of a heart attack in Havana, Cuba, in 1985 at the age of 60. A sense of the contribution he made to international and South African culture and politics can be gained from the honours he received before his death.

¹ I am indebted to Brian Butler who informed me about Le Guin's pseudonym, 'velia', which he explained was derived from the author's name and surname. Using this information, I was able to deduce Le Guin's place of residence: The Wood End of

[illegible]

புள்ளி: 1499

The Soviet President, awarded La Guma, the Order of Friendship; the Republic of Congo gave him the President Ngoussu Literary Prize; the French Ministry of Culture awarded him the much coveted title of Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres; and the Soviet Writers Union set a special evening to pay tribute to him and to celebrate the publication of what is now a million copies of his selected works (Lithuanian 1991:14).

This catalogue of achievements marks the recognition of La Guma's political and cultural development and underlines the need for a modern study of his legacy.

There is a general agreement amongst critics on the existence of a close relationship between Alex la Guma's politics and his fictional writing. Yet there are different opinions amongst them on whether this relationship strengthens or weakens his work. One, on the one hand, there are commentators who have embraced La Guma as a revolutionary writer whose works justifiably furthered the ideological ends of the Movement while, on the other hand, there are those critics who have been somewhat sceptical of the aesthetic merit of such politically informed literature. The most significant of the latter critics, Njabulo Ndebele (1991: 83), who has in a number of essays taken issue with South African literature that has 'farmed itself in the field of politics', has, for example, aligned La Guma with what he calls 'the tradition of spectacle' – the exponent of which he has accused of being guilty of 'the dramatic politicisation of creative writing' (Ndebele 1991: 96). It could, however, be argued that in using La Guma as an exemplar of the spectacular tradition, Ndebele seems to have overlooked the fact that La Guma was influenced by an equally significant but, naturally, different aesthetic tradition from the largely liberal/Aristotelian – one that wants to inform literary aesthetics of the ordinary, if specifically this 'drainative tradition which La Guma presents that this essay attempts to recuperate.

rediscovering a tradition

In a paper read at the First Pan-African Festival in 1975, a paper which the organizers of the African Renaissance Conference in present day North Africa might find useful, I. A. G. K. Guma

of Fata. Kogeleit-Pudenz (1984: 9) summarizes Kogeleit's argument that at the time of his death, '... many were working on *From the Mouth of Death* and were going so far to indicate that the title came from the Greek ... But he never did say publicly that it came from the mouth of the *Zulu* epic hero, Nkomo. Only the closely identified Zulu poet, Mphahlele (1921-2005) explains why this novel had been planned from a very early stage: though chapters had been written, it was abandoned. Mphahlele had written to him that he was working on it, and it was not a surprise that this went with the story of his writing it on a trip to the United States. He had written the novel, but it was not published' (p. 10).

Figure 10. A good example of the contraction of the terminal end of the Garter snake with the tail. Movement of the terminal end of the body from the head to the tail is 1988-1990. The distance is 100 cm. (Adapted from Figure 10 of Figure 10)

emphasised the need for cultural workers to reclaim the African cultural heritage and urged the liberated African countries to ensure that everyone had access to education because, in his words, '[k]nowledge is the weapon in the struggle for human emancipation' (La Guma 1973:99). Although La Guma uses 'Africanist' terms, the central thrust of his argument is, nevertheless, not at odds with his Marxist beliefs. The notion of education that La Guma seems to have had in mind here is what Norman Geras (1986:139) has called 'the education of the proletariat' (i.e.) in terms of which 'the proletariat transforms and educates itself in the process of its revolutionary struggle to overthrow the capitalist society'. This process of self-education of the proletariat, Geras (1986:138) is quick to point out, 'in no way contradicts the Marxist theory of the party'. La Guma is speaking from his position as a member of the Communist Party, as an 'organic intellectual' (in the Gramscian sense) who is supposed to provide guidance to the working class. For La Guma there was no contradiction regarding the reciprocal relationship between the working class and the party on behalf of which he wrote and organised:

The main distinguishing feature of a true democratic cultural revolution is its mass, nation-wide character. The strength and vitality of the revolution is derived from the awakened creative energy of the masses and their aspirations for new life, enlightenment and culture. Real progress cannot be decreed from above. Living creative progress is the product of the masses themselves. We must raise the lowest sections of the population to the level of making history (La Guma 1973:95).

In these words, La Guma not only made clear his belief in the pivotal role of culture in the struggle for liberation, but also summed up what may be regarded as the guiding principle of his revolutionary philosophy throughout his life. For not only did La Guma, as a cultural worker, attempt to ensure that 'the lowest sections of the population [are] raise[d] to the state of making history' by way of his writings, but, in his role as a political activist, he also identified with the interests of (and fought on behalf of) this constituency in his unwavering dedication to the liberation struggle in South Africa. For La Guma 'the lowest section of the population' is undoubtedly the proletarian masses, a fact which not only becomes obvious in the working class bias of most of his novels but also has a great deal to do with the influence of his father². Although La

² For Marx and Lenin, the party is nothing other than the instrument of the working class, its own organisation for struggle: it is not, for them, yet another external agent of liberation above or superior to the masses' (Geras 1986:139).

³ La Guma appears to share the Lukácsian conception that 'the fate of the revolution depends upon the ideological maturity of the working class' (Fishy 1983:86).

Guma informs us that both his parents were politically conscious people, it was largely his father's political activities which influenced his social and political outlook. Against this background, then, one cannot look at La Guma's culture and political development without examining his father's role in the South African liberation struggle.

James La Guma was a member of the ANC since the 1920s, the South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO) in the 1950s, a member of the UCLU in 1919 and by 1926 its permanent secretary. His commitment to working class interests was, however, not confined to his involvement in the activities of the UCLU. La Guma was a member of the Communist Party, South Africa (CPSA), a party which was formed in 1921, which he joined in 1925 and was in the executive of the party by 1926 as well as the secretary of the Non-European Federation of Trade Unions in 1928, in addition to his position as secretary of the ANC branch in Cape Town. Jack and Ray Simons (1983:267) describe him as 'one of the first coloured radicals to abandon the concept of liberalism for Marxist theory and class struggle'.

La Guma was elected to attend the International Congress of the League Against Imperialism and for National Independence as a representative of the Party in Brussels, Belgium, in 1927 together with Josiah Gumede of the ANC and D. Coomans, a representative of the South African Trade Union Congress. One of the congress that the South African Delegation drafted a resolution which demanded 'the right for self-determination through the complete overthrow of the capitalist and imperialist domination' in South Africa (La Guma n.d.:27) – a resolution which the Brussels Congress adopted. The resolution may have served as an impetus for La Guma's subsequent attention to the national question in South Africa. After addressing meetings in Germany following the conference, La Guma and Gumede left for Moscow, where La Guma discussed the South African National Congress with members of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECOI), especially with Nikolai Bukharin, then a prominent party member.

La Guma's first visit to Moscow after the Brussels conference is of particular significance both in terms of his contribution to the South African liberation struggle as well as the impact it might have had on his son's political and literary development later in his career. La Guma's encounter with Bukharin is significant in this regard. Bukharin was not only an important party theorist advocating full support to obtain 'African Economic Policy of the time but was editor of an official Party newspaper, *Pravda*, he also played a significant role in promoting proletarian literature through his support of the Proletkult. This brief encounter with Bukharin must have had an impact on La Guma – who is described by his son as having been a 'wild romantic and idealist' (La Guma n.d.) and later on his son's disillusionment as well.

Of particular significance with regard to this visit to Moscow, however, was La Guma's submission of a statement to the South African delegation to the Communist International (Comintern) in which he argued for the establishment of a 'Native

Republic' as a precondition for the realization of socialism'. La Gurnea's analysis of the South African situation received the blessing of the executive of the Congress, which then submitted the adoption of the slogan, '[a]n independent nation a public as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' government with full guarantees of the rights of minorities' for discussion by the CPSA (La Gurnea, p. 48). This proposal was, however, vehemently rejected and ridiculed by some members of the party, with S.P. Bunting being the most vociferous. After a lengthy debate amongst members of the party in Cape Town, the 'Black Republic' thesis, as it was later called, was endorsed by the CPSA in 1929. Commenting on La Gurnea's pivotal role in the formulation and subsequent adoption of the Black Republic policy the Simonson (1983:398) argue:

Only a person who combined a firm adherence to Marxist theory with a profound belief in national liberation could conceive the prospect of African rule as a necessary first step to the achievement of a classless society. Such a person would need a firm

The Black Republic thesis, which was based on Lenin's 1926 thesis on the national and colonial question, in terms of which the national liberation struggle against imperialism is seen as the first surge towards socialism, was to have a profound impact on the relationship between the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party (as the CPSA was later known) at a later stage in the history of the struggle. For in the words of Fricke's *Militant* (1989: 29), it underlined the crucial

relationship between African nationalism and socialism, by stating that the concept of class struggle must of necessity incorporate the principle of 'racial' or 'demographic' for Africans and other racially oppressed classes.

Jack and Rzy Simons (1983-1986) summarise Le Guen's argument in the following words: "First official recognition of race differences and unity leading to acceptance would follow". The party should therefore concentrate on strengthening the government; the national liberation, and at the same time clearly separate identity, including socialist party. Community school in multiple many party based upon the non-European masses' and a landless whites and natives behind an irrevocable separation policy given expression to the demands of African workers and dignified. This is how the British acted as the demand of African workers and dispoled. Illusions that the British had an intention to help them and their African businesses. The future republic Africa would act as a political catch all dissolving traditional subservience to whites among African and racial terror, the society's Africa meaning white". The phrase "dissolving traditional subservience to whites" among African and racial terror, among white towards Africans among white Communist Party talk around Steve Biko's governance in Black White Life. His message such statements in James le Guen's argument that prompted Joe Slovo's conclusion that the Black Revolution has in fact across Black Consciousness in South Africa (Announcement of the South African Communist Party 1971 - 1986 [video cassette]). The ideological thrust of the 'Black Revolt' thesis is summed up in the title of a book by Black Consciousness.

Most significantly, the 'Black Republic' thesis, which underscored the collaboration between British imperialism and 'the white bourgeoisie of South Africa' (Bunting, 1981:91), was a precursor to the 'colonialism of a special type' (CST) theory, which forged the central thrust of 'The Road to South African Freedom', the programme of the South African Communist Party (SACP) adopted in South Africa in 1962. In terms of the CST theory, 'the oppressing white nation [occupies] the same territory as the oppressed people themselves and [lives] side by side with them' (Bunting, 1981:299).

In the words that clearly signal the official justification of the alliance between the SACP and the ANC, the programme also states that the South African Communist Party set out as 'its immediate and foremost task' the attempt to work for a united front of national liberation and 'to strive to unite all sections and classes of oppressed and democratic people for a national democratic revolution to destroy white domination' (Bunting 1981:286). James La Guma's position is clearly indicated in the following words which conclude the introduction of the programme:

The destruction of feudalism and the winning of national freedom is the essential condition and the key for future advance to the supreme aim of the Communist Party, the establishment of a socialist North Africa, laying the foundation of a classless, communist society (Bunche 198: 286).

The Simonsses (1983:450) refer to La Guma as 'the chief architect of the black republic policy': this intellectual role which clearly underscores his highest achievement as an 'organic intellectual', was bound to have a significant influence on his son, especially with regard to his perspective on national liberalism and class struggle in South Africa.

early activism

As can be seen, then, Alex La Guma was born in a home where working class politics and the national liberation struggle were a major preoccupation, and was encouraged from the beginning to think in class terms and to see the situation of Coloured people in the national context. At one level, it was the existence of 'an atmosphere of working class activity and ideas at home' (La Guma 1991: 6) which aroused La Guma's curiosity as a child and shaped decisively his political consciousness:

I do not remember my parents ever economising on a job, child, but one was always being advised to devote oneself to 'earning useful', or 'be found useful'. A picture of health being in a living room. Many of the people came to visit and I was involved in the work of the conversations. We ended the book and continued to do our work on the 'Party' (1982-1983).

La Guma recalls enquiring from his mother about the picture of Lenin on their living room wall and being informed that his father was a follower of Lenin and that Lenin had been the leader of the great change in Russia which had done away with poverty so that people no longer have to be poor. When he probed further, he found out that this was his mother's way of telling him that his father was a communist. He also found out the teachings of Lenin.

that we were not in the country that they could achieve happiness for themselves and their children (La Guana 1993:163). La Guana himself, however, as a young, 'troubled boy' and, [he] was asked to be a participant, describe the various reasons for the hatreds which his father's work demanded' (ibid.:198:120). He was already part of the marches and demonstrations ever before he entered high school in 1938. As a high school student at 'Trafalgar' in Cape Town, La Guana relates with obvious cynicism how he discovered that they were taught by 'politically conscious' teachers. La Guana informs us:

After classes we were invited to attend lectures on the 'political culture'. There I heard long and dull discourses about the 'perpetual revolution' as well as 'Friedrich Engels' and his virulent attacks on the Soviet Union. This was, of course, to tell us that our family was and always had been right to cherish and admire the Soviet Union. The World I soon gave up attendance of these 'lectures' which also went under the name of 'cultural programming' (ibid.:198:251).

Like his father, La Guana became an avid reader from an early age. Writing under a different pseudonym, 'Arnold Adams', La Guana outlines some of the sources of his cultural and political development:

I read *The Iron Heel* and saw in Jack London's 'people of the abyss' my own community ground down under the weight of poverty, oppression, ignorance. I could feel that the oppressor pointed a finger at the 'land' in *The Ragged Dicks and Philanthropists* I saw my own working men. These books, and the more than the old books we were given to read at school, I wasn't interested in. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* or *Moby Dick* (Arnold Adams 1971:29).

La Guana read very widely, covering the classical Russian writings of Tolstoy,

The position being rejected here was the Trotskyist version of the 'permanent revolution' as espoused in South Africa in the 1940s by the leaders of such organisations as the All Africa Congress (1942), the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) and, significantly, the Cape African Teachers' Association. This version of the theory of the 'permanent revolution' rejects the national-democratic phase of the revolution and espouses instead, the notion that the revolution has to be socialist in character and cannot only establish a democratic republic. The following characterisation of this vision is one with which La Guana would have agreed: 'Trotskyism in South Africa (as elsewhere) has the following characteristics: It opposes the democratic revolution as a preliminary to the struggle for socialism; it is unable to get to grips with the national question; its theoretical dogmatism prevents it from culturally distinguishing between the 'form' and 'content' of class struggle, and it also neglects or ignores mass organisations and class fronts' (ibid.:198:199). For an inside perspective of this vision and a different view on the policies of the CPSA, see Hossa-Litvin's *Foreigners Coloured Bantuism*, especially chapters seven and eight. In chapter seven he provides a critique of the Black Republic movement in chapter eight he criticises the 'Front Unity' organisations as having provided 'the most sustained, intense and widespread political education of the oppressed people in South Africa' (ibid.:199:196).

Dostoyevsky, Gorky, Sholokhov and American writers such as Fennell and Steinbeck'. The working class bias of most of Alex La Guana's novel is born in his literary career and, therefore, be attributed partly to his early exposure to his literary tradition.

La Guana was at that stage a fifteen-year-old marine's apprentice but, as he tells us, he was more interested in seeing the defeat of Nazism than just was in his examinations' (La Guana 1991:17). The result was that La Guana dropped out of school (in order to join the army) before he could complete his matriculation and, having enrolled at the Cape Technical College, he passed matric in 1945 when he had already started working:

You wanted to get through school in order to enter a more dynamic world. At my high school I turned away from further education because it appeared that life held more serious things than mere curricula based on knowledge that had little to do with reality (Arnold Adams 1971:59).

La Guana's opportunity to enter 'a more dynamic world' came when he was employed as a factory worker by the Metal Box Company in Cape Town. Although La Guana was initially cautious about the prospects, it was while he was working for this company that he learnt about the hardships of being a worker—an experience that facilitated the emergence of his interest in working class issues. La Guana reveals what he felt about the situation of the workers there:

I could see how the workers were exploited, and how they suffered. I came to know the day-to-day problems they had, the hopeless condition of their families and other slum dwellers. These outcasts of South African society were more, they were 'backward', they were uneducated. Many of them died inside themselves like trees eaten by worms beneath the bark. I was amazed at their tolerance, their resignation. I couldn't understand why they didn't want to do something about it, why they didn't change these conditions and drifted along without lament, year after year (ibid.:198:71).

This is an interesting observation in so far as it underlines what the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács has called the 'official consciousness' of the workers in terms of which the 'capitalist social order' is internalised by the worker without interrogation, heroising, as it were, his 'second nature'.⁵ The remedy to this official conception of capitalist order,

⁵ See for example La Guana (1991:8). As James Mathewson has shown when he worked closely with La Guana in Cape Town before the latter left the country, 'Alex is an idealist, not a realist' (Alex was influenced by every writer who had a political feeling of the social oppression of others). La Guana's wide reading habits were also confirmed by his wife, Blanche, in an interview with Charidemohari (1992:199) as well as in a letter to the author dated 19th Feb. 1994. La Guana wrote: 'As a young man I read, among others, writers whose works I read with Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Gorky and others, or rather in a general way'.

In the words of Lukács, 'the every aspect of daily life is worked out individually by the worker himself, by the process of his own life as he has to do a human labour which

Guma was 'banned' under the Suppression of Communism Act as a known communist' (Abrahams 1985:7).

La Guma continued being involved in politics, however, even after the banning of the Party, participation in local and national campaigns rather than working class activities. When the Coloured People's Convention was called in 1953 and the South African Coloured People's Organisation was formed, La Guma was one of the founder members. The South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO), a national coloured organisation, was formed to mobilise and unite all Coloureds to resist the Separate Representation of Voters Bill of 1951, which was aimed at removing the Coloureds from the common voters roll, and to align itself with the ANC's campaign against apartheid and for equal rights for all South Africans (see Lewis 1987:259). La Guma became a member of the executive of SACPO in 1954 while he was still working at Caltex, but, after some time, he resigned from this company to become a full-time organiser for SACPO. In November the same year, La Guma married Maudie Herman, who was to share his political and cultural activities. In 1955 La Guma became chairman of SACPO and was instrumental in organising SACPO for the historical Congress of the People held in Kaptown in June 1955. While La Guma and several other SACPO delegates were on their way to Kiptown, they were arrested in Beaufort West and released without being charged only after the conference had ended. SACPO members, nevertheless, vowed to carry the Freedom Charter to every corner of the land in their capacity as members of the Congress Alliance, which adopted the Charter in 1955. After its 1959 December conference the South African Coloured People's Organisation changed its name to the South African Coloured People's Congress (or CPC) to fall in line with the Congress Movement under the auspices of the African National Congress.¹

journalism, detention and exile

The period from 1955 to 1962 was a significant phase in both La Guma's political career and his writing career. Firstly, in 1955 La Guma was asked to join the staff of *New Age*, a newspaper that served as the mouthpiece for the ANC and the SACP, at its headquarters in Cape Town.² It was after joining the staff of this progressive newspaper that La Guma 'really started to write seriously' (La Guma 1991:19). Secondly, as chairman of the South African Coloured People's Organisation, La Guma played a leading role in challenging the government's 1955 Race Classification Bill and the South African Act Amendment Bill which effectively removed Coloureds from the common voters roll. He was also in the forefront in the struggle against the decision of

¹ In joining the organisation which, for a reporter, La Guma was doing again following the pattern of his earlier work. In the 1930s, for instance, he *discovered* a monthly journal of the National Education League in which a black friend of his, Ernest, had published an article on anti-

La Cape Town City Council in April and May 1956 when the council finally decided to segregate buses (see Abrahams 1987:8). In December 1956 La Guma and other leaders countrywide were arrested and charged with treason. Since the history of the 1956 Treason Trial is well documented, it suffices to point out here that the central argument of the State against the accused revolved around suspicion of the existence of a conspiracy to overthrow the existing government by force as well as the allegation that the Freedom Charter was a communist inspired document, and that the trial began in 1956 and 1957 when, as a result of legal identification, the accused were acquitted.

As one of the accused in the Treason Trial, La Guma wrote extensive reports for *New Age*. On May 2, 1957 La Guma was assigned a regular column entitled 'Up my Alley' by *New Age* (see Abrahams 1985:12). It was La Guma's work with *New Age*, specifically his new column, through which he established himself as a champion of liberation, that paved the way for his literary career. As Andy Oshana and Roger Field indicate in a recently published collection of La Guma's articles and reports, 'many of the themes in his short stories and novels are first encountered and developed in the early newspaper articles' (La Guma 1991:vi). It was largely as a result of his political work and perhaps partly because of his being journalist – 'our people who called themselves 'the Patriots' made an attempt on his life on May 15, 1958. According to Maudie La Guma's account of the incident:

When the matter was reported, the police showed no interest. Only when La Guma was assigned a note reading 'Sorry we missed you, will call again.' The Patriots – and they came to the door to insert the note made by the bullet into the wall. That was two days after the event (La Guma 1991:10).

Immediately after the Sharpeville incident of March 1960 the South African government declared a State of Emergency and arrested many police activists all over the country. La Guma was one of those detained and he spent five months firstly in Robben Street prison and then at a special prison in Worcester in the Cape before he was released.

In the meantime, much had changed concerning the political situation in La Guma's life. As he wrote, 'the South African ... we have come out of the hills stronger, more determined than before' (La Guma 1991:147).

In 1961 when Nelson Mandela, the then leader of the African National Congress, called a national general strike in protest against South Africa becoming a white-minority, La Guma went underground and helped organise the Coloured people in Cape Town to rally around Mandela's call. He was captured for ten days for his involvement in the campaign. Following his release in June 1961, in August the government imposed a five-year banning order on La Guma under the Suppression of Communism Act. In 1962 La Guma was, according to his wife, 'the first person to be placed under two-by-four hour house arrest' (La Guma 1991:13). This restriction effectively prohibited him from attending public gatherings and effectively forced him to resign from *New Age*. In

October 1963 both La Guma and his wife were detained under the 'Ninety-day solitary confinement clause'. After Blanche's release from jail, she was also served with a banning order. Her husband continued to be under house arrest after his release. La Guma was again arrested under the '180 days solitary confinement clause' in 1966 and upon his release he was instructed by the African National Congress to leave South Africa with his family and settle in exile in London. La Guma told Cyril Abraham:

It was felt that after having spent four years under house arrest and going for the fifth year with the prospect of another five years ... one could be more constructive outside. So we came to Europe to carry on what we were doing on another front (La Guma 1991:25).

The period from 1962 to 1965 was significant with regard to La Guma's writing as he used the restriction orders to get down to the business of writing fiction. Apart from a number of short stories, La Guma wrote a novella, *A Week in the Night*, which was published by Mbari in Ibadan Nigeria in 1962. Between 1962 and 1963 La Guma wrote *And a Threepold Cord*, which was subsequently published by Seven Seas Publishers in East Berlin in 1964 while La Guma was in prison in Roseland Street. On his release from prison, La Guma wrote *The Stone Country*. As can be seen, then, the period from 1960 to 1965, the larger part of which La Guma spent under twenty-four hour house arrest, was indeed a period during which La Guma 'did most of his writing' (La Guma 1991:12, Abraham 1985).

During the period of exile in London, La Guma continued with his political work – addressing anti-apartheid gatherings as a representative of the ANC in the United Kingdom in 1966 and 1967. He also retained his membership of and worked for the SACP (which had been established as an underground movement in South Africa in 1953). Because of the secrecy that Party members maintained during the period of repression this has not been recorded in earlier biographical accounts¹. For the purpose of survival, Blanche La Guma worked at London hospitals, while La Guma worked for a private radio agency owned by Dennis Duerden. While working for Duerden, La Guma wrote a number of detective stories based on a fictitious African detective named 'Captain Zondie' (Abraham 1985:17). When the private radio agency closed down, La Guma found work as an insurance clerk at Abbey Insurance Company in London, a firm for which he worked from 1968 to 1970. La Guma's period in exile was also marked by a number of important developments with regard to his cultural productivity. As early as 1969 – three years after his arrival in London – La Guma was awarded the first Juma Prize for literature by the Afro-Asian Writers Association, a prestigious award which an official from Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at New Delhi

in India in 1979. This award must have served as an impetus for La Guma's production of his next work, *In the Flag of the Shaven? Eel*, a novel on the underground activities of ordinary people who have decided to wage an armed struggle against racial capitalism. This novel was, according to La Guma, conceived and drafted in South Africa although it was fully written in London (see Abraham 1985:18). Perhaps more significantly, La Guma's period of exile afforded him an opportunity to attend and address numerous conferences in different parts of the world and, thereby, share ideas with other literary figures the world over. For La Guma, on the one hand, this exposure did not only broaden his cultural horizon but also provided him international recognition as an author of multicultural reports. For readers and researchers interested in La Guma's work, on the other hand, La Guma's conference papers and essays published in exile are most valuable since they provide useful information on La Guma's conception of the function of literature as well as his argument on the relationship between culture and politics.

Soon after his arrival in London, La Guma was invited to participate in the Scandinavian-African writers conference in Stockholm in 1967. At this conference La Guma shared ideas with other African writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Wole Soyinka, both of whom were generous in their accolades for his literary talent. It was at this conference that La Guma for the first time made statements on his ideas on literature and commitment in an open debate. In the same year, and immediately after the conference in Stockholm, La Guma was invited as a guest at the Fourth Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers in Moscow. As Abraham (1985:17) points out, '[t]his visit to the Soviet Union was the first of many to come'. Those regular visits to the Soviet Union afforded La Guma an opportunity to have constant contact with the Soviet Writers Union and must have had an impact on his aesthetic commitment to socialist realism (at least in theory). In 1975, after a six-week tour of the Soviet Union at the invitation of the Writers Union, La Guma wrote a book entitled *A Soviet Journey*, a travelogue in which he records his impressions of the Soviet Union, which was published by Progress Publishers in Moscow in 1978. Although La Guma had regular contacts with the Soviet Writers Union, he seems to have spent a great deal of his time on his cultural activities with the Afro-Asian Writers Association. La Guma's link with this association began during the first year of his arrival in London when he was invited as a guest speaker at the Third Congress of the association in Beirut. Perhaps in recognition of his talent as a cultural worker, the members of the Afro-Asian Writers Association elected La Guma as deputy secretary-general at its 11th Congress at Tashkent in the Soviet Union in 1975. He was initially appointed acting secretary-general in 1977 (when the Egyptian secretary-general of the association died in Cyprus) and was eventually appointed secretary-general of the same association in 1979 (Abraham 1985:19). In 1979 La Guma, who had been instructed by the ANC to represent its interests in the Caribbean, Central and Latin America and was operating from Cuba, produced his last published novel, *Time of the Butcherbird*. This novel, according to Jan Carew (1986), was later read at a text for Soviet writers studying

¹ The member of the Party Publishing Unit was Lawrence Mphahlele, a SACP comrade who brought this story to light in some literature that with a *Mail* magazine Centre on 24 March 1991.

English literature and the language.

It has been argued that the exposure La Guma received during this period, which inevitably drew his attention to the need to address an international audience as well, may have inadvertently led to apparent contradictions between his politics and the aesthetic construction of his work, as exemplified in *Tone of the Proclamation*.¹⁴ According to this view, this contradiction may be attributed not only to La Guma's position of enforced exile, which deprived him of the benefit of writing on an 'intimately known community', but also to his changing 'resistance ideology' (Mangham-Brown, 1991:327). Drawing on the statement made by La Guma in an interview with Robert Schumann in 1966, in which La Guma indicates his attempt to achieve a 'universality of opinion' by moving beyond a set of apartheid created 'communities', Mangham-Brown (1991:32,34) detects in La Guma 'an element of aesthetic back-sliding', the evidence of which 'is provided *post hoc*, by what he perceives as La Guma's residual belief in the universality of traditionalist criticism'.

One cannot dispute the traces of a liberal humanist aesthetic in some of La Guma's extra-fictional statements. However, La Guma's use of 'universality' in this context seems to have a lot to do with the writer's will to transcend the barriers of race in his writing. Hence La Guma's reference to the failure of writers to 'project themselves beyond the colour line' earlier in that interview – and as such it may be seen as La Guma's reflection on the characterist position (or the pluralism) of the ANC as 'non-sectarian' (see cited in). It could also be argued that La Guma confides universality with revolutionary internationalism as can be inferred from his assertion that the writer 'tries to spread out, extend his views, extend his opinions and get opinions from other sources so that he doesn't become confined in his ivory tower' or that 'perhaps the universal ideas could still be expressed' even if one is writing 'within a particular environment'.¹⁵ Viewed from this perspective, then, Mangham-Brown's (1991:34) assertion that once 'the concept of universality is accepted, the whole creation of the

legitimacy of literature's serving historically specific political ends is thrown back into the melting pot' is somewhat problematic. Moreover, to make reference to 'La Guma's assertions about the relationship between culture and politics after his exile' or 'aesthetic back-sliding on the part of La Guma once he was established in exile' seems to imply that La Guma may have made assertions on this relationship before his exile. Evidence suggests that it was not until La Guma was in exile that he started throwing some light on his aesthetics – a factor that seems to have been overlooked in Mangham-Brown's essay. Against this background, then, I would argue that if there are any traces of some tenets of liberal humanist aesthetics in some of La Guma's statements, these are overshadowed by La Guma's consistent and heavy reliance on Marxist aesthetics of realism, which is informed by what Lukács – in a reference to Maxim Gorky's writings – calls 'proletarian humanism'. This brings us to the place of La Guma's fiction in the South African realist debate.

the South African realist debate

La Guma's work has always been at the centre of the realist debate in South Africa – a clear indication that he is known as one of the writers in South Africa who is seen as consciously working within a particular realist tradition. This debate was initiated by Lewis Nkosi (1979:221) who argued, in his 1967 essay, that there was a lack of tradition – 'indigenous' or 'alien' – in South African literature written by Blacks. Instead what one gets from black South African writing, Nkosi (1979:222) went on to argue, is 'the journalistic fact paralleling outrageously as imaginative literature' without any effort being made to 'transmute these given social facts into artistically persuasive works of fiction'. Nkosi does provide an indication of a tradition he would prefer South African writers to follow and that is the experimental line of modernism which, he feels, would rescue black fiction from the 'straightforward' documentary realist narrative. Amongst those artists who, according to Nkosi, have failed to 'transmute given social facts into artistically persuasive works of fiction', is Richard Rive in whose novel, *Emergency*, Nkosi (1979:222) finds a failure 'in characterisation and imaginative power to do justice to the desperate human situation with which he is dealing'. However, Nkosi is generous in his accolades for Alex La Guma who, despite the fact that he 'fills the same apartheid plot which other writers have so exhaustively worked up' distinguishes himself 'as a true novelist' by his optimism ('his enthusiasm for life as it is lived') (Nkosi 1979:226). Nkosi (1979:227) finds in La Guma's work, *A Walk in the Night*, 'distinct Dostoevskian undertones'. In short, unlike Rive's failure 'in characterisation and imaginative power to do justice to the desperate human situation' in *Emergency*, Nkosi admires La Guma's *A Walk in the Night* despite its employment of a realist narrative which the central thrust of Nkosi's essay seems to be aimed at undercutting.

In his intervention in this realist debate, J.M. Coetzee picks up this point more cogently. Coetzee argues in his 1971 essay, 'Alex la Guma and the Responsibilities of the South African Writer' that 'the Western line of experimentation' (which Nkosi clearly favours) would seem to 'perpetuate a rift between the writer and society at large'

¹⁴ This statement by La Guma is April Danaher and Michael Worbin confirmed that La Guma's was 'a genuine political stance'.

¹⁵ Falsberg stated that even though La Guma's later novels were aimed at eliciting international solidarity because it was felt that an international movement campaign could bring more sympathy to La Guma, La Guma declared in a letter to June Grant that his target La Guma really had an international audience. 'I very much do have a target readership – I am read, but slowly, and gradually, in what the way to be the story or movement of the writer according to the people of Alex la Guma' (La Guma in Grant 1978:43).

Some 'examples' that Mangham-Brown uses in his column, such as *Flow of the Marches* were identified earlier by Mervyn Mazarire (1982:39).

¹⁶ In a letter to Grant (1978:50), La Guma makes this explicit: 'The revolution is international, and I have characterised what their parts on the South African stage – hope they are all saying something to the South African'.

(Coetzee 1971:6). The writer, Coetzee correctly suggests, 'should not choose his material at random, but rather choose it with some sense of social implications for his choice' (Coetzee 1971:6). This is precisely what La Guma is doing. Coetzee points out in his brief but illuminating examination of *A Walk in the Night* in which he convincingly shows that this novel 'exemplifies a conception of literature radically different from Nkomo's' (Coetzee 1971:7). According to Coetzee, La Guma's novel is informed by a critical realist tradition which is exemplified in La Guma's truthful depiction of the Coloured situation and the gesture towards 'potentialities for heroic action' (Coetzee 1971:11,16) as captured in the symbolism of the 'dawn' of a new situation. Coetzee continues this line of argument in another essay, 'Man's Fate in the Novels of Alex La Guma'. David Attwell (1993:12) captures Coetzee's (1992) argument thus:

In *Man's Fate* in the Novels of Alex La Guma Coetzee goes on to argue, via George Lukács' studies of realism, that La Guma is a critical realist who politicizes his writing, pursuing 'two ... a revolutionary transformation of literary method'. In Coetzee's formalized symbolism thus, La Guma arrives at narrative solutions that once an unfairly progressive social movement.

In a word, then, La Guma is a social realist who is conscious of the ideological implications of working within 'his tradition'.

Seventeen years after the publication of Nkomo's essay, this debate was taken up by Ismael Ndebele. Following Nkomo, Ndebele argued in 'Turkish Tales and Some Thoughts on South African Fiction', an essay that has since become seminal in South African critical studies, that 'what we have [in South African black fiction] is creative writing's direct obsessive emulsion of journalism' (Ndebele 1991:45). This is a widely heavy reliance on an obsessive documentation of oppression has, according to Ndebele, inevitably led to the production of an aesthetic of 'anticipated violence rather than one of peace', an art which lacks the potential for a transformative impact on the reader's consciousness because it is grounded on political exposition. Such kind of fiction delivers on an aesthetic effect based on 'disorientation' and 'traumatization' (Ndebele 1991:45). Ndebele argues, Ndebele joins the debate much further in his line of work, 'The Rediscovery of the Ordinary', suggesting that writers should 'rediscover the ordinary' by exploring a wide range of human experience, thus by avoiding 'the representation of the spectacle' (Ndebele 1991:57) as embodied in narratives which are preoccupied with a documentation of oppression. Rediscovering the ordinary then, not only includes an effective use of subtlety so that the reader's imaginative faculty is challenged and, in this way, the transformation of his/her consciousness is assured.

Obviously, Ndebele provides La Guma's story 'Coffee for the Road' as an example of the 'essentially fatal and/or emergent otherness', 'the complete exteriority of everything' 'the drama occurs as if over the story' and the 'intriguing device of typographical alignment' as pointers to the 'spectacle' in his story (Ndebele 1991:43). There are no grounds to doubt the persuasiveness of Ndebele's argument in this regard:

however, one may argue that Ndebele's argument seems to have overlooked the fact that La Guma's documentation of minute details in this and other stories is indicative of his indebtedness to a naturalist tradition within realism. Moreover, one wonders at the modernness of Ndebele's vision of this particular story by La Guma! The same technique (the documentation of minute details) is used much more effectively in *A Walk in the Night*, which Ndebele does not make reference to. Indeed, one suspects, it would not in question the validity of this argument with regard to La Guma.

This debate invokes the 1930s debates between Lukács and Bloch on 'epistémologies' which were triggered off by Lukács's attack on Bloch's expressionism'. In the local version of the debate it would seem that Nkomo subscribes to Bloch's argument in terms of which the use of the experimental line of modernism is seen as compatible with the realistic aesthetic. For example, Nkomo (1970:223) has a lot of praise for Blake Modisane's *Blatant Un-Deception* because it 'shows a dedication to a superior form of realism which succeeds partly because the author is alive to the fact that reality itself is elusive to the process of time as an orderly sequence of events'. Coetzee, it has been shown, employs Lukács in his defence of La Guma's oeuvre. Unlike Nkomo, who displays some bias towards modernism, Ndebele does not seem to be suggesting that the writers should dispart with the realist tradition per se; instead, he posits as a reason for a realist aesthetic in terms of which individual characters is a text grapple with the problem of 'internal' contradictions of their identity. Michael Vahedi (1993:194), for example, has shown how Ndebele's own fictional work, *Fools and other stories*, is not only written in the realist tradition but is also targeted at the development of an 'intellectual leadership'. La Guma's project, on the contrary, was directed elsewhere. Here is La Guma on this point:

Having read South African literature, I discovered that nothing satisfactory or worthwhile from my point of view had been written about the conditions which I sprang. So I think there was a conscious decision on my part to place to record the life in the poor areas, working class areas, and perhaps for the consolation of my work to depict the community and life (La Guma 1991:9).

La Guma here clearly identifies himself with, and regards this point of view as consistent with, that of the working class; in a word, his intention was to create a South African working class (people's) literature – at least in terms of content (the question of whether he also had the working class as his virtual reader is another matter). It is thus no surprise that in line with his attempt to 'put on record' the lives of the poor working classes, La Guma perceives his role as a writer and his 'function as that of an historian of the people' (La Guma 1991:23). It should be clear, then, that the ideological

¹ For this article on *Aesthetics and Politics* (1971). A summary of these debates is also provided in Johnson's *African Aesthetics* (1983), Lynch's *Man and the Modernism* (1987), Hwang's *African Models of Literary* (1978), and Munn's *Writing for Revolution* (1985).

function which La Guma assigns to literature is radically different from the ideological function that Nidobele's realist project envisages.²⁴ La Guma's aesthetic is best approached through the work of Lukács.

Lukács argues that realism embodies an objective approach to the social world and that realist fiction provides a convincing picture of historical and social change. In the words of Lukács, the basic premise of the realist school is the recognition that Man is *social politikon*, a social animal. According to this view, derived from both Aristotle and Marx,

the individual existence [of characters] ... their 'ontological being' ... cannot be distinguished from their social and historical environment. Their human significance, their specific individuality cannot be separated from the context in which they were created (Lukács 1963: 19).

In Lukács's terms, then, the cornerstone of realism is the acknowledgement of the individual's fate as being inextricably bound to his/her social and historical environment. It is this recognition of the merging of the private and public domains, the individual and the historical, that constitutes the notion of 'typicality', a crucial concept in Lukács's aesthetics of realism, in terms of which individuals are seen as 'social units' who are actively involved in the socio-historical forces that shape their future. In Lukács's own words,

What characterizes the type is the convergence and intersection of all the dominant aspects of that dynamic unity through which genuine literature reflects life in a vital and contradictory unity of the most social, moral and spiritual contradictions of a time (Lukács 1978: 78).

In short, a socio-historical perspective and a broad readership willing to be conscientised are the necessary conditions for the realisation of realism.

There is no doubt that a socio-historical perspective plays a vital role in La Guma's fiction. One pointer to this trend can perhaps be seen in the development from one novel to another that marks La Guma's craftsmanship and establishes his authority as a social realist. This progressive development provides a fictionalised analysis of the historical development of the political struggle in South Africa in terms of the gradual development of political consciousness in La Guma's characters. As La Guma (1991: 38) himself points out, in these novels he 'tried' to portray 'truthfully' what went on in the lives of the poor and the working class and 'at the same time to indicate

the developing sense of revolt which was fermenting all the time within the communities'. La Guma's broader project then, the one that can perhaps be identified as a central feature of his social and so, was to present the working class as both 'objects and subjects of history' (Laman 1982: 79). Related to the trend of development in La Guma's novels is the sense in which central protagonists in each novel may be described as 'typical', not as 'abstract personifications of historical trends' nor as 'symbolised abstract functions of class struggle' as in naturalism, but in the Lukácsian sense in which characters become an embodiment of the general social conditions and yet individuals in their own right. The point to question, argues Lukács (1963: 8), is the organic, indissoluble connection between a person as an individual and as a social being, as a member of a community.

The crucial question, however, is this: where does La Guma's social realism fit in to the terms of Lukács's paradigm of different categories of realism? Is La Guma a critical realist or can La Guma be classified as a socialist realist who is influenced by the Soviet aesthetic of hero figures who serve as leaders of the revolution? In short, what does La Guma's South African realism fit into metropolitan realist forms?

the Soviet connection

La Guma had already written a number of short stories as well as three novels when he started writing essays on literature. For this reason these essays may perhaps be regarded as a reaffirmation of the theory that informs La Guma's writing of his own works. The issue of whether in reality La Guma's theory is compatible with his practice, is, however, a different matter. Suffice it to say here that, although these essays were not written primarily as a series of studies in aesthetics – but are drawn from various sources such as conference papers, interviews, extended reviews of other artists' work and essays in response to particular theoretical positions adopted by other artists – they, nevertheless, help to provide some indication of the central thrust of La Guma's aesthetics. My intention in this section is to explore the ambiguities and complexities of La Guma's aesthetic position by showing how they are a result not only of his Marxist beliefs but also of his indebtedness to Russian realist aesthetics (particularly Gorky's) rather than to Lukács.

If there is one aspect which emerges clearly in La Guma's aesthetics, it is his expressed conviction that the social world is not only knowable but can also be represented 'as it is'. In an interview with Cecil Abraham, La Guma (1991: 29) made the following comment with regard to his writing: 'when I portray the life of South Africa I try to show it as it actually is'. 'Life', La Guma (1976: 50) argues elsewhere, is 'the stimulation of artistic endeavour'. Indeed in all his extra-fictional statements La Guma has articulated this belief in the potentiality of fiction to capture the quality of human life in its profundity. This view is epitomised in the oft-quoted statement made by La Guma at the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in Moscow in 1968: 'One cannot separate literature from life, from human experience and human aspiration' (La Guma 1970: 238). It is this belief in the inseparability of literature and life which is central to

²⁴ In relation to Elfen's (1993: 9) linking of La Guma with revolutionary aesthetics it is perhaps important to note here that in a reading of Albert Sacks's seminal paper 'Preparing ourselves for the future' and Ndlovu's essay 'Vaughan-Brown 1983: 16' argues that Nidobele's 'radical politics' is somewhat at odds with 'the more conservative aesthetics underpinning his cultural imagination'.

La Guma's aesthetics.

La Guma's belief in the inseparability of literature and life, one may argue, should not come as a surprise. As a member of the Communist Party La Guma was expected, among other things, to subscribe to a materialist conception of the world in terms of which the source of all events and actions is to be found in material causes—real life. (It should however be added that not all empiricists are Marxists.) It could therefore hardly be expected that he would provide an idealist explanation of the source of fiction. It is therefore no coincidence that La Guma's works draw on the author's observation of life around him. In an essay written for the *Literary Gazette* in Moscow in 1980, in which La Guma makes comments on his own writing and political work, he makes this clear: 'I had seen many things around me which had never been dealt with in South African creative writing, and I was convinced that this was real material for a writer' (La Guma 1991:37). It was on the basis of his observations, then, that La Guma hoped to 'portray truthfully the lives' of people who are the subject of his fiction.

La Guma's conception of the relationship between literature and life, and his explanation that he provides of the nature of this relationship, are clearly suggestive of his indebtedness to the fundamentals of Marxist theory. This can clearly be seen in the following statement made by La Guma at the Afro-Asian Writers' Congress in Tashkent in the Soviet Union in 1975:

When we talk of the relationship between art and life, we mean that unity between what is reflected and the manner in which it is reflected, and this is the quintessence of art (La Guma 1976:50).

What immediately comes to mind as one reads this statement is Lenin's reflectionist theory of literature which is also endorsed by the middle-period Georg Lukács. One is in fact tempted to suggest that there are obvious shades of Lukács in this statement, as can most obviously be seen in the underlying belief that art 'reflects' social reality, a crucial aspect in the Marxist theory of realism. It will, however, be shown that La Guma's view of the relationship between literature and life is defined in non-problematic terms: which distinguishes it from the Leninist model of reflection in terms of which literature is not simply a crude reflection of reality but its mirror in which contradictions and ambiguities are embodied. As Kulikova points out:

Lenin noted specifically that reflection is not a simple, direct, 'dash-mirror' action, but a complicated, dichotomous, zig-zag-like one, which contains the possibility of departing from real life (Kulikova 1976:187).

The dialectical nature of the process of reflection is summed up in Lenin's own words:

The reflection of nature in man's thought must be understood not 'freely', not 'abstractly', nor devoid of movement, not without contradictions, but in the eternal process of movement, the arising of contradictions and their solution (in Kulikova 1976:187).

Although it is believed that La Guma may have had access to the writings of Lukács on the theory of realism at some stage in his literary career—a belief largely based on the knowledge that La Guma read widely, especially when it came to Marxist theory—there is no substantial evidence in any of his essays to suggest that Lukács's works may have had a direct impact on his aesthetics.¹ What is clear, however, is that La Guma read the writings of Lenin, Georg Plekhanov, 'the founder of Russian Marxism' (Lentheim 1970:57) and, perhaps most significantly, Maxim Gorky, the Russian pre-revolutionary author who since the 1934 congress of the Union of Writers became known as the father of socialist realism, and that this writer's theories on literature had a profound impact on La Guma's aesthetics.² As La Guma himself acknowledged in his 1968 address to the delegates of the Afro-Asian Writers' Congress: 'When we talk of literature in its true sense, we cannot exclude the contributions of Gorky. Maxim Gorky wrote a vast amount about literature' (La Guma 1970:217). It is therefore no coincidence that La Guma makes frequent reference to Gorky in redefining and defending his aesthetics in some of his essays.

In his 1968 address to the Afro-Asian Writers' Congress La Guma draws extensively on Gorky's essay written on the occasion of the establishment of World Literature Publishers in 1919.³ He begins his address by quoting at length Gorky's definition of literature which reads in part:

Literature is the heart of the world; all the joys and sorrows, dreams and hopes, despairs and wreaths of it, all the emotions of man as he faces beauties of nature, all his longings as he faces nature's secrets, and its wings.... One might call literature also the all-seeing eye of the world, an eye whose glances pierce the deepest secrets of the human spirit.... [All] literary creation in prose or in verse shares the unity of the emotions, thoughts and ideas common to all men, the unity of the sacred striving of man towards happiness and freedom of the spirit, the unanimous hope for better forms of

¹ Brian Raitling, in an interview with the author, speculated that La Guma might have read the writing of Lukács because he read a lot of Marxist literary theory including the writings of Christopher Caudwell.

² La Guma's acknowledgement of the influence of Gorky on his writing and his aesthetics can be found in 'What I Learned from Maxim Gorky', 'Answers to Our Questionnaire' (Arao 1987) and in Kondratovich's (1977) 'Writers in the Struggle for Peace'. In 'Answers to Our Questionnaire' La Guma specifically states that Gorky 'introduced [him] to working class literature and the spirit of socialist humanism that goes with it'. La Guma needs to be stressed that Lenin, Plekhanov, and Gorky at times disagreed. So La Guma had to choose from them what he thought was best for his own dream. See La Guma (1967), particularly his critical letters to Gorky as well as Gorky's literary portrait of Lenin where he records his own impressions of both Lenin and Plekhanov (Gorky 1942:279-325). In chapter 4 (Robins 1993) outlines and compares Plekhanov and Lenin's contributions to his literary theories.

³ See 'Vystupeniye' [Speech] (World Literature Publishers 1962:195).

(La Guma 1970:237).

La Guma quotes Gorky accordingly here not only to reaffirm his belief in the inseparability of literature and life, but also to endorse what Lukács (1972:218) has called Gorky's 'hottest conception of the mission of literature'—that is, the notion that literature has to facilitate the progress of humanity. Accordingly, La Guma argues:

Literature, art, culture, civilisation, these are not abstract conceptions as some would imagine. They define the direction and basis of our actions at a particular time. They must therefore be understood and interpreted in their revolutionary politics as the class which drives man forward or retards his progress according to the dynamism of that civilisation (La Guma 1970:237).

The key phrases here are 'define the direction and basis of our action at a particular time' and 'the ethos which drives man forward or retards his progress according to the dynamism of that civilisation'. For they cogently capture Lukács's theory of realism in terms of which a socio-historical perspective is crucial to realist fiction's depiction of society as a progressive force. It is by being rooted in socio-historical reality that literature performs its function, which is, according to La Guma, to raise the consciousness of the readers to the vitality of life. Following Gorky, therefore, La Guma argues:

One of the greatest values of literature is that by deepening our consciousness, widening our feeling for life, it reminds us that all ideas and all actions derive from realism and experience within social realities (La Guma 1970:238).

The idea of the indissoluble link between literature and life recurs in La Guma's essays and in different ways demonstrates some affinity between La Guma's ideas and Gorky's. Nowhere, however, is Gorky's influence on La Guma's aesthetics more pronounced than in the latter's provocative essay, 'Alexander Solzhenitsyn: "Life through a crooked eye"'—arguably the most significant essay in terms of one's understanding not only of La Guma's aesthetics but also of his politics. For one thing, La Guma not only defends the Soviet Union and its socialist practices (during the 1960s and 1970s) but most significantly he also employs Gorky to reaffirm his commitment to the aesthetics of realism in general and declare his unequivocal support for socialist realism in particular. But, for the moment, the question is: what prompts La Guma, an avowed South African Marxist, to write an essay on Alexander Solzhenitsyn, a dissident Soviet writer and a vociferous critic of Stalin and the Soviet leadership of the 1940s who was arrested, kept in prison camps, exiled, a writer who not only denounced socialist realism but infamously repudiated Soviet society, Marxism and socialism and became a convert to Christianity?

La Guma's essay was primarily prompted by the publication of Solzhenitsyn's Nobel Prize Lecture of 1972 by the *South African Outlook*, a local journal associated with the reactionary establishment, which through its control of Lovedale Press made

publications by black writers accessible to readers. La Guma (1974:69) sees the publication of this lecture by *South African Outlook* as a demonstration of the journal's complicity in the 'anti-communist and anti-Soviet campaign' waged by the Nobel Committee. He questions the criterion used by the Nobel Committee in awarding the Nobel Prize for Literature to Solzhenitsyn in 1972 and, having provided several examples of writers who deserved the prize but never gained it, accuses the Nobel Committee of using the Nobel Prize 'as an act in the "cold war"' (La Guma 1974:78¹²). La Guma goes on to argue:

The award of the prize to Alexander Solzhenitsyn in 1970 came only as a logical conclusion of the Nobel Committee's policy not so much on the merits of the literature as on its attitude to the Soviet Union, to the ideas of socialism (La Guma 1974:78).

By making a comparison of the reception of Solzhenitsyn's fiction in the Western mass media, on the one hand, and that of the Soviet Union on the other hand—the former bestowing accolades on Solzhenitsyn for his 'talent' and the latter complaining about his 'obsession with prison-camps' and his distortion of Soviet life (La Guma 1974:76)—La Guma seeks to demonstrate that Solzhenitsyn's works 'show that he is far from concerned with the realities of Soviet life' (La Guma 1974:77). Against this background, then, La Guma concludes: 'Seeing Soviet life through a crooked eye got him the Nobel Prize for 1970' (La Guma 1974:77).

It is not our concern here to comment on the demerits or merits of Solzhenitsyn's fiction. What is important for us is rather to point out that La Guma's scathing attack on the ideological content of Solzhenitsyn's fiction and the Nobel Committee's award of the Nobel Prize to this Soviet dissident writer provide ample evidence of La Guma's unwavering support for the Soviet Union and his uncompromising adherence to socialist ideology. This is best exemplified in the following statement La Guma made with regard to Solzhenitsyn's fiction:

to give the impression that prison-camps form the general experience of Soviet people is, to say the least, a gross distortion of the realities of Soviet life. No honest person who has visited the Soviet Union can claim that he experienced the atmosphere of oppression, concentration camps and secret police as Solzhenitsyn would have it. The common problems of the Soviet Union people today are those concerned with the transition from socialism to communism—and this is what most writers in the USSR are concerned with (La Guma 1974:74).

¹² In an earlier issue of *Black Beatings* (July 1970) La Guma wrote 'a good book with a bad philosophy' (*New Age* November 16, 1970:6). The same point on the Bonn 'beatnik' situation was also made in the week because this was not issue in the cold war, rather than anything else, and was not aware of the Nobel Prize for literature to this author as something of ideological bias. Consequently, Beating also employs Gorky in his criticism of the 'beating world'.

It was perhaps this attitude towards the Soviet Union that promoted La Guana, who was with La Guana during the latter's first visit there in 1968, to allege:

And La Guana is a man fairly and fearlessly committed to the "doggy-communist" I was supposed to discover how conservative and alienated he was in his conviction. Indeed there are many independent Marxist thinkers who would be irritated by his kind of gross regard for everything Soviet policy-makers are doing as almost beyond any questioning (Nkosi 1975:110).

To back up his argument Nkosi cites La Guana's 'implicit endorsement' of the trial of two Soviet writers, Yuli Daniel and Andrei Sinyavsky, who had been prosecuted for smuggling their manuscripts out of the country. For Nkosi, on the contrary, it was 'strange' that, in his words, 'any artist interested in creative freedom, least of all (La Guana) ... who has himself been prosecuted and his works proscribed' (Nkosi 1975:110), would adopt such an attitude towards the fate of the other writers'. La Guana's critique of Solzhenitsyn six years later can therefore be seen in the context of La Guana's general attitude to the critics of the Soviet Union in general and dissident writers in particular.

The most crucial part of La Guana's essay on Solzhenitsyn for our purposes here is his critique of Solzhenitsyn's Nobel Lecture (itself entitled, 'The Role of Writers in Society'). For it is precisely Solzhenitsyn's aesthetics, and his conception of the role of a writer, which eventually become the main target of La Guana's critique. Briefly summarised, for Solzhenitsyn art is of divine origin: 'there are no doubts about its foundations ... we received it from Hands we were unable to see', he argues (Solzhenitsyn 1972:142). Although Solzhenitsyn explains the source of art in spiritual (idealist) terms he insists on the responsibility of a writer to his society. He is, however, quite emphatic on the freedom of the artist: 'Let us concede that the artist owes nothing to anyone' (Solzhenitsyn 1972:145). Implicit in his emphasis on the freedom of the artist is his rejection of writers having to play a politically partisan role by espousing a particular ideology. This is a clear demonstration of Solzhenitsyn's condemnation of the officially sanctioned practice of socialist realism with its emphasis on the exaltation of the heroic figures of the revolution. According to Solzhenitsyn, the writer has a moral rather than a political responsibility to his community and this is in line with the mystical terms in which the origin of art is explained in Solzhenitsyn's aesthetics. In Solzhenitsyn's own words: 'The writer is not an outside judge of his compatriots and

contemporaries, but an accomplice in all the evil perpetrated in his country or by his people' (Solzhenitsyn 1972:147).

La Guana interrogates Solzhenitsyn's mystical or idealist conception of the origins of art. He points out that for Solzhenitsyn art is something that is 'above, separate from, people' and then argues, if it is true that 'we received [art] from Hands we were unable to see' (as Solzhenitsyn suggests), therefore 'we must conclude that even if there was no humanity, no mankind, no people on earth, Art could still be there' (La Guana 1974:70). Instead, La Guana offers a materialist explanation of the origins of art, arguing that all art 'came from human endeavour'. 'If talent was not exercised, then we would not have art', La Guana argues (La Guana 1974:70). Having said this, La Guana reiterates his belief in the indivisible link between literature and life and employs Gorky to back up his argument: 'What the imagination creates is prompted by the facts of real life, and it is not governed by baseless fantasy, divorced from life, but very real causes' (La Guana 1974:71). On this basis, therefore, we may conclude that La Guana turns to Gorky primarily because he shares with Gorky a materialist conception of the world from which the idea of the inseparability of literature and life stems.

The assertion from Gorky (cited above) leads La Guana to the following definition of art: 'art is a representation of life' (La Guana 1974:71). If art is a 'representation of life' as La Guana suggests, then, what is the role of the artist? For La Guana, the task of the 'real artist [is to search] for truth and to depict [that] truth' (La Guana 1974:75). This conception of the task of the writer has some affinity to Lukács's theory in so far as it is suggestive of La Guana's heavy reliance on the honesty of the writer in his pursuit of 'truth'—and, as such, would seem to downplay the role of ideology in this pursuit. For Lukács (1978:84), following Marx and Engels, the honesty of the writer, we know, means portraying 'reality as it actually is' even if, in the process, one has to transcend one's 'most cherished preconceptions and most intimate personal aspirations'. This is where La Guana parts company with Lukács: for La Guana, the search for truth is consistent with and perhaps too closely linked with the principle of partisanship of literature as espoused by Lenin in 'Party Organisation and Party Literature'. For this reason, La Guana (1974:71) expands his definition of art:

But, further, art is a representation of life also modified by the personality of the artist, for the artist has a character, an outlook on life, the world around him, and through his art he hopes to modify the personality of others.

Once again, La Guana's indebtedness to Marxist aesthetics of realism can be seen not only in his definition of art as a reflection of social reality but also in his acknowledgement of the role of ideology in his representation of reality. However, La Guana's use of the term, 'personality' instead of ideology could be seen as revealing visible the (at times) *ad hoc* nature of his theory.

La Guana's conceptualisation of the role of ideology in literature, one suspects, is attributable to his interpretation of Lenin's principle of partisanship as well as his somewhat mechanistic version of the theory of reflection. Earlier in this essay, La Guana employs Gorky in reaffirming his belief in the Aristotelian didactic, but more so political, animal. Later, in the same essay, La Guana reiterates his conception of the

¹⁰ Solzhenitsyn has since returned to Russia and, in a dramatic turn of events, an article which appeared in *Moscow News* (22 February 1987) it was reported that the trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel was 'now officially viewed as a mistake' (See Anon. 'Sagging Admission' in *British Communist* 31:387-1-5). 'Andrei Sinyavsky' is the pen-name of Aron Tertz who, like La Guana, was critical of the anti-realist and Stalinist repression. See his novel *The Trial Before* and his accompanying paper entitled 'On Socialist Realism'.

relationship between literature and life as well as the remaining non-writing function of literature: "Literature and art not only reflect the life of the people, but they also help to enrich the human mind" (La Guina 1974:24). He then goes on to argue:

The idea of the trained outlook of literature and art with the interests and struggle of social classes and, in socialist society, with the life of the entire people, was theoretically substantiated by Lenin who propounded the principle of partisanship of literature. This is a means of combat, formula outside the struggle of classes, outside politics, for each writer, whether he likes or not, expressing in his work the interest of someone else's (La Guina 1974:41).

While one endorses the notion that "artistic creation" is socio-historically determined and can therefore not remain completely "outside politics", one would be sceptical of the argument that a work of art is always an expression of an author's class interest or ideology, as implied in this assertion.⁴ Nevertheless, the significance of this assertion, however paradoxical, is that it clearly spells out La Guina's belief (despite humanist trappings in his vocabulary) in the ideological function of literature, a belief to which La Guina makes consistent reference in his extra-fictional statements.

There is a clear agenda in La Guina's adoption of Lenin's principle of the partisanship of literature and it is to embrace socialist realism. Accordingly, La Guina begins by castigating "bourgeois propagandists" who "attack this principle, trying to prove that to serve the interests of a definite class is incompatible with artistic creation". To back up his argument he refers to what he calls "the clutter of innocuous and trivial reading matter produced in the West which helps to divert the masses from more serious aspects of life" and wonders whose interests "the writers of such material serve" (La Guina 1974:34). In contrast, La Guina argues, the socialist system is the first system which "freed culture from the influence of the money-bags" by "affording the artist a chance not to pander to the tastes of a small, rotten lot of the "cultured" but for the masses" (La Guina 1974:75). The argument ends on a high note, with La Guina (1974:75) "affirming and embracing socialist realism".

Each real artist searches for the truth, seeks to depict the truth. But there is what socialist ideology is also interested in. The main demand of socialist realism is a portrayal of truthfully in its progressive development.

⁴ La Guina may be paraphrasing Gorky's argument here: "A writer is the eyes, ears and voice of his class. He perceives, formulates and portrays the sentiments, desires, worries, hopes, passions, interests, virtues and vices of his class, his group" (Gorky 1992a:272). In his "Ideology and Literary Form: A Comment" Francis Mulham (1975:85) has challenged this conception by pointing out that the ideological status of the text is not determined by its origin but by its objective function and on this reason, as La Guina's ideology might even be bourgeois and not revolutionary.

The final statement ("Each real artist searches for the truth") is interesting in the sense that it is as if La Guina responds to a statement Solzhenitsyn is quoted as having made with regard to socialist realism elsewhere:

All have agreed, whatever their subject and material may be, to solve, to penetrate the main truth, the truth that shakes you in the eyes, even in the literature. It is this view to penetrate into the truth that is called Socialist Realism (Roman Hingley quoting Solzhenitsyn in Hingley 1979:283).

La Guina makes use of Lenin's principle of partisanship in order to endorse socialist realism and, thereby, challenge Solzhenitsyn's discourse.⁵

It was in the name of Lenin's principle of partisanship that the (official) Zhdanovite version of socialist realism was proclaimed in the Soviet Union after the debates of the 1930s. Zhdanov is quoted as having said of Soviet literature:

Our Soviet literature is not afraid of the charge of being "tendentious". Yes, Soviet literature is tendentious, for in an epoch of class struggle there is not and cannot be a literature which is not class literature, and tendentious, allegedly nonpolitical. And I think that every one of our Soviet writers can say to any self-witted bourgeois, to any philistine, to any bourgeois who may talk of being tendentious: "Yes, our Soviet literature is tendentious and we are proud of this fact, because the aim of our tendency is to liberate the toilers, to free all mankind from the yoke of capitalist slavery" (Quoted in Robin 1992:56).

Clearly, there are striking parallels between the Zhdanovite version of "tendentiousness" and La Guina's interpretation of Lenin's principle of partisanship, as articulated in his article on Solzhenitsyn.

It is necessary at this point to explore another dimension of La Guina's aesthetics of realism which seems to me to provide a clue to La Guina's recourse to the principle of partisanship. Apart from Gorky, it would seem that La Guina's aesthetics of realism also has a great deal to do with George Plekhanov, whose early philosophical contribution to the realist debate in Russia received critical attention in the 1930s. This

It should be pointed out here that even before La Guina went into exile he was aware of the debates on Soviet aesthetics (and more particularly on socialist realism) since some of these were discussed in *New Age* in the 1950s. See for example Ilya Ehrenburg's report "Soviet Writers Call for Radical Changes" (*New Age* May 23 1957:7), William Bonham's "Soviet Culture is the Heritage of All" (*New Age* July 16 1959:4) and "Pasternak Tells Why he Wrote *The Zhigals*" (*New Age* October 30 1959:4), as well as Brian Benington's "Dr Zhigals: A Good Book with a Bad Philosophy". Perhaps more significant is the fact that Soviet aesthetics and research has also been as interested in South African culture and politics as South Africans were in theirs. For more information on this see Davidson and Olszow (1997), as well as Samoylovsky's "South African Literature in Russia" (1992), and Chervonin, Samoylovskaya and Zamskaya (1988) among others.

is significant when one considers that "David Mervin, on its philosophical side, was married to Plekhanov and Lenin" (Lichtheim 1979:27). There is ample evidence that La Guma read Plekhanov's *Uncollected Letters, Art and Social Life* ([1899-1900]1957) and appropriated some of Plekhanov's ideas by incorporating them into his own discourse.

In his essay, "Has Art Failed South Africa?", which appeared in *The African Communist* in 1977, La Guma employs Plekhanov in his endorsement of ideologically oriented artistic production. He points out in his critique of the art for art's sake school of thought in South Africa:

The black artist in South Africa is not aware to making his work with 'politics' in mind but accept that as one of the virtues of the oppressive society, his work almost automatically becomes involved ... for us of the oppressed artist, art is not made for the State but the State has for art—society is not made for the artist, but the artist for society. The function of art is to assist the development of man's consciousness, to help improve society (La Guma 1977:82).

He then goes on to attack those artists who reject a utilitarian view of art citing Plekhanov's argument "[a]rt for art's sake arises essentially where the artist is out of harmony with his social environment" (La Guma 1977:82). He accuses these artists of being in "ivory towers" taking "refuge from the slings and arrows of an outrageous society" (La Guma 1977:82). La Guma's essay was written as a rejoinder to Cecil Skotnes (1976), a South African artist, who had expressed his concern about what he saw as "a singular lack of guts" in South African art despite the existence of what he described as "a classic revolutionary situation" that could stimulate a proliferation of artistic production. In his argument Skotnes had particularly singled out what he perceived as "lack of a strong artistic tradition" on "the Black Front" and expressed his reservations about the merit of art that is "born to ... political liberation in general". As can be inferred it is precisely with these particular aspects of Skotnes's argument that La Guma takes issue and recruits Plekhanov to make a case for black artists.

Plekhanov distinguishes between those artists who perceive art in terms of their responsibility to society, those who argue that the function of art is to assist the development of man's consciousness, to improve the social system, on the one hand, and those who see art as an end in itself on the other (Plekhanov 1957:149). He then uses various examples from different historical contexts to test the viability of these two opposing views. Plekhanov's investigation leads him to the following conclusion on the art for art's sake school of thought: "The better in art for art's sake arises when artists and people keenly interested in art are nevertheless out of harmony with their social environment" (Plekhanov 1957:163). On the contrary, the utilitarian view of art

that is, the tendency to impart to a production the significance of "ideological or the phenomenon of life, and the joyful eagerness which always accompanies it, to take part in social work, arises and spreads whenever there is mutual sympathy between a considerable portion of society and people who have more or less artistic talents, in creative art" (Plekhanov 1957:163).

As can be inferred from these statements, the validity of Plekhanov's thesis lies in his attempt to demystify the terms of these opposing perspectives on art by locating them in historical contexts or social conditions within which they thrive.¹¹ It could be argued that it is because of Plekhanov's rejection of "prescription in art" that La Guma appeals to Lenin's principle of participation, thereby finding a resolution to the impasse that Plekhanov's realistic theory seems to create for him in this regard.¹²

In all his extra-fictional statements La Guma consistently denounces the art for art's sake argument and espouses a utilitarian view of art. This is best exemplified in the following statement made by La Guma (1977:1-3):

It is perhaps possible, within the environment of developed societies, to make with a certain amount of confidence the impression that the art culture, the level of civilisation of a people has nothing to do with social-economic and political forces within these societies that culture has nothing to do with politics. In South Africa this is not possible. The proposition of art for the sake of art finds no foothold in the atmosphere of racism, violence and male exploitation which is the day-to-day experience of the South African people.

What is particularly striking here is not so much La Guma's rejection of art for art's sake proposition and the way in which he embraces a utilitarian view of art by underscoring the inseparability of culture and politics, but it is the fact that there is an element of tentativeness with regard to his use of these two positions in this statement. In short, there is an unarticulated assumption that in a post-apartheid society, under a different historical or social setting, there will be a shift from the contemporary discursive position. Indeed, this seems to be confirmed towards the end of the essay:

As long as racism and oppression live in South Africa, culture will take this form. When the oppressed have freed themselves from the shackles of

¹¹ Roland Robyn (1992:150), who traces the origins of socialist realism and detects its contradictions, argues that "the Plekhanov art is a socio-historical phenomenon: a form, a style, a content, something to express, something that is expressed through images. It is a reflection of reality, anchored in it where, with a misnomerization what the relation between a form and content is maximally adequate".

¹² Denz (1967, 1971) sees this rejection of prescription in art as Plekhanov's "first theoretical defence of the principle of *the open work*". Robyn (1992:152) comments: "As the art form is always the sign of a revolt from the social, one needs to analyse who this revolt from the social, historically speaking, imposes itself on certain artists. That is why Plekhanov abandons the 'social reality' in art as an invariant principle. In so doing he creates a considerable shift in what we have called the normative base of what art must be open on an ongoing and evolving path that in conjunction with his rejection of prescription in art would allow to explain why he was blacklisted as a Marxist and as the creator of a passive aesthetic in the Soviet society of the 1930s".

economic, social and political environment, and to open new horizons of content of literature. It is to shed a light on the life of freedom and comradeship among comrades' (cited in 1973:112).

It would seem, then, that La Guma has fully grasped Plekhanov's argument that the 'social utility of art' is not an inherent principle and that he agrees with Plekhanov's thesis in general.

However, as Henri Arvon (1973:14) points out, Plekhanov 'refuses to permit art to remain in the service of party politics'. This is where La Guma joins company with Plekhanov and, instead, embraces Lenin's principle of partisanship in literature. It is perhaps not surprising that La Guma should subscribe to Lenin's principle of partisanship in literature when one considers that La Guma served his apprenticeship as a writer as a member under the auspices of *New Age*, a politically partisan newspaper that was not only 'run by [Communist Party] members [and] consistently reflected party policy [but whose] position on international matters was [also] virtually indistinguishable from the foreign policy of the Soviet Union' (German & Olenzak: 1997:xxxi). Significantly, it was apparently with regard to Party publications that Lenin wrote his famous paper on partisanship, 'Organisation and Party Literature' in 1905. However, one may argue that La Guma, like his counterparts in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, extends Lenin's principle of partisanship to include creative works of literature. This can be seen most obviously in La Guma's argument that one 'cannot at once separate one's social and political allegiances from one's creative work' (Guma 1978:49). It would seem, therefore, that La Guma subscribes to Plekhanov's argument in so far as his compatibility with his liberation of someone and that, where the question of tendentiousness is concerned, La Guma does not seem to distinguish between his works and his political allegiances. This does not, however, mean that in La Guma's works the political message which conforms to his political allegiances is always explicitly stated – and, in this sense, his practice would seem to run odds with his theory.

The concept of tendentiousness in La Guma's aesthetics is linked to his belief in the ideological function of literature, a belief to which La Guma (1991:20) makes consistent references:

A writer, if he is conscious of what is going on around him, automatically cannot 'be real' precisely as a thorough portraying of life around him also produces his own relationship to it. Of course, one would be prone to think that a writer is supposed to be conscious of the direction in which his work is moving to point out 'think that in the case of literature it is written to point the reader's perspectives and attitudes of their humanity.

In La Guma's view, then, a writer is not only a chronicler of the experiences of his community, but he is also an ideological, providing guidance to the perspectives of the community. It is against this background, then, that La Guma (1970:27) expresses the intended ideological effect of his writing of *And a Thousand Good in These Words*:

When writers have felt the pain of the South African man, people have no

waterfall in his belly by the work itself, nor does he exploit it. But I also cannot help myself, though, that when somebody reads his work he must do something about those readers who have turned his country into a material and cultural wasteland for the majority of the inhabitants.

As can be inferred from his statement, in La Guma's terms, it is not enough for literature to depict the social situation truthfully, but, in addition, the ideological effect of literature should be to transform the consciousness of the readers even to the extent of spurring them on to engage in some form of action. It would seem, then, that this for this purpose that La Guma turns to social realism as an effective means of conscientising his readership.

contra Gordimer and Fugard

The significance which La Guma attaches to the ideological function of literature and the concept of tendentiousness can also be seen in his literary criticism. This is best exemplified in La Guma's critical essay on Nadine Gordimer's *The 76th Street Interceptors: Notes on African Writing*. In the first section of this work entitled 'Modern African Fiction in English', Gordimer makes a critical assessment of African literature written in English which she sees as 'beginning with the Négritude movement. She then distinguishes between African writers who are 'testifiers of social change' – those who merely provide a 'sort of context of expression, of black background text' (Gordimer 1973:81) – and those who write 'literature' in which the 'quality of the writing matters. Having made a critical appraisal of some literary texts by such writers as Achebe, Ngugi, Ayi Kweyema Amaia and others, Gordimer (1973:32) concludes that African English literature's best writers are critical realists in the Lukácsian sense—establishing a link between the past and pointing towards the future—and that this is the direction in which African literature is developing.

In response, La Guma takes issue with Gordimer's exclusive treatment of English literature written by Africans and her measuring of them against European standards. He describes his special treatment of 'African literature as "literary apartheid"', a practice which, in his view, results in the construction of 'a cultural Bantustan' (Guma 1974a:103,102). According to La Guma, Gordimer's reservations on the 'realism to social change' are due to these authors' giving too much attention to racial issues'. But, La Guma argues, 'bettering the social impact has never guaranteed success for any work of art' (Guma 1974a:103). What is crucial in La Guma's stance is rather the ideological commitment of the writer and the extent to which his writings contribute to human progress, in his words:

The writer's participation in the development of life is measured by the ideological and artistic level of his work, the depth of his deviation of even small problems. The writer must find the epicure of events and determine his place in them, his point of view, then he will find application in his fiction, and he will come forward with his work, his work will serve the cause of people's and social progress. There are writers who work in that area and who stand

apart from events, who do not maintain close ties with the truth of their ethos, their source of inspiration. An atmosphere of vacuum cannot stimulate works that contribute towards the common progressive character of life in literature.... We are witnessing how the cultural heritage of Africa is transformed into modern, social and political orientated literature and the arts. This is one of the most important tasks of the mentioned cultural revolution and a stirring event in modern and progressive world culture. (Gala 1974a:103)

According to this view, then, the writer's credibility as a craftsman, and, one may add, the literary value of his work, depend largely on the ideological effect of the cultural product—hence La Guma's belief that socially and politically oriented African literature contributes towards a cultural revolution. Implicit in La Guma's criticism of writers whose works are not based on a concrete ideological basis, those 'who work in a kind of vacuum, who stand apart from events, who do not maintain close ties with the truth of their ethos, their source of inspiration', is his endorsement of the principle of partisanship in literature.

The fact that the principle of partisanship in La Guma's aesthetics is closely linked to socialist realism (as stated earlier) can most obviously be seen in La Guma's negative response to Nadine Gordimer's labelling of the best African writers as critical realists. In an argument that reveals La Guma's lack of familiarity with Lukács, La Guma ('Gala' 1974a:106) accuses Gordimer of failing to address the question of the main trends of development of African English literature 'in terms of African reality'. La Guma ('Gala' 1974a:106) continues to argue:

Instead [Gordimer] borrows from George Lukács a formula which assigns 'critical realism' as not only the link with the great literature of the past, but also the literature that points to the future'. And so she concludes with amazing aplomb there seems to me little doubt that African English literature's best writers are critical realists, and that this is the direction in which literature is developing.... But African development and African literature have not come to a full stop'.

La Guma's objection to Gordimer is somewhat puzzling: implicit in his argument is the suggestion that African literature should be assessed 'in terms of African reality' rather than through a heavy reliance on critical theories of foreigners such as Lukács. However, as to the question of assessing African literature 'in terms of African reality', La Guma's argument would seem to me to render visible two factors with regard to his aesthetics. Firstly, it indicates La Guma's lack of awareness of Lukács's seminal contribution to Marxist aesthetics of realism to which La Guma himself obviously subscribes. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, La Guma's argument here is suggestive of his somewhat ambiguous attitude towards being categorised as a critical realist—La Guma is amongst those African writers who are seen by Gordimer as creating an African literature, the critical realists, Lukács and 'testifiers' who 'take stock-in-trade' abstractious of human behaviour and not about 'for a dummy in dress shoes'.¹⁰ Gordimer argues that 'La Guma's protagonists in *District Six* live in a

Walk in the Night 'do not talk about inequality' instead they 'love his wealth' (Gordimer 1975:19-20). Nevertheless, in La Guma's assertion that African development and African literature have not come to a full stop there is an implied indication that African literature should not be defined within the confines of critical realism.

Why does La Guma object to being labelled a critical realist? La Guma's 1974 essay (also written under the pseudonym 'Gala'), in which he examines Athol Fugard's oeuvre, may provide some clues. In this essay La Guma argues that in Fugard's plays there is 'an ever-present concentration on experiential styling and technical innovation' and he sees in this regard evidence of Samuel Beckett's influence on Fugard ('Gala' 1974:182). Not surprisingly La Guma is quick to point out that it is nevertheless 'the content of Fugard's work which must certainly "reveal the real man"' ('Gala' 1974:182). For La Guma is not so much interested in Fugard's dramatic device, as he is in the ideological orientation of the content of his works which, he hopes, will 'reveal the real man'—a reading that would seem to reveal La Guma's conflict of critical ideology with authorial ideology. In Guma's only comment on Fugard's early plays, *Shogood Bridge* and *Mogogo*, is that they are 'naturalistic tragedies set in Johannesburg black townships—and staged with African casts' (ibid.) (1974:182). *The Blood Knot*, which seems to gain La Guma's full approval, is seen as being informed by a liberal humanist ideology whose tenets include 'the freedom of the individual, abhorrence of colour discrimination and the nightmare of Black's inner apartheid' ('Gala' 1974:183). La Guma finds in some of Fugard's later plays, however, not only 'decriminalising symbolism' but also a lack of clear ideological commitment. For La Guma, the government's withdrawal of Fugard's passport in 1967 (which was reinstated four years later and accompanied by the South African government's subsidy of his play *Boesman and Lena*) and Fugard's subsequent withdrawal of his support for the cultural boycott resulted in 'the absence of a more concrete response to the realities of the South African scene' ('Gala' 1974:185). Instead, La Guma argues:

Athol Fugard is now the play right first. It is never right for him to put any various aspects of life through his scalpel. He let the liberalists of the late of South African liberals with their absence of any viable life or consistent attitude towards the society in which they live and work (ibid.) (1974:184).

'Scalpel' is a telling term here in the sense that it is clearly indicative of La Guma's immersion in Marxist-leninist. La Guma's attitude to liberal ideology is (deliberately) ambiguous. Although he accuses liberals of their lack of 'realistic or consistent attitude' towards their society, he does not expect Fugard to move beyond the confines of his ideology. Athol Fugard, La Guma argues, 'need not only be an observer of his country's condition', or as he puts it merely 'their witness', and be a 'classic example of the guilt-ridden impostor white liberal of South Africa'. Within the confines of a liberal humanist ideology itself there are prospects for a progressive outlook. La Guma seems to suggest, in La Guma's own words: 'An admission of guilt is in itself a step towards personal re-evaluation, and a more profound understanding of his "human as an artist"' ('Gala' 1974:185).

It may however, be argued that beneath La Guma's critique of the ideological content of Zupard's plays, lurks his dissatisfaction with a critical realist perspective which La Guma clearly associates with the liberal humanist ideology that informs Zupard's writing. Liberal humanist literature is seen by La Guma as protest art *par excellence*, it merely negates without making any positive affirmation. In his words: 'It is not enough for South African art merely to denounce the negation of the racist way of life. Art must also be witness to the fires of the struggle for liberty' (Gale 1974:104). La Guma's reaction here is clearly reminiscent of Gorky's 1914 critique of critical realism:

The readers of the bourgeois 'proletarian novel' was a critical realism. But while exposing the darkness of society ... critical realism could not show people the way out of this darkness. It was easy to criticise everything, but there was nothing to assert except the obvious senselessness of such social existence and 'life in general' (Gorky 1988:303)².

The parallels are striking, it would seem then, that, beneath La Guma's ambivalence still in the towards critical realism lies his aspiration towards socialist realism of which his literary mentor, Gorky, is known to be a leading exponent.

conclusion

My argument is that if there is any convergence between La Guma's aesthetic of realism and that of Lukács this has a lot to do with La Guma's absorption of Gorky's notion and aesthetics of realism rather than the possibility of La Guma having read Lukács's writings on the theory of realism. Both La Guma's admiration of Gorky's fiction and aesthetics, and his apprenticeship in the Communist Party-linked newspaper, *New Age*, which helped establish La Guma's position as both a social realist writer and an ideologue, produce La Guma's socialist aesthetics.

At one level, then, La Guma's aesthetic draws extensively on what Robin (1992:109) has identified as the shifts and displacements in the discursive base of the Russian realist aesthetic. This can be seen not only in his use of the Marxist theory of culture but also in his employment of Pickhanev's conception of the uncertain voice of art, which La Guma links to Lenin's principle of partisanship as a way of interpreting it in his own discourse. However it is also important to note that this was re-created in a Marxist theory of literature that could simply be ingested into the South African context. The concept of ideological didacticism that underpins the socialist realist aesthetic was grafted onto the realist aesthetic. This raises the question of

whether La Guma's obvious endorsement of socialist realism has played a worthy role in the aesthetic in his fiction, a question that falls beyond the scope of this essay.

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² Robin (1992:149) says that Gorky wrote on the Russian tradition of novel and plays fiction. The novel, often called realism, the primacy of the novel over the aesthetic, not only of the novel, even form.

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**A Social Function for
Literature?
Two Women Critics and
South African English
Literary Studies, 1939-1948**

Corinne Sandvick

Debates to contemporary South African literary studies routinely make claims about the redistribution of English Studies to the formation of a crucial public sphere and a democratic citizenry.¹ Such aspirations and postures are not new at all. In the 1930s and 1940s two talented women critics invoked the same political and cultural ideals in their literary criticism. In this paper, I select Christina van Heyningen and Doris Meyer's literary criticism from the 1930s and 1940s, exploring the following concerns: their attitude to politics, their understanding of the social function of literature, and their critical methods. Finally, I assess their respective efforts to connect English literature and the promotion of democracy in South Africa in the decade leading up to 1948.

Christina van Heyningen

The daughter of an English mother and an Afrikaans father, Christina van Heyningen was born in one of Milner's notorious concentration camps in 1909. She attended schools in the Orange Free State, went on to study at the University of Stellenbosch where she received a Masters Degree in English Literature, and continued her studies at Somerville College, Oxford where in 1936 she was awarded a degree in English. In 1939, she took up the post of Senior Lecturer in English at Stellenbosch University, joined the staff of the University of the Witwatersrand English Department in 1947, and went on to become Professor of English at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, in 1955. She published both reviews and critical articles in a number of South African journals and periodicals including the independent periodical, *Toek*, the Afrikaans periodicals, *Koekoek* and *Ons is Back*, *Skandaleet*, and later for Pietermaritzburg journal, *Theoria*. She completed a number of textbooks on English language and composition, and is remembered, particularly, for her work on Samuel R. A. Johnson. John

See for example the applications in Serfling & Van der Vaart (2007) and 1996.

Milton, and the South African players (cf. H.W.D. Manson, *Alibi*, with Geoffrey Durrant—with whom she enjoyed a lifelong friendship). Van Heyningen was a key figure in the importation of the techniques of critical criticism to South African English Departments in both 1949s and 1950s.

As regards Van Heyningen's attitude to politics, her most consistent concern was an opposition to totalitarianism of any form. Van Heyningen was particularly troubled by the support shown by members of the Afrikaans community for Nazi Germany. Fiercely opposed to all forms of ideological and political control, she identified with the values of democracy and individual freedom, and devoted considerable time and energy to their defence. These commitments are best summarised in her response to the enormous growth of pro-Nazi ideas and sympathies in South Africa in the early 1940s. In 1941, she published a petition in the *Cape Argus* which was signed by eighteen other colleagues at the University of Stellenbosch. The petition, which was also published in the *Swedish Times*, the *Cape News* and the *Star*, was written in protest against 'the slavish imitation of foreign models of ideological warfare, blind prejudices and bitter intolerance' (1941a:3) amongst the Afrikanerspeaking community. The signatories argued for the need of 'personal freedom and autonomy, and for a more extensive state intervention, to also give an important place to the individual subject:

Being a state citizen means, in the first place, studying, acquiring knowledge, for the purpose of translating his knowledge into forceful action in life. A student who does not study will be a man who does not know, and such an ignorant person is of course, the most subject of a totalitarian state. (1941a:3)

For Van Heyningen, the training in critical thinking is an important antidote against the propagandist tactics of Fascist ideologues. This commitment extended to the post-war period when as a founder member of The Johannesburg Education League—an organisation established to combat government indoctrination by means of pamphlets and terror—Van Heyningen resisted attempts by the Institute of Christian Nationalist Education to enforce religious and cultural instruction in schools. Notwithstanding her commitment to active political involvement, she remained a realist in the inevitable spread of liberal ideas. Responding to a demand by the University of Cape Town's SRC in 1948 that a unilateral decision be made on the question of whether or not Africans should be allowed to participate in the social and sporting life of the university, she criticises UCT for 'not let[ting] sleeping dogs lie', arguing instead that

if nothing more is said on the question, non-South Africans will be accepted as equals in those places that are Islamic, and perhaps in cricket, and the letter of the law will be carried out in the official places, and that in this way there will be—

¹⁰ For a more extensive history of Van Heyningen, see the introduction to the collection of essays edited by Jan Beckett and U.C. Gardner (1989).

will gradually go on and on. (1943c)

Always an independent thinker, Van Heyningen formulated her critical position in relation to Matthew Arnold, T.S. Eliot, Q.D. Leavis, and Denys Thompson, and whilst not always agreeing with individual contributions, the assumptions of the *Southern* school theory remained an important critical touchstone. She owed a principal intellectual debt to F.R. Leavis (with whom she corresponded on a number of occasions), and reiterated his sense of cultural and intellectual decline, and his antipathy towards popular culture. Like Leavis, her efforts were principally directed towards the training of a critical vanguard capable of appreciating and promoting Great Literature and resisting consumer culture. Van Heyningen assigns a central function to the reading and interpretation of poetic works. Poetry, like all literature, is valued because of its 'difference', and because of its transformative power. 'The reading of poetry

is of the present moment ... [in] poetry, partly because it demands so much of us, of the whole man, not merely his brain, his emotions, or his body, is perhaps the most valuable activity of the human spirit.' (1951:161)

Poetry is a difficult pursuit calling into play 'intense involvement and "vigilance" of the senses, brain and emotions' (1945:16), and because it is concerned with the 'problem of "value"—of its affirmation, renewal, and definition in an ever-changing world ... the reader is forced into through the same process, a reconsideration of values, to reaffirm the values that we live by' (1945:16).

Van Heyningen's literary criticism also reveals a pervasive concern with individual morality and personal responsibility. For her, both life and art are subject to the operation of absolute moral laws. The artist has a primary 'duty of giving direction' (1946a:17), in the process disclosing the universal moral order in his/her work. She criticises what she regards as the modern tendency to blur distinctions between 'good and evil'. Macbeth himself, she argues, understands the lie of the witch's claim that 'fair is foul, and foul is fair':

That fair is foul, he would know in his natural capacity, and the art of a go, weakened his nerve, and turned him into the Lucio's of the world, a man who is ... to Shakespeare good and evil were not far apart, and that of any good writer who has not accepted the responsibility, explicitly or implicitly, of choosing between them, and who has not made the affirmation of values his chief good functional aim. (1946a:17)

Van Heyningen's moral pre-occupations lead her into difficulties when she attempts to evaluate the work of an author whose values she feels compromised to reject. In a discussion of the novels of Henry James, she criticises his 'neglect and ignorance of "immoral" and "dishonourable"' (1945c:15) behaviour and sums up his achievement in

¹¹ For more on Van Heyningen's assessment of Leavis, see Gardner (1990:125–163).

the following quote borrowed from H.G. Wells: "the beautiful cathedral has been laboriously built, and James has come so reverently laid upon the altar—sacred choir" (1946a: 77). Wells and, further, Eliot and everyone's moral judgments, particularly in her later works, make it impossible to criticize James' writing, and she views her own admiring, as his stylistic achievements, and honor as the moral bankruptcy of his themes.

Her belief in moral absolutes which transcend time and space rears Van Heyningen's suspicions of any attempts to locate Great Literature in a political context. Responding to Shakespeare productions which sought to meet the aesthetic criterion of contemporary realism, Van Heyningen argues:

...the scene should be somehow withdrawn from its own specific reality—a historical speech, let us say, poetry as much as prose and drama. It should, in an ideal and universal other, find a real and true permanence, and the best of the rhythm should be heard clearly and surely through the most intense emotional distress and agonies (1945: 69).

This tendency to privilege the universal over the concrete realization of human experience is clearly evident in a discussion of a production of Samuel 'The Pliers' in Nazi-occupied France. While Van Heyningen acknowledges the play's overt pro-Resistance sympathies, she quickly moves to a discussion of the particular moral problems it poses, concluding that the 'universal principle' (1948a: 52) offered in the play's resolution is that "every man has in his last analysis ... to forget the moral law out of the act of faith in which he finds himself living" (1948a: 52). For Van Heyningen, the conscious foregrounding of resistance helps to purge art of its social roots, and move it beyond the concerns of a particular time and place. This is especially so in the work of Shakespeare:

The actor should have left the [emotion], by that process of pleasure, that Weblair and I describe, into a calmer region of contemplation, where one does not so much suffer as reflect on things, and conceptualize what he has heard and what it means to him (1945: 69).

Similarly, in a discussion of a performance of Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' by 'non-European' (1946b: 134), Van Heyningen approves of the way the disturbing political aspects of the play are displaced, finally, by an atmosphere of peace and magic.

[A]ll the harshness, the pain and worry that the [disappointment that is] the end into his disquieting play, were easier than, perhaps, the author would have wanted, and he never forgot to tell the good drama was undertaken in everyman's—and the African's with a few slight parts of relief in it—freedom and freedom of contemplation, where we can see the truth of that moment, and feeling something like the French, says (1946b: 140).

The criteria of F.R. Leavis, the influence of Van Heyningen's critical pro-

cedure is the elevation of literature above politics. Although never conscious of as blatant in many direct senses, Leavis's English Studies was never a slow understanding of

The poem and production of literary matters through Leavis's lens, and beyond politics itself, in fact, was a permanent ideological function. The school before with politics and judges in the name of the literary (1945: 139).

For Van Heyningen, what prevented literature from attaining its redemptive function was consumer culture. Her remarks on "the triviality and detachment of our time," the "increased of modern life," the "scourge of propaganda," even of the "greater" from England, and the "only glory" (1945: 14) best to be found in the signs of a "writing" nostalgic for the values of old England, and an uneasy sense of a civilization in decline. For Van Heyningen, all that remains of this world, and is a separate sense of spiritual unrest, which

... he has seen left in our minds, the neglected strength of the old, the forgotten idea of manhood, of a nation, but a finer and more vision is past (1945: 14).

Her views are best summed up in an unpublished review of *The Passion According to St. Christ* where she inquires:

Is it Democracy that has brought us to this pattern, where neither beauty nor grace, nor brains, nor talent, nor sense, nor affection, nor loyalty, nor hope, nor anything is admitted anymore, except what is a mere function in business, and a mere abstract (1946: 11).

Van Heyningen's method of teaching literature—forged as a response to the threat of consumer culture's ubiquity—was set out in her contribution to the 1946 conference of English Teachers. She argues that the training of critical judgment is best achieved by means of guided small-group discussion and comparison. Using this method, students are taught both to distinguish between good and bad poetry, and to identify the "false feeling," "craft" and "sentimentality" of contemporary popular culture (1948b: 14). The result of such an education will ultimately be registered in the emergence of a critically-astute citizenry. The values of a threatened critical minority are thus able to secure continuity in the present age. For Van Heyningen, in fact, in historical background is confined to the information it provides concerning the artist's,

Examine the questions and the following examples as a guide. A third very practical criterion question asks, "Which of the following poems do you prefer and why?" In another example, when asked to describe the mood of a poem, and to explain what mood it is, the "happy" (1948b: 14). For Van Heyningen, the school before with politics and judges in the name of the literary (1945: 139).

moral and social conventions of the period. Accordingly, her critical method is dominated by detailed attention to literary form (rhythm, use of language and imagery), and her critical eye is directed towards a narrow canon of European texts.

Finally, what does the teaching of English literature in South Africa entail for Van Heyningen? Or, to return to the original question: how might English literature contribute to a critical public sphere and democratic citizenry in South Africa? Van Heyningen's understanding of this question is best grasped by focusing on her thoughts about the encounter between black South Africans and European high culture and its attendant aesthetic imperatives. For Van Heyningen, art reveals an universal human condition, 'penetrates through all the wrappings to the man in all men' (1942:12), and—in a version of Matthew Arnold's Culture and Anarchy thesis—she suggests that art can combat race prejudice by directing individuals towards their common humanity. When Donsdale's drawings of the coloured community are held up as exemplary 'beauty in colour'

we see the coloured people not as a class or a nation, as we are accustomed to seeing them, but as a people. This is a world of these to us, as we humanly feel, and this plays the greatest part, even when an artist is conscious of, in building up his picture, with dignity. When Shakespeare turned to his art, he tried to write a people, not a class, and he could not do it. His imagination took another, the deeper part of his priority struggle, with the star lower path, with the truth that his play became the many, not the one, and Cordia, Antonio and Isabella, Desdemona and Othello, against their creeds, as with these, as with Shylock is revealed. (1942:12)

An article entitled 'Entering a New World' published in the Afrikaans periodical, *Die Dinsdag*, records her experience of marking the English examination papers of African students:

If the Examiner says I saw a people turning over, waking up in the new new world, and rubbing their eyes with wonder, and I found it so muching me so in marking that I should like to sit with other people! (1945:9).

Her excitement at the prospect of being witness to this intoxicating and liberating cultural encounter is marked only by a concern that this might not be shared there:

One must fear for these young South Africans one sees how normal in their mind and their. They love to read the literature and books and books, and expect to go flowering, in the new and enchanting world of white civilization. . . . Will they stretch her and the exciting white too? Must they be be poisoned? (1945:11)

Van Heyningen's earlier openness towards a common humanity are betrayed by her

insistence on the superiority of British culture as embodied in English literature, and her assimilationist ends. In addition, her sense of the relationship between white and black South Africans is defined in terms of liberal parameters rather than any kind of political solidarity.

Dora Taylor

Dora Taylor and her husband, J.G. Taylor, arrived in South Africa from Aberdeen in 1924. They settled in the Cape Town suburb of Rondebosch, whereupon J.G. Taylor took up a lecturing post in the psychology department at the University of Cape Town. Dora Taylor began writing book reviews for the *Cape Times* in the early 1930s. In 1939, she contributed a series of articles to the independent periodical *Free*—then edited by André Brink—and was a regular contributor of book reviews and feature articles between 1941 and 1946. Taylor and her husband were initially drawn towards a cluster of left intellectuals (many of whom were themselves immigrants) centred at the University of Cape Town. Taylor subsequently became a member of the Trotskyist Worker Party, whose members helped form the Non-European Unity Movement in 1943 and acted as its secret inner core through the 1950s and 1960s (Drew 1996:56). She also worked in close collaboration with J.B. Tabata, founder member of the A.C. Africa Convention (1955) and the NEUM. Described by Tom Lodge (1983:19) as 'the major political force among coloured intellectuals', the NEUM was part of a new spirit of non-compromise and non-collaboration amongst African, Indian and Coloured South Africans which emerged in the early years of the 1940s, and which was marked contrast to the reformist tactics of the previous generation. According to Neville Alexander, the Non-European Unity Movement was

a highly distinctive South African liberation organisation [which] . . . remained independent and mostly devoid of other more prominent national opposition forces (1990:92).

Apart from her work in the Non-European Unity Movement, Taylor gave lectures in literature to a variety of student fellowship groups, and was also the author of a number

This group included British-born academics like Benjamin Farrington, Pamela Highton and Frederick Hodder, who had been part of early Marxist student movements in Britain. See Hiron (1997).

For more information concerning the origins and development of this student group in South Africa, see Hiron (1993) and Drew (1996).

See also Lodge (1987) and Mchale (1991).

Apart from the as yet unpublished work done by Chris Russell, Dora Taylor's contributions to South African politics and literature has been largely ignored. There is also a biographical note in the introduction to her memoir of literary activity in South Africa, *The Role of the Woman in the Movement* (1955), published in the late post-apartheid period. For two critical summaries of her contributions to South African literary studies, see Swannell (1988) and Smith (1988).

of twentieth-century novels, an argument. In 1948, when all her family were forced to flee to England, where they remained in exile until her death.¹

Whereas Van Heyningen's notion of democracy is often connected to the social mobility it purports to describe, Taylor's understanding of politics displays a strong sense of the racial basis of South African society, drawing attention to the gap between liberal ideals and material reality. South Africa is described as

a society where the ruling class is a privileged minority planted on the back of a majority of poor and oppressed people and seeking from them at least tacit power (1943d: 12).

In South Africa, aside from inequalities in the judiciary, the growth of anti-Semitism and 'poor economic conditions, racist legislation such as the Colour Bar Act and the Burying and Servants Act and a further bolster for the democratic principle of our statute book' (1943a: 3), she continues,

the ... Native Areas, the Union Representation Bill, the Land Act and the Urban Areas Act ... are all big overhauls of the principles of democracy, and it is wrong to regard them as mere tinkering with the machinery of the political and social life of the country, or the regulating of the existing machinery to make it work more smoothly (1943b: 3).

Performance, however, founded and self-determined, remains 'theory' in any society which is based on economic inequality. With its 'class bias', she argues, 'homogenous democracy' is 'a variety of true democracy' (1942c: 3). Where a genuine educational education is lacking, 'the variety of democracy which cannot provide the satisfaction of basic or material needs, the quest for the liberal ideal in the individuality of individuals that can ... liberty and freedom in a capitalist system, pointing out that the individual under capitalism is at the mercy of the impersonal forces of a vast 'bureaucracy' (1943: 14), and the social consensus is achieved by subtle—but no less effective—forms of state coercion.

In answer to the quest for social justice and the strategies through which this may be achieved, Taylor critiques the liberal notion because of her tendency to confuse definitions, notions of democracy, and by failure to develop its assumptions into concrete political terms. Olive Schreiner's early liberal hopes, for example, while serving as the most familiarly articulated of the welfare and happiness of humanity as a whole² (1942d: 3), are underpinned by exceptionalist claims to demand for an unrestricted franchise. Finally, while she acknowledges the need for a more vigorous, critical and independent public sphere, she argues that a liberal faith in such demands of social reform as a free press, parliamentary representation and political transparency is misplaced.

The liberal faith in reform is misguided and misguided, and it is urgent to change it, if white as well as Black and if the individual is to have a living belief in a metaphysical belief in change, believe in a living faith

in what is called democracy in political and table conferences, and among the individual human oppressors. And it is a faith that is based (1942: 13).

While Olive Schreiner may be forgiven for her turn-of-the-century optimism concerning what the liberal spirit might achieve,

... there has been a very, ruthlessly proven the bankruptcy of liberal faith in the tide of political events. Such faith as it might have had in itself and the hope that the human mind of governments has been 'robbed of its life' has faded away (1942: 13).

Taylor is in broad agreement with the perceived need to foster a more critical and independent public sphere in South Africa, and echoes Van Heyningen's emphasis on the importance of education. Discussing the South African education system, Taylor expresses anxieties concerning the cultural philistinism, intellectual docility and political apathy of increasing numbers of South Africans. This she attributes, in part, to an authoritarian school system based on rote learning and the examination method. Taylor's fears about 'the lure of the penny dreadful', and her arguments about the necessity of 'trained judgement' (1942b: 14) bear the distinctive influence of the *Sentinel* position. However, it is not the decline of the 'beyond community' that she fears, but the political consequences of public 'suggestion and ignorance' (1942: 16) in the face of increasingly sophisticated techniques of mass persuasion. She argues:

We do not want a nation of docile, regimented men and women unable to think for themselves, unable to judge between truth and the false. They provide an excellent background for the Fascist ideology and Fascist methods for power stripping and mass vanity for interference and the beauty of folklore, football, repertory and cinema (1942: 17).

Armed with the critical skills acquired in an education which fosters independent thought, the South African citizen will be able to successfully negotiate the modern menace of both advertiser and propagandist. In addition, South African children will be made fit both to take their place in society and 'to change it where it is rotten' (1940: 14). Taylor, however, adds an important qualification to the argument that education can achieve social change. In response to the demand that training in democratic citizenship should begin in schools, she argues that these attempts at reform—worthwhile in themselves—are nevertheless based on the assumption that 'the nation exists in a vacuum where it is an inseparable part of a social and economic system' (1942: 9). Present economic and social inequalities already dictate that only a privileged few will benefit from these reforms. Furthermore, carefully justified democratic principles will be at odds with

an economic and social world where the idea of justice and equality ... are at a discount, where deeds and words stand at opposite poles, where the dignity of the individual and the dignity of human are fiction and not fact (1942: 9).

To reach people about democracy without changing society as a whole is to produce 'cytines' and 'madmen' (1941:9). Educational reform, therefore, cannot take the place of effective efforts to end alienation and servitude.

Turning to her literary criticism, Taylor sets out her allegiances in the following passage:

The Marxist approach to art, in so far as it shows the relation between art and society, is so basic it explains why and how a certain tendency, or art has arisen at a particular period in history, in so far as it sees in the critic in analysing the many facets of the artist into its component elements, in so far as it is able to examine critically the 'above for all' attitude of both artists and critics, of men of the social class even if 'part' art is inevitable as a means for a fully understanding the artist and his work, as a plain in recognition of art (1941b:72).

Where Van Heyningen looked to England and Russia for guidance, Taylor did not turn to any great measure to English Marxists of the 1930s.¹⁷ Described by Perry Anderson (1992:53) as a 'spontaneous radicalization within traditionally dormant militarist', English Marxism was primarily a reaction to the social, economic and political crises of the period, and it took its political and theoretical cue from Marxist Russia, rather than Central Europe. Whereas there was a tradition of Marxist thought in Germany, Italy and France since the late eighteenth century,

English Marxism had no heritage was even able to take account of the attitude of Schopenhauer in the 1930s.... The works of Marx, Engels and Lenin were of course available, but for their reception of contemporary Marxism, the British intelligentsia were almost entirely dependent on the officially sponsored writings of Plekhanov, Bukharin and Stalin. The reception of Trotsky and Luxemburg had by this time been thoroughly effaced, and the works of Lukács, Korsch and Lie Frankfurt School remained undiscovered (Molham, 1974:29).

Increasingly contaminated by Stalinist control, English Marxism was cut short after few years by the Nazi-Soviet Pact and the Second World War. In subsequent years, English Marxist literary criticism became a source of embarrassment – simultaneously pilloried for its vulgar determinism and its Komradic overtones – and suffered a

¹⁷ I have argued elsewhere that Marxist literary criticism in South Africa was conducted outside a formal academic context in particular participants like *Wolke*. Although Taylor's work merits further investigation and most certainly attempts to apply Marxist critical principles to the texts of Henry James, French exiles of other South African Marxists should not be overlooked. See Sandbrook (1986).

¹⁸ In contrasting the opposition between Marxist and Revisionist views on much of the art, *Wolke* is perhaps to go as far as to call the latter 'reactionary' and 'right' Trotsky, and a 'left' Critique 'reactionary' and 'right' and the latter 'reactionary' and 'right'.

corresponding lack of critical attention'. In a summary of English Marxism, Francis Molham (1974:40) argues that English Marxists

were united in their insistence that literature could be understood only in relation to the social conditions in which it was produced. Hence, literary criticism came to be regarded as the elucidation of the social determinations of a text, as the identification of the 'social equivalent' of a given character, realistic or idealist.

While Taylor's criticism can also be broadly understood in these terms, she does not share their intellectual origins, claiming instead the intellectual and political tradition of classic Marxism, which she received from Lenin and Trotsky. Unlike much of its other cultural and political traditions, then, Taylor's strand of South African Marxism owes very little to Britain.¹⁸ In an article which appeared in University of Cape Town journal *The Critic* in 1935, Taylor (1935:84–85) registers her indebtedness to the Lenin-Trotsky heritage, and opposes the perversion of their ideals under Stalinist rule:

Under the Soviet regime art has become synonymous with propaganda. It was not so immediately after the revolution. In the first naive enthusiasm of the liberated proletariat forty thousand poets blossomed in Russia. But when Stalin, in opposition to Trotsky, turned the Russian Communist Party into a nationalist organisation surrounded by a hostile Europe, it was necessary to create weapons of defence not only in iron and steel, but in every medium of art as well. Art became state-controlled like any other form of labour.... It is possible that this is a transition stage. This tyrannical attitude to art is a contradiction of Lenin's whole purpose in liberating the proletariat. Culture is possible only where there is leisure, and in spite of the present work worship in Russia, the ultimate goal of the movement is to create more leisure for the masses. Freed from the tyranny of the machine will enable them to study the culture of the past and other countries.

Taylor's arguments concerning the relationship between literature and its material context derive principally from the work of Leon Trotsky. His major work, *Literature and Revolution*, was published in the early 1920s in the years following the momentous events of October 1917, which saw the successful overthrow of the Tsarist autocracy and the establishment of a workers state, and four years of bloody civil war during which a fragile people's government had to be defended against a powerful counter-revolution. Stalin's rise to power in 1921 marked the beginning of a period of increasing

¹⁹ For a critique of English Marxism, see Williams's (1986). See Perry (1985) for a more sympathetic account of the outcome of the 1940s Marxist literary context in England.

²⁰ An alternative strand of South African Marxism is to be found in the literary criticism of Michael Parent, a member of the South African Communist Party. See, for example, his series of articles on J. M. Coetzee published in 1985 in a journal called *Wolke*.

state-bureaucratisation and regimentation, which in the cultural sphere reified itself in the doctrine of socialist realism, and the rise of the proletarian movement. Consequently, *Literature and Revolution* treats a difficult path between an endorsement of revolutionary literature, and an indictment of emerging tendencies towards rigid ideological prescription and control in the cultural sphere. Much of Trotsky's argument lies in his attempt to take up the problem posed in Marx's key argument in the 'Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy' (1859): that 'changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure' (Marx 1992:426), to his 'cultural continuity' thesis. Trotsky rejected as no less popular amongst Soviet intellectuals in the 1920s that a new proletarian culture would be formed in 'laboratory' conditions under the direction of a proletarian avant-garde. Both Trotsky and Lenin had argued that continuities with pre-Revolutionary bourgeois culture should be preserved and extended rather than discarded. What Taylor shares with Lenin and Trotsky is the attempt to apply Marxist categories to literature, and a desire to supplement official underwork with active participation in political struggle. Taylor's critical method is based on the assumption that

the writer, a legacy, the product of the society and the culture that it enriches and that it undermines, of that society acts like searchlight upon his work (1943a:12).

and it is towards the identification of the social roots of art, that much of Taylor's criticism is directed. Her examination of South African literature, in particular, now of the priority she gives to the historical and material circumstances in which literature is produced. She argues that the economic, political and social context of cultural production in South Africa has had a distinct bearing on the kind of culture which has emerged. As she puts it: 'A culture ... bears[] the stamp of its material basis' (1943b:12). According to her, the compromised political and economic position of white English-speaking South Africans in the 1840s, bolstered by a number of racial and capitalist notions, led inevitably to a sterile literature which could contribute nothing to social change, and the conclusion that such a rotten foundation culture, art and even literature can hardly expect to meet 'greatest fulfilment' (1943b:12).

Another good example of how Taylor applies her materialist method to particular literary texts is her examination of writing by black South Africans. She begins by examining oral traditions. Like Tugan, Taylor's way of an extended endorsement of pre-colonial oral traditions. For Taylor, the material conditions which produced these cultural forms in the first place have been irreversibly destroyed by the domination of 'the white life' (1943b:10) and colonialism as she later exist in the present only in 'faded splendour' (1943b:10) form. Consequently, she gives attention to those cultural forms which emerge in response to rural surveillance and proletarianisation, and become 'literature' that is an active process of creation and is a reflection of life as it is lived in the present' (1943b:10). Here, Taylor's remarks echo Trotsky's positive but more distant for the cultural 'discontinuity' of an urban existence. And

while she recognises that the desire to preserve indigenous oral traditions can be an important element of an insurgent nationalism, she is also wary of the ideological and political consequences of such preoccupations in the hands of the less scrupulous. For the government official, their experience is used to justify oppressive racial policies like 'trusteeship' and 'separate development', and for the missionary – under the auspices of a mission-controlled press—they become a vehicle for religious indoctrination, turning to African writing of the early twentieth century. Taylor argues that the material conditions of racial oppression and economic exploitation, and a corresponding political docility, have been inimical to the growth of culture.

Culture requires a sound basis on which to build. Where is it for the African? There is no basis. There is an abyss. Africans form an oppressed mass without political power, without democratic rights, their cultural and economic destitution is summed up in the past laws, in the Coloured People's Act, in the Urban Areas Act, in the Land Act, in the whole policy of segregation. Under such conditions there must be cultural destitution also (1943m:12).

Aside from the poverty of its material base, another factor that contributes to the mediocrity of writing by black South Africans, Taylor argues, is the fact that African writers are reliant on a mission-controlled press. Apart from the restrictions on subject matter imposed by missionaries, the dominance of religious values results in the stifling of social protest and freedom of expression, the falsification of history in keeping with official historical orthodoxies, and blindness to the injustices of colonial conquest. For Taylor, it is a conservative literature which perpetuates rather than challenges oppression. In support of her argument, she cites H.I.E. Dhlomo's positive reading of the cattle killing incident in 1857 in his novel *Nongqawse*, an event which secured white economic and political control over the amaXhosa. Similarly, Taylor endorses R.R. Dhlomo's realistic depiction in *An African Tragedy* (n.d.) of social conditions in the Johannesburg of the 1920s, but argues that his concern with individual morality and the Christian themes of sin and repentance prevents him from either describing or critiquing the social forces which have produced the situation he depicts. Growing political consciousness, a common sense of oppression, collective organisation and the 'determination of a whole people to strive for democratic rights' (1942m:15) are the necessary pre-requisite for the production of 'a culture worthy of its name' (1942m:10).

Taylor emphasises class in her study of black writers. In an argument which anticipates the 1970s materialist rejection of both Eurocentric and Africanist approaches to writing by black South Africans, she points to the anomalous position of educated black writers in the social formation—as members of a privileged group, alienated both from the majority of uneducated blacks and their white oppressors, and implies that their position of partial social and economic elevation in relation to the

¹⁰ In Kinnegard, see also her discussion of the work of Peter Abrahams (1943n).

working masses, makes them reluctant to challenge the status quo.

It is not the forgotten, either, that the few who continue against odds to exist, have their redoubt, but the precarious footing between two worlds. They are neither at ease with their oppressed brothers, nor are they accessible to the white man. . . . They are not even acquainted with the idea of losing. Through daily action on their part the little they have gained is gradually lost, is soon again a prey to the devouring of poverty (1921:12).

As with her analysis of black South African writers, so too in her understanding of white South African writing, Taylor like Trotsky argues that art is an expression of class interests. Taylor distinguishes between William Plomer and Roy Campbell's social critiques (*An Arabian Horse* [1925] [1985], and *The Wreckers* [1926] [1971] respectively) on the basis of their class affiliations. According to Taylor, Campbell's critique is the 'expression of contempt of the post-bourgeois world on the part of the poetic aristocrat' (1943:12) while Plomer's is the scepticism of the bourgeois intellectual in the aftermath of World War I. Taylor's analysis of class and race in South African literature is informed by the notion of racialised amongst Luvu Movement members of race as a construct, and 'racism' [as] a more expansive use of capitalism' (Sanders 1986:96). While South African writers, then,

reflect the ideology of their class and culture. When they are of an African or a Coloured race the prizes of their book are more than a decorative canopy. . . . They write as members of a dominant white caste looking down at other and alien groups and species. When, like a native, they are victims, an object of discrimination, pity, hate is a problem, a threat, a threat to white policy and white civilization (1942:10).

A final instance of her critical method is the series of articles on late nineteenth and early twentieth-century European and American poetry published in 1944, which resembles the kind of wide-ranging cultural and economic analysis attempted by the English Marxist Christopher Caudwell in *Mind and Reality* (1937). The series of political, social and economic crises which mark European history from the mid nineteenth century are understood to have produced certain observable reactions in the artistic production of the period. These she summarises as a 'tendency towards a more strongly marked individualism in art, and more complete occupation of the Ivory Tower' (1944:13). This broad conception of artistic movements in relation to changes in the economic base is qualified by a recognition, first, that artistic movements are subject to their own laws of development and, second, that individual responses may take different forms:

The development of literary tradition moves in a line, a simple thing to be traced mechanically in each country in parallel lines according to the development and decline of capitalist society or social. While the economic base is an invaluable and essential guide in tracing the rise of certain characteristic concepts, the human factor always governs the process.

change, assimilation, imitation and revolt when imitation looks for the genuine spirit of the movement in its beginning (1944:12).

Where Van Heyningen consistently elevated literature above politics, Taylor insisted upon the primacy of economics and politics in relation to literature. This is most vividly apparent in how they understand the relationship between literature and social change. There is the traditional disagreement between the idealist and the disincarnate materialist: Van Heyningen stresses the role of ideas in historical change, and Taylor looks to revolutionary insurgency. Commenting on early twentieth century attempts to awaken Irish national sentiment by means of Celtic theatre and the work of the Gaelic League, Taylor argues that

it is well known that revolutions cannot be made by literary or cultural movements: the deep social distortion of the masses must supply the urge to action (1941:15).

Similarly, Upton Sinclair is guilty of

over-emphasiz[ing] the role which art plays in the social process, the time for art as a weapon of propaganda, as the maker of a new world. Art in many varied and subtle ways reflects social problems, accompanies great historical movements and the study of art illuminates them. But Sinclair was compelled to regard art as a lever for social change, as the mighty agent of a peaceful revolution, as a substitute for the workers taking over by force (1943:16).

Here, Taylor draws on Trotsky's understanding of the relationship between literature and its economic base. For Trotsky (echoing Hegel),

the nightingale of poetry, like that bird of wisdom, the owl, is heard only after the sun has set. The day is the time for action, but at twilight feeling and reason come to take account of what has been accomplished (1923:53).

And for Taylor,

it is not possible to step from one to the other in a political program, that is, in a specific. Creative literature is formless without a deep feeling for the assimilating of experience (1943:15).

What follows from this understanding of the relationship between literature and social change is that literature should not be pressed into the service of a political cause. For Taylor, this is to confuse art with politics.

Taylor's unwillingness to abandon her category of the 'literary' in pursuit of 'political' art, and her far more nuanced understanding of the relationship between literature and its material context did not prevent her work from being compartmented by both laymen and academics as Stalinist propaganda and vulgar determinism. Much of

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'Here be Dragons': Challenging 'Liberal' Constructions of Protest Poetry

Priya Narismulu

In addition to the apartheid State, the emergent culture of liberation had to contend with another hegemonic formation, comprising white English-speaking intellectuals who took an interest in South African literature. Liberals have been highly influential in the production and reception of literature in English through university English departments, literary journals and literary magazines, publishing houses (the English Academy of South Africa, the Grahamstown Festival, the Market Theatre), and most of the English press. Despite their influence, the liberals have been a small group. Estimating that liberals comprised some 5% of South Africa's population, Peter Dinko (1995) argues that

a culture claiming to be that of the majority of the population of variation is a broken culture and a hybrid culture. It is, that we saw through the proposition that it represents us more fully than we do.

While Dinko's conclusion is important, the size of the liberals is but a fraction of his estimate. Further, although there has been a tendency to refer to this group uncritically as liberals, it has ranged from what may be designated as conservative 'bourgeois' or 'left liberals'. Although ambiguous, the term 'conservative liberals' usefully describes those

See Anne Dinko (1990-1991) critique of the role of the Market Theatre between 1970 and 1980.

The Urban Commission's statistics suggest that whites as a whole employed a little over a million people, i.e. 12% of the population (Urban Commission 1994: 225). During the 1987 white elections, the English-speaking vote for the National Party (the erstwhile National Party) lost its position as a united opposition to the Transvaal Party (now the English-speakers have supported groups to the benefit of the National Party). Clearly, amongst white English-speakers there are expressions of the white, which is not usually included in such statistics (1978-1989) in the National Geographic. Distribution between white groups primarily associated with the setting of what they believed to be their interests and values and the national's concern with the social and linguistic inclusion of the black domination in the economy.

who sought to characterise themselves as liberal but who were also concerned with maintaining their privilege of position in the existing structure of power.

Sociologists who have studied the white community of the states conclude that, on the whole, one is dealing with a conservative majority and this includes the English-speaking South Africans whose liberal tradition has been greatly exaggerated. Although there is no aggressive racialism among many of them, prejudice and stereotypes still exist towards the black community ... abroad (Adewusi-Pooyan 1984:21).

This group is central to understanding the hesitations, silences, gaps and misdirection in the literary discourse that deals with the development of resistance literature, in a country moving towards civil war in which literature offered people resisting the State a forum, conservative liberals as members of the institutional forces that have sought to neutralise resistance writers. This had the effect of naturalising economic and political domination behind prescriptions of taste, despite the fact that, as Madeline Gerdner (1988a:228) has pointed out, 'the white middle-class establishment was not, as it claimed, the paradigm of South African life, and what culture was not the definitive South African culture'. Central to the existence of the minority interest group has been its ability to impose:

its own categories and problems, its particular selections and its version of the world on all other sectors ... to perpetuate the conceptual and cultural divorce concerning its own law (McCarteal & Siegfried 1983:17).

Although there were lively and varied experiments in poetry and other genres (notably drama and music) in the 1970s and 1980s, there were very few attempts to develop a sense of what these expressions might mean, particularly in relation to the socio-political contestation and transformation that was underway. Significantly, the revision of liberal South African historiography that had been undertaken by writers such as Johnstone, Walpe, Trapido and Legassick in the early 1970s seemed to have bypassed literary studies. Writers kept claiming that they were apolitical in a highly politicised society, as revealed in the articles of Douglas Livingstone (1974; 1978). As the State policed cultural production, conservative liberal intellectuals believed that they operated 'in abstraction from the institutional sites in which the complex relations of discourse and power are actually negotiated' (Pechey 1984:57).

I will argue that the ideological position of the conservative liberals caricatures the dilemma of settler cultures: never inhospitable and too remote from the European centre, they compensated for their marginality by asserting their power in the

ex-colony as non-relational guardians of access to the centre of cultural life. In particular A.G. Ulliyatt and Stephen Watson have clearly shown their presumption of themselves as part of the principal interpretive community. This bears similarities to the widespread assumption among intellectuals of themselves as the natural audience of literature, as exemplified by Stanley Fish's (1980) 'interpretive community'. Such a position is produced through the tactical delimitation of the main 'community' so as to enable one group, in this case, it turns out, to impose the terms of their own perception, to be perceived as they perceive themselves (see Mathean & Siegfried 1983:19). In this way, questions regarding the sources of interpretive authority are, in effect, and ultimately resolves as if by default, upon a very intellectual criterion which constitutes itself as universal, transparent and ahistorical, but which has tended to be white, male, middle-class and Anglocentric. The presumption of a truly homogeneous audience represents a tactical disregard of the deep divisions in South African society.

'protest literature'

All critics declare not only their judgement of work, but also their claim to the right to talk about it and judge it. In short, they take part in a struggle for the monopoly of legitimate discourse about the work of art, and consequently in the production of the value of the work of art (Rancière 1990:15).

Using English offered black resistance writers a better chance of being published. This was partly the result of the State's control, division and underdevelopment of the indigenous languages. There was scarcely any structured support for the development of a literary culture in any of the indigenous languages. Further, given the State's patronage of publishing monopolies that adhered to its line, there was no space for independent publishers and other structures of production. In addition to the hegemonic power of the English language which made many black writers feel obliged to write in English (their second or third language), there were strategic reasons. Writers judged that publishing in English rendered their work less susceptible to State interference, while it increased their access to a broader community of South Africans resisting apartheid and to people located beyond the borders who read English. They took their decision in a context inospitable to their artistic and political aims.

Some of those in charge of English language publication and validation used State repression, either consciously or unconsciously, to advance their power and interests. To maintain their cultural dominance they tried to advance and deflect the challenge of resistance writing. Ulliyatt's article 'Dilemmas in Black Poetry' (1977) is a

⁴ For Kibbey's *Sales* (199:161) 'If they have a power of exclusion and access, it secures them, by the powers of discrimination ... I would add, that the idea against production of conservative literature is exemplified in Western international economic interests ... to conserve the monopoly of the West in the Western sphere' (Spivak 1988:211).

⁵ The sole publisher in Zululand chose to publish Mkhazi's *Exile* in 1976, where the town, which necessitated his leaving, came under military and English and public order curfew, as well as had to go into exile.

black affect to counter cultural dominance by containing, marginalising or excluding resistance literature. Ujyatt employs a host of colonialised terms like 'folkloristic poetics', 'authenticity' and 'tradition' while ignoring the effects of the State's repression on black writers and writing. Ujyatt was challenged by Stubbs (1978), Soló (1978) and Mungai Brown (1979). Less extensive, though still Eurocentric (and more influential than Ujyatt's article), are the approaches of the editors of various poetry anthologies. For instance, in their introduction to *Peoples of the Land: An Anthology of South African Poetry* the editors, Marcia Lavezzo and Jonathan Paton (1985:7), make the following assertion:

Our intention is to give the reader a sense of the development of South African policy since its beginnings with Thomas Pringle in the early nineteenth century.

Leveson and Parnis identify of South African poetry with white English South African poetry is significant. Their comments indicate the gap between the phenomenon of resistance poetry in English (which had appeared for more than a generation) and its reception by critical academia. Another example that suggests an unconscious Anglocentrism occurs in a press interview with the winner of the Saulman Literary Award in 1987, Professor Michael Chapman. Discussing the struggles of creative writers to deal with social reality, he remarked:

Poverty in South Africa is not a precocious re-emergence. Since the 1870s it has engaged itself with local and international agencies (see Maffioletti 1983: 11).

Both sets of statements clarify the evaluations on which conservative liberal discourse was founded. Many South African resistance poems of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s show the influence of indigenous and traditions that predate Pringle and British settlement. In this regard, the omission of indigenous literary/cultural traditions from

In the 1960s it was surprising if black writers were included at all. *South African Writing Today*, edited by Nadine Gordimer and Lionel Lincoln (1967) is more representative of South African writing than *The Penguin Book of South African Verse* (1968), edited by Jack Cope and Leo Krige. The latter included English translations of poets writing in Afrikaans and African languages, although no African writers who wrote in English were included (See *African Poetry* 1984:173).

Leveson and Paken's remarks before various panels at the conference of the State in Africa of 1989¹⁰ – the British government's claim that South Africans rejected sanctions was accepted as a 'long question' in most public forums and by the time of the 1990s, the basic assumption being that the term 'South Africans' meant only white Africans. By contrast, Mark Owen's (1988) approach to attitudes towards sanctions demonstrated that most black South Africans favoured the imposition of sanctions, and were prepared to endure short-term hardship on the road to the reintegration of a nation.

Chapman's contribution is particularly surprising given the Chapman and Danger anthology (1987), which has 'Sam' and 'Kheh-Nho' material, and Chapman's extensive representation of 'black positive' series of anthologies. It seems much to suggest the extent to which ideology overrides data. This type of contradiction may be found, for example, in *Is Antilean*; Gellal has suggested, in different circumstances, a history:

The colonialists have a habit of telling us that when they arrived in Africa they wrote into history. You are well aware that this is the company – when they arrived they took us out of our own history (quoted in Ochi, 1986: 63).

A further problem with this mode of representation is encapsulated in Chapman's shorthand use of the term 'Soweto Poets' (e.g. in his 1982 collection *Soweto Poetry*) to refer to poets such as Serepe, Gwala, Sepumba and Mshali, when only one of them, Sepumba, actually lived in Soweto for a time. Mafika Gwala (1929-70), the poet-activist from Mputumalanga (KwaZulu-Natal), challenged the reductive and inaccurate use of the internationally-recognisable name:

I refuse to be called a "Soweto Poet". We have all disagreed with the labeling — a good example of liberal paternalizing. I just cannot consider myself in the mould of a "Soweto Poet". Living with constant fear and other angst in this country does not revolve around Soweto alone.

Like Chapman, Levenson and Paton's group interest seems to prevent them from accounting for the impact of other cultural traditions in their construction of the development of South African poetry. The statements of Levenson and Paton (1982:1) and Chapman (in MacGregor 1987:1) suggest that they could only imagine their readership to be conservative liberal white English-speaking South Africans like themselves. Ulyatt's mystification of the continent is part of an approach that chooses to ignore the material conditions that inform black culture and literature, one exemplified by Douglas Livingstone's (1978:10-15) well-known poem 'August 24th'. Responding to Ulyatt's (1978:53) invocation of the 'perennial problem' of whether politics and poetry can mix', Joe Slabbert (1978:48) counters that such a question is ill-posed, 'it doesn't exist in a country where going to the toilet is political'.

Gwara's objection to the label "Newest Poet" has a parallel in Njohu's Ndiebele's opposition to the title of his anthology of black poetry, *Ask the Black Man*. It was edited by Tim Couzens and Essop Patel and published by the progressive publishing house, Raven Press. Ndiebele's (1983:45) sister objections tend to show the implication in the title that the collection comprised "poet's poetry":

Name of the person who has been waiting the people who wanted to hear me

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conclusion they have been, we take it, as a measure of our success in doing so, and our paper aims to shed light upon them in a recent performance analysis.

Nickel's broad literature responsibility, and his desire to share in the corruption of society, literature is a guilty victim in an oppressive society. There have been differing views regarding the meaning of the term "prequel fiction" in the period in which it occurred. Richard Rye (1943:26) offers a sense of the concept:

perfect intention [intended] by the fundamental principle of the complete rationality and intellectual work of the organism. Its identity is produced by having manifested action and the writer who gives the voice and sound of "freedom".

Some activist-writers like Dennis Brutus described themselves as protest writers in the 1960s (see Chimpenyezi 1993:151). So did the poet and critic Cosmo Pieterse (c. 1969), who used the term in the period before the rise of Black Consciousness. Pieterse and Pieterse's sense of the term (particularly given Brutus' sports activism) was quite remote from the diluted meaning the term acquired in conservative liberal discourse (which Kuvshin analyses in postface). Given the earnings, house arrests and exit permits to which his stage writers like Bruns and Alex la Guma were subject, sympathetic foreign audiences were often all they could participate in the short and uncertain term. The combination of the political expression and liberal cultural dependency may have led some of the next wave of intellectual writers to approach sympathetic and influential foreign audiences in place of their work, it is possible, for example, to read Oswald Mtshemi's Mshali's 'The Master of the House' (1972:55) and Mshemi, as Ntshali's 'South African Dialogue' (in Chapman & Danger 1987:44) as protest that appealed to an sympathetic fraction of the ruling class (the liberals) for relief (Cowan 1993: 12). This suggested that

Recent progress in the understanding of the expression of literature as a variety of personal responses to texts and to social and literary contexts is discussed, and the importance of

There is a need for more liberal black artists and writers like Eubank Rice (1963, 294) and ways of life to create an 'Afro-ecological' environment and 'green life' (p. 294).

We find $\beta \approx 0.7$ for $\alpha = 1$ and β decreasing to zero as α approaches the final product $\alpha = 1$.

In 1982 Raven Press supported by granting him one of the nationalities of the *Revista de la Unión Soviética*. Since 1982, Raven Press (1982-1983), the first part of which was taken from the 1982-1983 Raven Press (1982-1983).

David Mervin, *Journal of American Studies*, 40 (1996), 1, 107-120.

show results in terms of standard deviation by week.

River (1983:23) also pointed out that 'almost all contemporary writers do not fit comfortably' into the category of protest literature. According to Gareth Corwell (1980:58), River described protest literature as 'writing produced by blacks for white consumption'. Corwell (1980:58) identified River's position with the argument that

It was essentially negative within power as α was in increasing a symmetric attitude, our analysis on the readability.

The citation rate between Rorty's position as a liberal/liberal critic and the position of liberal/liberal critics is significant (one will be examined later).

In early studies in the left of Peru, such as registered Madoza and Moras (1990), registered greater problems with the concept of 'protest' in rural Indians (p. 99) or the addressed name of the problems of being very different from the existing questions such as 'Why the migration?' (p. 17) and 'declaring that' (p. 18) has been offered present literature has not its change in some extent (Sánchez 1993: 235). However, (1991: 62) also expressed some concerns that:

Now more than ever, it has become necessary to reexamine the African literature as protest. Protest literature is writing by the normally marginalised and/or excluded from the centre of power in an attempt to initiate change, sympathy and support against discriminatory areas and measures. . . . Protest springs from a feeling of being wronged, it is the outcry of the marginalised and the underclass of subordinates who see themselves as such. It is both collective and individual. It functions within the system, often with regard to the process, prescribes channels of communication, and respects hierarchy and order. The end in view of protest is reform, not revolution. Protest is a call for amendment, for improvement and struggle for empowerment.

The term *protest* has quite a different meaning in conservative liberal discourse to the construct in resistance discourse, as Maramba begins to suggest in his subsequent references to the Kari and Carter (1991:609) text. At the same time Maramba's unwitting conflation of the two occurring under the conservative liberal rubric attests to its hegemonic power: a power that is part of a neo-colonial process of abusing the production of emerging writers from the cultural production of the oppressed minority. It is all out about the history of protest action, mass political mobilization and national resistance that characterized political behaviour over many decades (such as the Defiance campaigns, the Sharpeville demonstration and the Soweto riots of 1976). Instead, the term carries the implication that resistance writers could only imagine dealing with oppression through a base-level and individualised literature of complaint, which suggests that Wally Serote was qualified only as a poet, not a

The authors' very concept of "China's free trade" is precisely the opposite of their own realities, serves to confuse and distort. (quoted by World 1989: 152)

constructing an audience

"I never meant to rebel
in the name of love"
(Sylvia Plath 1980:20)

It is possible that some resistance writers may have written for a liberal white audience for reasons that have to do with power and access: the effects of liberal hegemony, which suggest the naturalness of such a readership, rather than this was the result of universal reception. The pressure upon emerging writers in a highly stratified society to accept a marginal identity in the cultural space of a dominant group, a desperate need to be published, or a belief that little else was possible, given the level of political awareness. However, most resistance writers' struggles for equality tended to inform their relationships with all their audiences, ruling out the obscuring literature of non-political protest that came parallel with the liberal appellation. Ndebele's (1991:411) objection to his title *Ask Any Black Man* challenges the hegemonic assumptions regarding the audience of protest literature. While such a title directs the anthology of (mainly) resistance poems towards liberal whites (implied in the power-ladder issue of *who* does the asking), it reinforces the conservative liberals' position that "protest literature" was directed primarily towards themselves. Ndebele's (1991:45) continuing disquiet over these constructions of audience is evident in his assessment, years later, that "[t]he question of the audience for this 'protest literature' is a problematic one."

Many resistance poets had complex notions of their intended audiences. The radical writer James Matthews treated his different audiences in quite distinct ways:

Cry/Poet is manifestly intended for two kinds of reader, by definition very different from each other: to his white readers, Matthews shouts his disgust and warns of the approaching 'day of anger', while he tries to open the eyes of his black readers to their situation and to mobilise their courage and political rage by Alvarez-Pereira (1984:20).

Owing to the structural violence of apartheid (which had consequences for education, language policies, library facilities and the identity of the book-buying public²), the construction of emerging readers was largely an act of faith on the part of the writers, who anticipated and fostered their development. By inscribing themselves as the principal audience these liberals further marginalised or negated people who had been

systematically excluded by the apartheid dispensation. By diminishing the complex range of readers assumed by resistance writers (including the sympathetic audience that were developing overseas), and presenting themselves as the sole or most significant audience, the conservative liberals tried to increase their control over the reception of the literature. Ndebele's (1991:45) raises the implicit contradiction in such a position:

Such factors as the levels of literacy in English among the African population would obviously point towards a particular audience, an English-speaking liberal one at that. But that audience, schooled under a European literary tradition, was in turn schooled to reject the literature 'meant' for them.

From the late-1960s most activist-writers (like Matthews) responded by focusing their attacks not just on the State but on conservative liberal attempts at containing resistance literature. Black Consciousness writers, in particular, challenged the self-serving parameters that legitimated a familiar authoritative interpretive community. Ndebele (1991:45) comments sceptically that:

Conventional wisdom proclaimed that [protest] literature was justified on its supposed appeal to the conscience of the white oppressor.

Through the construct of protest literature liberal intellectuals installed themselves as the intended audience of resistance writers with the suggestion that as a sympathetic portion of the ruling bloc they would intercede on behalf of the oppressed. This manoeuvre is captured in Anne McClintock's (1987:229) description of them as

careful squanders of moral teachers, advisors, and bewildered [sic] ears: those who are moral but admiring the legitimacy and 'universality' of the ruler's values³.

However, there was great science about their attendant responsibilities: all that was evident was the presence of a fastidious audience. The strategy served to strengthen the legitimacy of the conservative liberal hegemony, while freeing the supposed intercessionaries from action and accountability. That Ndebele's (1991:45) has been alert to the contradiction is evident in his persistent question:

But what of the audience for whom this literature was not subjectively meant? What about its effective audience?

This is the key issue. Although it is not addressed directly in the essay in which it is

² In South Africa the level of apartheid (which had consequences for education, language policies, library facilities and the identity of the book-buying public), the construction of emerging readers was largely an act of faith on the part of the writers, who anticipated and fostered their development. By inscribing themselves as the principal audience these liberals further marginalised or negated people who had been

They responded to political and economic crisis by writing against the 'corruption of the intrinsic values of the craft for political ends: formal ineptitude, loss of individual expression and originality' (McClintock 1987:247).

noted, the title of the essay, 'The Rediscovery of the Ordinary', offers direction:

The hegemony of distasteful publishers, editors and critics hampered resistance writers, and even early challenge to their influence came from David Evans. Evans had been imprisoned for five years for sabotage in the 1960s (*American Poetry* 1981:85). Writing in 1966, after his release, Evans challenged prescriptions about the role of the poet in a police State. In the poem 'If Poe's Mind Have Flags' Evans suggests that critics chase the disorientated, ideological, formalist and New Critical interpretive paradigms because of their own historical crisis of location.

They
ask the poet to be
a poor bird in a cage (in Feather 1966:202)

The conclusion contains an engaged and defiant manifesto. Attacking petty bourgeois sensibilities, Evans rejects the liberalist ideological ruse that dealt with its political marginality by asserting its cultural significance:

We refuse

We'll google and free
explaining the corpses
refusing the rot
revealing the holes ripped by the shot
We'll wrap around our banners
the guts of the road
- if we must have flags
L. Matthews as shared in, Weinberg 1980:200)

During the late 1960s and early 1970s a strong contingent of black poets emerged (in literary magazines like *The Classic*), and in 1971 Lionel Abraham published an anthology of Oswald Mtshali's poems *Sounds of a Conditio Dram*, which initiated debate on the value of black poetry. Liberal intellectuals responded with reviews, debates, articles and conferences, while reservations were expressed by writers like Seneke, Ndebele and Rive, who were preoccupied with the realities of the State. These writers, like Matthews and Gwala, rejected the official version of 'primal literature', what they saw as an ideological category that did violence to their work. Rejecting any control over the production of resistance writing, James Matthews created a company called Blue Publishing House in his home township of Ashburton, the Cape Flats, licensed by the attempts to police poetic discourse. Matthews (1984:24) rejected the title of poet, declaring 'I am not a poet'. He explained his position as

follows:

I've become known for me, the Durbanas, Hargreaves, Sadhana and I, etc. etc. Dying children – starving, poor, sick – I could write not – I was not doing anything about the situation. I felt physically ill. I wrote. It was not poetry. Critics have known it. It was not poetry. I mean, did it want, I write expressions of feelings (Matthews 1984:72)

Backed into a false dichotomy by the critics' prioritisation of an over-politised, Matthews insisted that the form his writings took was less important than their substance. Peter Horn (1994:15) records Matthews' reaction to the term 'Poetry?': 'Bullshit'. Gareth Cornewell (1980:67) pointed out that to

judge Matthews' work in terms of an aesthetic ideology – which he was deliberately jeered – is inappropriate. . . . For Matthews it is clear that the message is indeed a more important than art.

A later anthology by Matthews, *Feathered Walls and Other Delights* (1990), is pointedly subtitled 'a collection of feelings'. Matthews echoes the dilemma that Ntombiyandé Kubiye a Kucheka (1979:64) expressed a decade earlier in 'What art did I have a good laugh?':

There are no poem – writing
No art – not rags
These are my feelings

Mufike Gwala (1984:43) also challenged the 'academics who claim an almost presidential authority over black writing', demanding:

what moral right does he [critic] have to judge my style of writing? What guidelines outside the culture of domination has he applied? (Gwala 1984:48)

This moral right was simply assumed by some critics who depicted the restless and alienated character of western poets and other artists as being 'natural' and archetypal. By fetishising literature they attempted to avoid the insistent social and political issues. This is evident in the critical work of the most prominent representatives of this tradition in the period under survey, Lionel Abraham and Stephen Watson. As Abraham's work has received much attention¹², the focus will be on Stephen Watson.

¹² Through Abraham's involvement in literary societies such as PEN (1986:286-501) and through his work as an editor he supported emerging writers. The first collections of Mtshali and Seneke were published with this support.

¹³ Kelsey Sol's (1988) review of a collection of Abraham's work is particularly incisive. It joins Mike Kirkwood's (1976) analysis of Gary Barker's work in 'The Colours of a Culture: The English South African Cultural Theory'.

apparently racist international arguments of immigration, the fact remains that cultural differences exist. The idea that only WASP culture is universal, a racial ideal which until very recently was widely practiced (Sigmund Freud included) at St. Paul's in 1984-85.

It is significant for the construction of 'protest literature' yield, in part, from its purpose, that it is supposed to subject resistance writing, even as it mimics the history, ideological orientation and political power of the hegemonic literary. Peter Ikenberry (1994: 18) early work, *Poems of bourgeois protest*, may be read as a cynical reaction to such an aggrandisement. Ikenberry, who worked within close proximity of various conservative liberal circles, expressed his exasperation at the increasing role of the literary establishment.

to people start making their
 future needs clear
 to his sibling and my
 dad also wanted to give a few words
 and share his experience.

to listen you've listened. I'm happy
to help you
everything been going on every day
looking at you're looking. I bottle of beer
a lot better. I've been a patchy
of my FORM and CONSENT you

TOURASSETTY VOICES HEARD (from 1991-2000)

Horn exposes the economic and planning logic at the awards of the high culture purveyors, illustrating Bourdieu's (1977:185) argument that 'all practices, including those purporting to be disinterested' can be treated as 'economic practices directed towards the maximising of material or symbolic profit'. This culture is an arena in which symbolic but not less serious struggles over resources, access and authority occur.

איזערט? נאך גארדן פארט? נאך אלע זאכן?

Power is making you dream
while the release of the country are being
Power is making you sleep
While they tell the jet is good again

We get:

Poems for you and your altered sleep.
Poems which do not disturb you nor
The quiet of a Sunday afternoon.
When the sun rises in the morning was cantabile
And the sky shone and the sea was calm.

55. put us on:

Harris's response to the cultural struggles of the 1980s was to challenge defensive liberal objections to thorough-going social transformation.¹ In "The seventh class" Harris (1991: 94) urges his readers to ignore the polemics of the dismantled beneficiaries of apartheid. The poem understands his audience (over) to be complicit, who insist the oppressive system:

There will be those who only see the narrow short-sighted vision of the distribution of the population of the world as far as time. They will no longer own the riches of the previous times nor get themselves off existing and both can not be confused by them.

While critics like Watson have fixated narrowly and retroactively on issues such as the quality of expression, the challenge for most canonized writers and critics was to begin to construct a critical discursive space against, and despite, the repression of the State and the oppression of many privileged users.

Watson concludes the 'Under Pressure' essay with a defensive attempt to prop up his elated reservations of value by referring to the supportive remarks of his students, some of whom, he suggests, may have been slack. Even if that were not an issue, the

¹ For theoretical identifications of this social institution see Bond and (1994:125), and Fick (1992:171). The institutionalization of an unpolished discursive form under the guise of neutral, objective, fact-serving, self-evident ideogamy is demonstrated; informality in the exercise of the current national-social power in the South African academy. The situation is not at all ideologically naïve. In the preceding voices in literary studies, a self-evident universalism (Hesse, 1990:7). See also Spivak (2000:1-16) on 'universal particularity'.

Like Horn, other progressive white writers such as Jeremy Crossin and Kathryn Jo's have also addressed "the reality behind the mask" and the real poverty of a vast "part of the population," and behind the generally complacency and disavowal "a world afflicted by youth and subemployment, a world from which once-fellow men [sic]—those 'unlike others'—have been banished" (Crossin, *Review*, 158-159).

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Academic Exchanges

Shane Moran

The state of tertiary education in South Africa has been described in the following terms:

Finally, higher education is beset by legitimacy problems. In general the historically white institutions (and a number of black institutions) possess little moral and political legitimacy. Contrastingly, the majority of black institutions (and a few white institutions) have little or no academic credibility. Overall, the system is seen as one that perpetuates inequality, is hugely wasteful, and fails to serve the human-resource needs of the country. Higher education in South Africa fairly accurately reflects the society within which it is located (Mogale & Chene 1995:58).

Confronted with this legacy, the Government White Paper 'Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education' (July 1997) declares that the purpose of higher education in South Africa is to contribute to the socialisation of enlightened, responsible and constructive citizens possessed of reflective capacity and a willingness to review and reassess prevailing ideas. The authors of the White Paper propose upholding rigorous standards of academic quality and these pedagogical, political and ethical goals are to be achieved in a context where the funding differences between historically white and black universities remain, and where higher education for students is not an affordable or sustainable option. In short, South African universities are being called upon to become 'more representative in a country embracing political transformation along the lines of liberal capitalist democracy with its mixture of considerable political freedom and persisting socio-economic inequality'.

The authors of the White Paper view the relationship between institutions and society in terms of establishing an appropriate balance between higher and ordinary

1. 'The economy in the South Africa continues to largely represent what it was in 1993, except that there is more growth (publicly) and a few black faces and companies that participate in it. Otherwise it is business as usual' (Sam Sibanyoni, *Weekly Mail and Observer*, November 23, 1996). In the run-up to the 1999 elections, COSATU has been reminding the ANC that the will of the people, expressed in the 1994 election, did not sanction the market-driven policies of GEAR. Tony Lagden, then Financial Minister of the Democratic Party, has responded strongly to such 'deliberate insubordination' of the government and its policy by defaming GEAR and claiming that COSATU is 'negating against the grain of history' (see *Newsweek*, May 10, 1997). President Mandela and Deputy President Mbeki reiterated the same to the South African Communist Party's 100th congress (see *Newsweek*, July 2, 1998). Tony Craig responded to the reformist Party through growth or growth through redistribution immediately in *Mail and Observer*, July 10-13, 1998.

and public accountability. Although academic freedom is affirmed as a fundamental right protected by the Constitution, institutional autonomy is delimited by the need to redress the injustices of the past and meet the demands of globalisation. The stress on the material factors that constrain academic freedom echoes the 1990 'The Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility':

Intellectual freedom in Africa is currently threatened to an unprecedented degree. The historically persistent and persistent economic, political and cultural crisis of our continent continues to undermine development in all spheres. The impact of neo-colonialist structural adjustment programmes has been compounded by increased political aggression, widespread poverty and inadequate human development (in Daniel et al. 1995:234).

The homeopathic capacity of the market to open up opportunity and the necessity of affirmative action are balanced by awareness of the pitfalls of structural adjustment, principally the (supposedly short-term) contribution of monetarist policies to the emasculation of large sectors of the population. Although education is often dependent on a system that takes care to ensure that the great majority of those with equal rights shall get only what is essential for mere existence, higher education has an unmatched obligation to support a democratic ethos and fragile civil society. The earlier 'Lima Declaration on Academic Freedom and Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education' (1938) also addressed these 'economic factors' and stressed that:

Academic freedom is essential for efficient higher education, research, administrative and service functions, with which universities and other institutions of higher education have been entrusted (in Daniel et al. 1995:230).

A notable continuity between the Lima and Kampala declarations is the declaration of the right to education rather than the *de jure* guarantee of free tertiary education. The South African White Paper reflects this thinking and, given the Democratic advances and the existence of a state that can now claim legitimacy, curates the Kampala Declaration's commitment to institutional autonomy in the face of potentially authoritarian state power.

The foregrounding of the social function of South African universities provides an opportunity to reflect on their denationalisation and the contribution of academic autonomy to general freedom. In this essay I will indicate some of the challenges facing academics engaged in institutional democratisation and social transformation. Four areas will be addressed: 1) the connection between academics and democracy; 2) attempts to claim legitimacy in South African English literary studies; 3) South African feminism; and 4) manuscript studies.

academies and democracy

The tremendous debate on the higher education sector in South Africa has elicited a contribution from a senior Africanist Appiah, Chair of Comparative African Studies at

Harvard. Appiah sees the university as an agent of a form that must preserve its relative autonomy *vis-à-vis* the state. Although the power of academics is eroded, they can and should contribute to the transformation of society by resisting the regulation of university life according to the supply and demand of the marketplace and according to a purely technical ideal of competence. The correct recipe for South Africa is to be found in:

modern liberalism ... in the context for our reflections on the form of the university curriculum (Appiah 1997:79).

Liberals living in globally illiberal times can aid transformation by rethinking central beliefs:

We believe in private property and we believe in civil equality, but we don't support progressive taxation (Appiah 1997:79).

Appiah (1997:80,97) traces the language of liberalism to Kant, noting that 'individual autonomy is at the heart of political morality', and argues for the role of academics in 'the recreation of South African society'. The new South Africa, as the home of radical liberalism, and teachers of English literature in particular, can go beyond the utilitarian imperatives of the state and curriculum to the autonomy of citizens. The pedagogical contribution to the formation of free subjectivities is envisaged in formal terms, and the study of literature can bring about the realisation of liberal ideals, primarily democratic equality, by transcending divisive ideologies:

The study of literature, done well, teaches one to engage critically with what one reads, to work with its norms and presuppositions, to reflect on cultural and historical contexts, to ponder moral and political claims. These are skills beyond grammar, and they are skills that everyone needs if they are to think through carefully the quest on that face as any citizen (Appiah 1997:96).

As an answer to the interrogative acquiescence that criticism of the system invariably meets with — 'Yes, it's very unsatisfactory, we all know that; but what would you put in its place?'—Appiah argues that the South African university can contribute to liberation from the external authority of a corrupt society, and literature is part of this formative, educative, political experience. What are the shortcomings of Appiah's conception of the liberating role of academics and the university?

Firstly, Appiah is repeating key elements of English literary studies: his conception of the anti-ideological role of literature is strikingly close to that of F.R. and Q.D. Leavis — minus F.R. Leavis's iconoclasm and acute sense of the vested interests manipulating institutional power at universities. Significantly Appiah elides a central problem: in South Africa the realisation of liberal ideals hinges on the viability of overlaying divisive and unjust property relations with civic values of respect, equality and autonomy. Today the constitutional declaration of equality has to contend with entrenched neo-economic inequality, and the promotion of formal democracy is in a contest with the perpetuation of oppressive and unequal social relations. Here the

envisaged strictly off opportunity for appropriation grounded in reciprocal exchange and obligation is undermined by the persisting reality of possession by misappropriation. Those working within vital centres of epistemic power and conflict like the South African university—where the social identities of academics are forcefully intertwined with the mutually exclusive forces of political regeneration—are in a position to register the concept of academics at variance with the ideal of facilitators of critical thinking and enquiry. Students may have a less benign view of the social function and intentions of those employed to stand apart from better citizens. Universities are not the neutral, democratic structures, and the vision of the popular involvement of the community with a democratic society is not the same thing as democratic participation and control of the institution. Rather, universities exercise authority over their student constituency and back this up with coercive power, authority is defended by other social and political institutions that are committed to the protection of property, and which can not necessarily do so for the same enlightened principles as the university.

Anish's dilemma is that the autonomy of the academic committed to social justice is undermined by being located within an anti-democratic social institution that functions to both counteract and reproduce the inequality of existing property relations. Anish's free time is part of a hegemonic discursive ideology of individualism that both legitimises and challenges social inequalities. The degree to which Anish's argument pro-empirically positions potential alternatives as anti-democratic provides a glimpse of the Janus face of the new world order that normalises capitalism in terms of progress and freedom. This effectively excludes a vital political and pedagogical question: whether within the parameters of capitalism, the contribution of the human sciences to producing autonomous, critically thinking individuals able to step beyond current conditions and create new opportunities is best achieved by insisting consent through Rousseauistic sentiments of sociability, or by encouraging the radical interrogation of civil society (see Muller & Cloete 1991).

The possibility that factors of location and contest, sites of institutional power and discursive privilege, are creating oppressive epistemic relations hark to those who work in the shadow of 'Barbed Education'. In response South African retailers, and academics within English literate departments, have produced their own tradition of reflection on political pedagogy.

At least one person was shot dead and another injured on Tuesday this week when five and 700 private security guards moved in to demolish a long-standing informal settlement on the outskirts of Johannesburg's Midrand township. International and anti-apartheid activists in the South African National Civic Organisation (Nasco) condemned the 'brutality and heavy-handedness' of the action and accused the A.P.C. of 'colluding with the police to destroy' the settlement and 'murder innocent people' (African News Service quoted in *Mail & Guardian* 1997). While campaigning against the perpetration of capitalism of such crimes as 'the legacy of apartheid is still a machinery of ruling of the poor' (ibid. 1997:12).

academics and legitimacy

In the 1940s Geoffrey Durrant returned to Natal after studying English at Cambridge and announced the critical task of addressing

how the light can be made free, not only from government tyranny, but also from the more subtle and pervasive tyrannies of economic and social life (Durrant 1941:1).

Mantra for English literary studies were 'to humanise our knowledge and to make our Universities into centres of living thought for the whole community' (Durrant 1943:19). Durrant (1948) drew attention to the historical context of the production, reception and teaching of literature, and appealed for a more democratic post-war settlement in which a revised education system could confront the problems of modernisation and foster critical attitudes in students. Responding to the state's consolidation of racial capitalism, Durrant (1958) appealed for the preservation of the humanising value of Trevelyan in a hostile ideological environment.

Beyond the university in the 1950s, South African radical intellectuals saw the formulation of the aim of pedagogy as the mere transmission of culture as a reactionary attempt to rob education of its potency and force. Recognising that teachers have always held a hybrid position as quasi-civil servants and that they are paid by the very agencies of the government they may seek to challenge, claims were made for the counter-hegemonic potential of pedagogy. In a vibrant and now largely forgotten debate teachers and activists beyond the university interrogated the link between enlightenment and the political task of transforming the country by political struggle. The impositions and potential of political pedagogy were discussed in the context of the principle of non-collaboration with the racist state where participation in government institutions amounted to collaborating with the oppressors¹. Arguing against seeing the tactic of the boycott into a principle, Walter Sisulu (1957) proposed that participation in these institutions may at times be the most effective method of exposing them and struggling for more effective representation. A varied discourse of revolutionary praxis sought to address the oppressed masses with the call to challenge all existing centres of legitimacy, and transform institutions from an alien social power. Revolutionary enthusiasm was accompanied by sober warnings against overestimating the political effect of prominent acts by pedagogues in a context marked by a constrained and distorted public sphere.

By the early eighties, and then writing from outside South Africa, Durrant

¹ See Kdenzie (1973), Kirkwood (1976), Ntse (1977), Vuyiso (1984), Ansell (1984), Mvusi (1986), De Kock (1990), and Johnson (1996) for critiques of the South African English literary legacy.

² See P. L. Mzili (1982) and the response of A.K. Jordan. See also P. L. Mzili's (1984-1986) accounts of the 1935 school boycott and role of teachers in the PAC's Bojo during the 1960s, and Hyslop (1991).

(1981:28) asserted the goal of developing 'critical intelligence' and the preservation of 'academic autonomy' against crude demands for 'relevance' and 'commitment'. This involved 'the attempt to formulate a coherent programme of human education, responsive to changing historical conditions, an education centred on the assurance of humanity's 'humane finality', capable of providing nourishment 'for minds and for the earth, the question of how to live' (Lurie, 1981:29,38). Within South Africa, the prospect of the demise of the racial state and the challenge of creating a more representative multicultural university renewed a sense of the social mission of English literary studies among 'the crop alone the possibilities of debate about human and artistic issues' by means of 'a radical liberal consideration of connections between artistic and cultural responses' rather than a 'revolution of the existing paradigm of literary studies'.

It is not, for example, that some tendencies within Marxism are equally essentialist... Other tendencies are at times equally essentialist, principally in their insistence on identifying and taking strongly aligned positions about conflicting forces in an otherwise observable social reality which all witness, and the system is supposed to reflect, or even mediate... Given the present-day responsibility of the university to a heterogeneous humanity and social structure, it seems to me that literary studies may best serve students, whatever their race or ideology, by means of searching modifications and changes within the existing model (Lurie, 1985:157,159).

Within the many cross-currents of debate the 'focus on moving the government towards reform' was accompanied by a felt need to counter 'an autocracy of a Marxist-Leninist kind', and the worry was:

...but although ending apartheid is important, it might not to obviate the equally important task of creating a democratic culture which will support a post-apartheid democracy (West 1988:15).

The shape of the anticipated dispensation continued to excise anxious academics confronted with a crisis of university funding that continually reminded them of their status as state employees (see Givens 1988, Moulder 1988). Some English literary

scholarship concentrated on 'capital, surplus and socialist revolution' was linked outside of South Africa to Ngugi's Kenya. Farrow was characterised as an 'anti-nationalist and white and black alienation as model African barbarists—the latter in some designated "homeland" by younger Marxist elites in his country' (Lurie, 1989:23ff). The ideological overtones of this narrative suggest the naïveté of Doherty's (1986) contention 'the failure of Marxist materialist analysis to gain a national power in English literary studies can be attributed to the lack of paradigmatic practice. Rather there was a noticeable commitment between reformist academics and the government to form progress as sequences of capital, capitalizing the system and the state in turn and demanding Africanisation and the creation of a truly national, generally accessible literary and ideological canonism' (see the preface to the 1988 *Journal of English Literature*). The extent to which the failure to achieve a 'new' or 'newer' symbols of national identity, without a 'new' academic discourse, prevented the rise of a new

academics up to ideologically articulated the understanding of education to racist per se:

...traditional government policies—military and constitutional—in defence of segregation and white privilege can be held directly responsible for the shortage of funding to suffer (Muglane-Brown 1988:48).

Caution was expressed that 'the enligtening and emancipatory powers of education and culture' would fall before the

...of the into post-apartheid society rhetoric whose calm, universal, often ambivalent spiritual and intellectual emptiness (Lurie 1989:25,29).

Forebodings that the university will not be guided by 'the best reason but by the lowest common denominator', were accompanied for some in the humanities by a renewed sense of mission and an arising faith in the ability of the liberal canon of the English community to facilitate liberal democracy. English literature teachers were seen to have a role in altering students to the prejudices of the 'common mind'—be that a Nationalist or a pro-African 'Nationalist mind' (Nicholson 1989:4,10). Others negotiated in terms of the ANC's 1988 *Constitutional Guidelines*, and an ideal of reciprocity between those within the university and the broader community was seen to rest on a redefined social contract, the removal of the toxin of racism from the socio-economic sphere, and recognition by white academics of the need 'to become for a time the European-other' (Chapman 1989:21).

Reformist academics articulated the principles of legitimacy against revolution in terms of a pluralist model of democracy that respected the rights of minority groups but also recognised the primacy of the general will of the people. The hierarchies, forces and tensions of the university were viewed in functional terms amenable to modifications capable of re-tooling its institutional practices (distorted under the pressure of a despotic state) for a new political environment. The duty of English literary academics was conceived in terms of reflecting the experiences of a national conscience and utilising the educative potential of education to enable students to transcend corrosive ideological interests (see Marshall 1990, Wright 1991). The fact that such conciliatory and well-intentioned calls were issued from an institutional and bureaucratic space embedded within the material structures of a distributive system that oppressed the masses was not allowed to disturb the sense of the legitimacy of the counter-hegemonic discourse on the liberatory functioning of the university in an era of transformative reconstruction has taken the form of a shuttling between a vision of the university as a vital organic component of democracy and a knowledge of the often marginalised existence of academics.

The courage of those advocating the progressive vision in the era of the state's 'racial strategy', and the merit of this vision over its reactionary counterpart, should not be underestimated. Efforts within universities to counter the apartheid system by operating within the university and providing a platform for opposition was a vital contribution to the

The part that gender plays in academic power relations is difficult to ignore in a context where, in addition to the (non-existent) possibility of their research being prioritized by faculty members, female postgraduates can confront an abusive but institutionalised power offering preferment in exchange for sexual labour. The struggle continues when those same senior colleagues act as editors with control over publication. One might expect this position

What would feminist theory set on the institutional practices that constitute the university – to take only one forum in which political struggle and academic enquiry are enmeshed? (Schafetz 1980:6)

to have far-reaching consequences when these practices, as in other institutions, carry a legacy of authority. But if a momentary thaw will be repeated by other writers, David Schalkwyk (1990:51) is able to deflect any analysis of institutionalised practices into the pathos of generalised oppression that includes

male, marked, burdened for as long as the practices that constitute it and allows coexistence with benign, de Klerk's

The sexism of academia goes far beyond a vision of feminism as an ethical project rather than a struggle with specific power structures and their beneficiaries. The sentiment of empathy is central to Cheryl Locke's (1990:170) proposal that feminist academics

without a doubt, [be] a more sympathetic work environment for considering the work of their women – not to give them prize as educationally and academically privileged critics to listen to their voices as we formulate approaches to their works.

Only then might it be possible 'to bring about a necessary paradigm shift in the institutionalised power structures of English departments'. For Jenny de Rooij (1990:31) the role of academic as empathetic reader motivated by an ethics of solidarity is reassuringly unproblematic, and she offers the following prescriptive censure of prescription:

Clearly, within the bounds of reason one can speak about the for people one can legitimately evaluate other people's categories, theories and practices. For example, O. would, when they are concerned such understanding must be sensitive, searching and not prescriptive.

Ethics levels the playing field of historical victimisation and empathy opens up the conscious possibility of understanding and community; the legitimacy of the institution and the efficacy of its discourses and personnel are vindicated. The truth is that responsible academics can work from within institutional discourse to transcend its obvious limitations, otherwise

one would end up in a pathetic org. where the historian would have to

chandon. His or her work in favour of autobiography and the specifics of personal history only (Walker 1990:7, and cited in de Rooij 1992:1994)

The composition of the personnel of the university defined in terms of gender, race and class frames the ability of those academics to work against domination. But when a self-examination of their own practices academics can move beyond essentialist determination by social identity to clear a space for the (self)representation of South African women:

We can use our position as feminists within the academy to change current reading practices (Ryal 1990:28).

In a context where the university is one of the centres of the culture of imperialism as well as the site of its contestation, attention to social identity in the form of subject-positionality holds out the possibility of avoiding insensitivity:

Historically produced differences between feminist academics and their subjects may, and almost certainly do, lead to misunderstandings, misreadings, insensitivity within feminist research. Black researchers, black and white, need to be acutely aware of this problem. But this does not mean that to be used creatively, to power a genuinely dialectical interaction between two vigilantly conscientious subject-positions, perhaps some progress can be made towards understanding and changing the situation of all South African women (Austin 1991:127).

Philatery potential is dispersed thru a general resistance of academic autonomy and integrity capable of subverting dominant discourses and practices. For Suveen Hassien and Cheryl Walker (1992:83) what must be maintained is the difference between political activism and an academic discourse that

depends for its success on a different set of principles: rigour and clarity, intellectual honesty and adventurousness. These principles require a context of relative autonomy from the immediate political imperatives even though they may be informed by broader political projects.

Sara Magari countered liberal complacency by linking academic practices to social identity and political representation in order to position academics' historically specific interests. Recognition and reciprocity solve the odds of self-legitimation as academics exercise the 'habit' of power; generalising their particular interests and minimising the persisting distribution of the material means to enjoy rights. Magari (1990:23) pointed to the irreducible experiential gulf opened by the racialized class position of South African academics offering sensitivity

Struggle, within its concomitant oppressive structures, widens the gap between the experiences of black and white women. How can I, a white academic, understand black women and themselves and their work when I am not able to shift from her position?

Under a veneer of egalitarianism, academic discourse as the maintenance of self-legitimising discursive manoeuvres might regulate emergence, group solidarity, the expense of others. The social function of the university may be to reproduce rather than challenge existing social relations, and identifying centres of power in specific historical contexts has the aim of reaching beyond the academy to use the political threads of opposition to weave together women from divergent social and historical locations.¹⁰ This has involved disingenuousness between institutional policy and the actual function of academics in order to avoid both confronting academic work by women with 'local and institutional' discourses by turning the intra-institutional character of academic work into a kind of transcendent individual autonomy that both enables and is the goal of academic work.

Stagaglia's approach implicitly challenged the claim that academics are by vocation involved in working to 'enrich the education of students, and that the progressive potential of academic discourse is signalled by the exchange of conflict and struggle for 'universality' and 'dialogue' within the broad consensus of pluralism. Defensive accusations of racist counter-racism and the opportunities for strategic patronage secured by the screening of incoming personnel work in the interests of those maintaining but willing to modify, institutional hegemony. Those using the language of reciprocity may well be furthering their own interests and expressing the national self-interest of the beneficiary, the confession of a potential lack of neutrality (the problem of the ownership of knowledge) can be put aside in favour of appearing more responsible. The stubborn intention of rightful possession and the sincere intention to combat injustice do not cancel out the crisis of self-justification, the hypocrisy of a power that cannot be justified and which is perceived as usurpatory. Analysis of the power relationships sedimented in academic work, concerned with the aim of transforming existing practices and concepts within the profession itself and its

characteristic apparatuses

The issue of the social identity of academics and the constitutability they can legitimately claim to enjoy was crystallised in the January 1991 conference on 'Women and Gender' held at the University of Natal, Durban.¹¹ The institution of academics to general freedom and democratisation was dramatically foregrounded in a series of exchanges between black and white academics and community and activists at the conference. Feminist academics were challenged to critically examine their social function within an oppressive and unjust historical context. Setting aside Samu Diazila's (1991:166) fragile 'apologia'—'There is no blame for the history'—a sense of the intensity of debate is conveyed by K. Sibhine Luthala-Rennett (1991:227):

Two major dichotomies ensued which created a tense and highly charged atmosphere. The great divides were between black and white women as well as activists and academics ... Two discourses about the need for academic standards to be maintained were used to deflect the substantial neglect of black and activist women alike. Ironically, the subject of research in most of the presentations were black women but the conference did not include them. It simply commodified their suffering to generate relevant papers ...

For Debie Hofmeyr (1991) the conference was a good beginning to developing feminist theoretical debate in South Africa. Desiree Lewis (1992:175) also registered the opportunity for self-criticism presented by the level of dissent at the conference, and offered the following salutary diagnosis of the failure of community:

While women's privileges are based on their depoliticisation and exploitation of black and particularly black working-class women ... White feminist academics have asked white in the African 'black women'. As producers of knowledge who have recently created a niche in the patriarchal world of knowledge production, they rely on the construct 'black women' as passive, unarticulate and representable objects. Recognition of the interpellation of black women would lead to white feminists' loss of confidence in an academic domain where their hold is already tenuous, and therefore particularly since a high premium has always been placed on their privilege in negotiations of the colonised, the post-colonial, the colonised in South

¹⁰ According to Belinda Bozzoli (1991:14): 'A combination of a materialist and an Africanist understanding is surely necessary for this process of colonisation, to be adequately captured. See those engaging with the work of sociologists, historians and anthropologists examining the construction of racial identity: Bozzoli (1987), Gubekel (1983), and the essays collected in Chingunji (1991). But the fact that materialist and Africanist analyses themselves arise within academic contexts (which are often entered by individual writers) also requires analysis. Bozzoli (1991:1) contention that in a racialised South Africa, '[i]nherent mystifications of bourgeois life are a reality in this stark order' underestimates the ideological generation of academic discourse. See also the astute warning that universities are institutions that have contained within them an 'authorised logic of conservatism. They have no ideology. They just resist change' (Hofmeyr 1992:67).

¹¹ The conference arose in the wake of the Multiracial Conference held in Amsterdam in January 1990, organised by the ANC. See Thayer (1991), also Cherrin et al. (1991:40) on the 'workshop for South African women and the ANC. The position and status of women within South Africa were legitimate political issues to be addressed within the process of national liberation'.

For Christopher Badaghe (1991) the cause of discord was easy to identify. 'Patronage ... involved a white middle and male Afrikaans elite, on the one hand, and a coloured, township (geographical) black majority on the other. More interesting is Patricia Smith's (1991) observation that the conflict was not only 'in women's terms' and 'notably by community women activists engaged with newly coloured and coloured women's issues in the town as well as of academics' seeking feminist discourse in the 1990. 'Women in Africa and the African Diaspora: Beyond across the borders' the academy' in Kibuka Njiragu, Joe H. Njiragu & Lewis (1991), Daymond 1996, Mchomo (1992), Cherrin (1991), Cherrin (1991), 1991 on the 'simpler' of the movement. The first of the two women's groups in South Africa.

Africa. This partially accounts for the reluctance of some to recognise discourse as a site of power relations and to consider the extent to which their self-proclaimed interpretive mastery colours their understanding of relations of race, class and gender in society.

Lewis (1992:16) detected 'inessential spurious wrangling about the distinction between "about" and "for" as the conference and get referred with approval to the views of prominent academics like Gayatri Spivak'. She went on to identify an alliance of 'mainstream feminists and neo-Marxists' who employ the tactic of undermining black solidarity by referring to the class position of black academics (1992:21). The appeal of neo-Marxist revisionism and white power is seen as the main obstruction to the opening up of academic discourse. Lewis (1992:17-21) concluded by 'charting a way out of this apparent impasse' which 'involved opening up interpretations 'to an expanding and non-hierarchical categorisation of positioned interpretations of women's experiences'.

Academic discourse has been central to the proposed solution to the impasse that feminist reaches when researchers merely reaffirm their right to represent others (Hendricks & Lewis 1994:73), and academic exchange degenerates into an 'eristic contest between experiences. However a suspicion of the norms of a universalising academic language of discourses and professional distinction entails that the experiences of the oppressed are granted pre-discursive epistemological and moral authority.

There should be no need for blacks or any other marginalised groups to authenticate their critiques of structural inequalities and power relationships (Hendricks & Lewis 1994:72).

Still, monopolisation of epistemic infallibility does not rule out the concession that many local feminist literary critics have registered sensitivity to the question of social identity (see Lewis 1995). There is a realisation that the attainment of the privileged institutional space of analysis is not simply dependent on the traditional academic pedigree of genealogy. The same may well be achieved via 'solidified interpretation, foregrounding social identity when, under the cover of appealing to the ethics of discourse, positional antibureaucratic stances pre-emptively position potential critics as victims. As a rule when universals are being made up to reinforce a binary by representing society and the state as government (Lindner), the metonymic value of personal and their internal or isolated experiences are clearly marginalised. The central question then is not 'what could white about women' but 'how we write about others', and whether academic and socially dominant feminist 'conjustive solidifying mechanisms' (Hendricks & Lewis 1994:70f).

The methodological and political question of 'how we write about others' centres on a 'move away from identity to a "pure Marxist" towards "post-Althusserian" and post-colonial theories' that confront 'discourse as a site of struggle' (Lewis 1992a:17). Deconstruction is welcomed because its 'emphasis on discursive practice counters the Marxist and Althusserian hegemony in South African and post-colonial theory in its aid in describing the persistence of the hegemonising thought in left-white theories and practices' (Hendricks & Lewis 1994:70.7.8). This perspective has intermeshed with a view of post-colonial theory that privileges South Africa and America and excludes the rest of Africa:

In the United States, with a context comparable to the South Africa, one of interlocking racial and ethnic discourses... (Lewis 1997:2)

The challenge of interrogating the social function of academics has been displaced by modification of the norms of academic discourse that retains an inflated conception of the liberatory potential of academic autonomy. What is obscured in the restating of the current post-Marxist collage is the fact that the prioritisation of discourse as a site of struggle' as a means of countering the determinisms of an avowed Marxist orthodoxy accords with the Althusserian project of *De Quae?* Evidence that the term 'post-colonial' originated in the left-wing theories and practices of economists in the early seventies makes the prospect of transcending the Marxist legacy via 'its more equally problematic' sensitivity to the imperatives of an egalitarian academic marketplace results in an ahistorical view of academic discourses that subsumes consideration of the social function of the university and its potential into the intra-academic question of reconfiguring theories.

I turn now to another response to the crisis of legitimacy evidenced at the 1991 Natal conference. This time the attempt to negotiate the power and privilege associated with the representational role of academics, in particular those engaged in feminist literary studies, also foregrounds the question of academic discourse. The ideal of insurgent academics is replaced by the idealisation of the mediating social function of academics and the role of the university. Like its insurgent counterpart, the realisation of academic autonomy within a pluralist academy also obscures critical examination of the social function of academics.

feminist literary studies

Margaret Daymond introduces *South African Feminisms*, the 'first collection of South African literary feminist writing to be published in the United States', by reflecting on the 1991 Natal conference at which the 'researcher-academic's "text of our domination" of her subjects, making them into objects of enquiry... exploded'.

¹ See Mafema (1994) for a theoretical discussion of writing and Walker's (1997) for an account of Mafema's work academically overlaid on this.

² See Laetitia (1979) on Althusser and Agamben (1993) on the post-colonial.

[illegible]

The redress of sociological challenges that academics like me now face is to shed the habit of power (Daymond 1996: xiv). This is a habit exercised through a sustained, by-the-medium-of academic discourse.

Such a multiplicity of knowledge—in the several aspects of representation, interpretation, memory and theory—could bring contestation to a broad set of forums, and this is what the Internet often and without a design we can prove widely democratized the context out of which new practices of representation, however risky the form of a simple polarizing of a color and a black, that would be at the root of a perpetuation of the 1990s late strategies of apartheid, in South Africa, as I think in North America, the entire every of black women in to feminized politics that seemed to oppose politics, not now in diversity, a more complex sense of the shifting effects of difference, that is, ending in the first, a racialization (or which on the other hand this unity can still be an important component of the project against white hegemony (Daymond 1996:281).

Academic discourse is located within an evolving relation between metropole and periphery, and the exchange of intellectual commodities travelling back and forth along corridors of power linking South African universities to those in the metropole is some evidence of nonreciprocal globalisation.

the developing dynamic between the first and third worlds will inevitably shadow the centre-asymptote configuration of the past (Overland 1996:xxxviii).

Today, in an era of reconstruction, the institution is *intercultural* as a point of intersecting: communal social obligations, and responsiveness to the general will of the people, involves reorienting the university to meet the social and political needs of a broader community.

Thus, we work under the constraints of progress and discontinuities. Changes are simultaneously fragile and premeditated, speculative. As the legacy of the past is defined and contained, and as new sociopolitical obligations are formulated, we must live with women just emerging from oppression. It's not an ideal state.

For maintenance of consciousness, bring to mind of factory which, while it is efficient and full of contradictions, is performing available to members of those affected industries. (Excerpt from "1990/1991")

Intellectual progress enables the academic to look back over the legacy of the past and shed the 'imputed and veiled' notion of traditional South African English literary studies (Daermond 1996:xxv). A descriptive difficulty of an

small, symmetrical oligopoly between the country's women... there are examples of this type at work in the policy and of its leading to a strategic convergence between economic rationalism (1990:xxiii) and socialism (1991).

The goal of realising abstract rights within the material formations of social conditions is bolstered by the belief that, as an enabling institution and medium of representation, the university can contribute to the establishment of a democratic polity based on negotiation and diversity.

In this vision literature continues to represent the humanising and ethical nature of social obligations, and enables academics to be seen to be recognising such obligations rather than legislating them. Miriam Tlali's stories countermand the stoical pathos of women's lives, and Head's biography becomes an *exemplum*, a story with a moral to move and impress its readers and instruct them in their democratic obligations. The benign values located in Tlali's stories are seen as both universally valid and applicable to the historical context of South Africa.

His vocabulary about his work is in opposition to tradition which, when read reflexively, suggests a theme of loss and isolation.¹¹ As the narrator of the story, flowing through the pages which give it potency, he brings content from ordinary daily life (Owen and 1966:231, 238).

The 'aridness' process by which Basile Head² contributed to 'new workings of the imagination' by bringing 'a special sensitivity to the stresses and conflicts faced by

Elsewhere, hindsight enables Dymond (1995: 565) to claim that race legislation did not prevent the Afrikaner victory of 1948. And this being the early 1940s, neither side in the morning of "We-Them" is yet positioned by the weight of legislated racial difference (Dymond 1995: 565). Unfortunately historians repeat that legislated racial difference was embodied in segregation and urban controls, the 1927 Immorality Act, the 1936 codification of the old Cape franchise and the application of Chapter V of the Natives' Land and Trust Act, in the 1936 Statute the British influence tended to deepen the bifurcation of race rather than to resolve them. And apartheid was a development of Tregid's system of indirect rule which is then developed from the Bhepuma system in Namibia. See Meylan's (1994) argument for a more patrilateral, ex-hibit in 1920's Division and the rule of apartheid and, ultimately, of Apartheid.

wanted' his compulsory status (Daymond 1996: 223, 227, 229). In a gesture recalling Freud's reading of Little and Anna's 'to one or two disavowal forms in their *Casebook* (1933), an act of transference reshapes Freud's own subject, interpolating a racial Boscman on her body, as the judge of the 'emulative' and 'mild' interpreting Freud's own writings. The individual (white) becomes a mediating subject, facilitating the actual recognition of a common humanity or obligation, and the appeal to the subjectivity of the writer and reader effectively cuts the subject off from the forces that determine it.

Barbara Bowen, the U.S. series editor of *South African Frontiers*, concludes her overview of scholarship in the immediate post-apartheid years by echoing the theme of developing equity:

Black women's autobiographies, oral histories, and cited narratives come under discussion here, not just as rich textual performances but as complex mediators between black and white women, between State power and traditional patriarchy (Bowen 1996: xi).

Texts are now viewed as 'complex negotiations' between power structures, and academic discourse is the emerging site where these exchanges 'between black and white women, between State power and traditional patriarchy' are registered. The asymmetrical force of these positions inside and outside the academy reveals behind a utopian conception of the institution as an open network of correspondence.¹¹ The violent

dominative history of how texts 'come under discussion' – the summation of those who discuss and those discussed, the legacy of the discourses employed and the media of representation, etc.—remains opaque. The place of literary studies, and academic work in general, within a legal and institutional order developed during a historical process of colonial and neo-colonial appropriation is not addressed. Now the academic is prepared to listen to others but the factors that mediate interlocation are ameliorated by a rhetoric of reciprocity, and the anti-apartheid spirit of solidarity with the oppressed becomes a distancing platitude obscuring those repressive historical forces that continue to stand in the way of equality.¹²

A vision of the university as the facilitator of mutual recognition between those within and beyond the institution, a means or instrument to mediate the transition to a new sense of citizenship, is shared by literary academics at the metropole and in South Africa. The pay-off is that the legitimacy of the university is affirmed and the validation of a writer remains the property of academics as legitimators of knowledge, revisers of canons and prescribers of texts. The utopian prospect of equitable exchange between imperialist centre and newly liberated periphery substitutes for the reality of exploitation'. In the debate on representation a normative, moralising approach to the transformative role of universities and the liberatory potential of academic autonomy obscures the fact that the existence of universities and their personnel is a legal existence dependent on the general nature of the state which is in turn shaped by the economic conditions of society, formal property relations and law. The pragmatist rhetoric of 'negotiation' presupposes mutually free agents able to contract obligations through agreement, and 'diversity' suggests naturalised variety rather than violently constructed differential stratification. The ideological resonances of such terms in academic arguments for pluralism need to be taken into account if 'positioned interpretation' is to enable academics to avoid 'reproducing the very terms and hierarchies of the institutions' (Boyce Davies 1995: xviii). That is, if academics mobilising a moralising teleology of restitutive reconciliation wish to avoid facilitating an ideological reconciliation with the immediate present, with the persisting forms of domination and servitude.

¹¹ Peter Hofmeyr (1992) has criticised against the 'cognitive historicist' approach of much feminist literary studies. Nadine Gordimer (1983: 96) resisted in Hofmeyr's (1977: 197) categorisation of Lesbo's categories with their artistic literary-critical dimension by refusing to 'allow this old view of genres to allow unexamined content' emanating from 'a young white lecturer in the title' access to the South African tradition. Daymond (1996) exactly commends Hofmeyr's work on oral tradition without inferring her U.S. audience that Hofmeyr left a 'narrative and ahistorical South African English literary studies for the more materialist base' of her academic work.

¹² *South African Frontiers* was enthusiastically reviewed in the *Journal of Southern African Studies* (1997: 234, (675–679) by Anthony O'Brien of Queens College City University of New York. Interestingly O'Brien is the partner of Bowen.

¹³ Even when a self-fashioning of power, without pedagogy and without armed literature remains a question of subjectivity. Through exposure to discursive power and by developing the skills required to define a subject and to categorise power, access to that subject is gained which necessarily reconstitutes that state as a self-perpetuating state. The 'material' aspect of the subject is not the only one (1996: 32). The centrality of this hegemonic model is a case of the nature of the subject. The subject is not a subject (1993: 22) clearly that writer's body and the text is not concerned with the 'material' aspect of the subject.

Analysis is exchanged for history and language in the claim that a literary text explores 'the riches and depths of black women so as to bear witness to their coming and negotiable contribution to the healing process for which all South Africans long' (Coetzee 1996: 150). Consider the following statement: 'The dangers of seeing African women as peripheral exist in apartheid South Africa where deprivation was so widespread that it might be called of it: large inequalities have been created, not so general, and not mysterious' (Coetzee 1997: 141). See *Government and a woman's story*.

In terms of integration into the global economy rather than exposing an existing patriarchy South Africa appears to be being further marginalised. The marginalised periphery of global capitalism is being internationalised, see Adagashie (1997), Morris (1996: 24–25) and Walker (1998).

Conclusion

In a post-apartheid context concerned with restitution and representivity attempts to reconcile the contradictions of academic work are producing a further repress. Strategically reducing the value of mobilised discourses to intentionality or representivity—to the interest-determined intention of its participants, either in the form of their inferred or professed intentions or simply read off from the morphological code of their social identities—produces so legitimating commodification of exchange that are readily accommodated and controlled by the institutions they claim to analyse. Positionality can disguise rather than expose the hierarchies of power and the circuits of exchange within the academic marketplace, and moralising professions of liberatory intent grounded in social identity are, like normative appeals for reciprocity and equality, part of the institutional currency. On the other hand, the gesture to inclusive pluralism and the move away from privileging social identity in the last instance risks underestimating the forces shaping the institutional site of academic production. The rhetoric of pluralism that unites a diversity of writers within the sectorial can be taken to signal the containment of counter-hegemonic projects within the imperatives of professionalisation, a work ethic that testifies to the on-opting capacities of bureaucratic systems. In this uneasy exchange the historic necessity of institutionalised representivity becomes a marginalist abjuring of personnel that legitimises rather than challenges existing institutions.

Claims to be promoting the pluralist, egalitarian distribution freedom, and counter-hegemony to the exclusive monopolisation of knowledge potential based on social identity both share a non-liberatory potential. The result of arguing that any academic can, with the merest decorum, in principle speak about anybody else or that the social identity determines in the last instance the ability of academics to work successfully for the representation of the socially marginalised, may be the same. In either case foregrounding the autonomy of academics involves privileging a certain activity that represents the exercise of individual freedom and the realisation of discursive freedom. When anthropological positioning functions as a kind of post-justification or *apologia*, the institution is in turn vindicated as the site of a general resource of autonomy, critical activity able to criticise other social institutions in the name of general freedom. As part of a general process of institutional self-criticism, the university itself indirectly affirms the auto-reformist capacity of existing institutions facing widespread legitimisation crises: reform is best managed from above in reformalist fashion by the self-critical abjuration of the hierarchies of power.

Academics trying to highlight injustice by 'speaking about others' in accordance with the transient imperative to realise what 'ought to be' run the risk of maintaining an inaccessible reality. This is because academic autonomy can work not only to secure the legitimacy of the university institutionally committed to the free use of reason, but also to validate the possibility of, and opportunity to achieve, freedom within the political economy that currently defines society. Performative gestures of commitment and sincerity testify as a desire on the part of academics to atone for the legacy of victimisation. However both the presentiser foregrounding of intention and the pathos of our condition embodied by social identity can serve to ensure the very

histories and contexts at issue.

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The Worm in the Bud: The Divided African State

David Henson

Review Article

Citizen and Subject

Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism

by Malanoo Mamdani

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The discourse of the African renaissance, diplomatic initiatives in Southern Africa and beyond, and money-making strategies by South African companies seeking explorations of the interior have brought the relationship between the peoples at the southern tip of the continent and those of the land north to the north into the matter of politics and business. The Clinton visit and his various printing of opportunities in Africa as a new profitable investment opportunity, brings to life the key issues of SA relationships with the rest of the continent as South Africa appears the centrepiece of international diplomatic initiatives, eagerly elevated by American support and intervention. Behind the public blandishments of manifest destiny and economic opportunity is the real motives of power and money and the accompanying manifestations of territoriality, arrogance and xenophobia.

Apart from the students of foreign policy and specialists of various types, there are few real authorities on Africa in South Africa. Compared to the experiences of those from Europe and the United States, few South African exiles living in the continent have returned with a fluent intellectual interest in the African continent as a whole. The movement of ideas and intellectual exchange over the divide between South Africa and continental Africa is painfully confined as the political and economic borders sear. The disciplines and focus of studies in South African universities in previous years – civil services such as African Studies and Comparative African Government and Administration – that previously attracted some with a colonial interest in continental information, with all their evident limitations, have somehow withered on the vine. In many ways African Studies has to be created anew in South Africa, and this is the task of the continent's academic communities over the next and next decade of African Studies in the 1990s. Mamdani has conducted both pioneering work in the development of an African Studies which inquires our contemporary continent, our situation, and locates Africa within the global context. His work has been both

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theoretical and practical; he has written on population control and the politics of Uganda where he served with distinction on the Local Government Commission.

The intellectual claims of *Citizen and Subject* are broad and all-encompassing, and his work quite explicitly carves out a new work from the material of the various histories and destinies of African continent. Mamdani highlights many of the convolutions of the post-apartheid period: its timid advances, the broad mood of acquiescence in a fait accompli among many warring of its potential internal wars, and its ambiguity and cross confusion in relation to the role of people in the rural areas which is undoubtedly the least reformed aspect of the new period. Mamdani is helpful in going beyond the racial dilemma to point to the real nature of the contest for democracy, the actual obstacles, and provides a thorough examination of the various of ideas along which advances have been attempted. But his approach does have limitations, principally his identification of South African exceptionalism with political economy: this identification allows Mamdani to jettison the methodological perspective of political economy, a perspective that I believe provides a valuable resource for combating South African exceptionalism.

the things that bind

Citizen and Subject clearly marks on the intellectual antecedents of the current controversies as Mamdani straddles many divides: those between the disciplines of law, politics, cultural studies and sociology, between divisions of African Studies and what he denigrates as South African Studies; and between colonial and post-colonial forms of rule and resistance. Mamdani is a writer who refuses to be trapped in the conservative logic of 'race relations' and the false paradigms of comparative colonial practice, but cuts through the thickets of colonial discourse to reveal the dynamics of divide and rule, in a way that eliminates that which previously appeared hazy and obscure. He argues that the majority of Africa's peoples are locked into a peculiar subjection to traditional authorities reinforced and reinforced by colonial practice of decades. This authority remains unreformed by post-independence governments.

In an unusual introduction to the book Mamdani presents his approach in terms of a specifically political methodology that emphasises his preoccupation with the nature of the African state and its practices, particularly in the rural areas. Indeed he rejects the approach of South African Studies which he sees as based fundamentally on political economy. His foundational approach is not theoretical at length, it is simply asserted and then defended through an exhaustive examination of various case studies from the continent, effortlessly moving between the literature and experience of Uganda, South Africa, and other countries. Mamdani argues that South African Studies is based on the prejudice of South African exceptionalism, and that it is largely 'economistic' with an overdrawn preoccupation with explanation that rationalises analysis of the form of rule of the African majority.

With its eye on an invariable process of proletarianisation, it sees rural areas as simply shrinking in the face of an inexorable process of enclosure and

ment, even as largely as was the inability fully to explain apartheid as a form of the state that was born in racialistic perspective. One that highlights 'levels of mass-individualism and previous alienation, established'—that South African capitalism marks a stage. Conversely, the same exceptionalism marks the cultural nature of the South African independence (27).

South Africa, he continues, is characterised from when it forms a 'labour perspective' by 'semi-industrialization, semi-proletarianization, semi-urbanization, capped by a strong civil society'. For all his speaking of the 'labour' perspective he walks consistently through the writing on trade unionism. But rather than engaging with this tradition critically on its own terms, Mandani chooses to highlight the 'native question', the conditions of rule over the African people, as the point of departure. The commonality between South Africa and the rest of Africa, he argues cogently, lies in the bifurcated state which characterises both. This bifurcation did not arise as a pure idea out of the mind of the colonial oppressor but evolved from his encounter between authority and resistance not only in Africa but from the wealth of experience, particularly of the British imperial state in India. The key feature of the African colonial state was that it was Janus-faced, showing two faces of the same bifurcated state, expanded differently in the rural areas and the urban areas. There is a duality of two 'centres' of power under a single hegemonic authority:

Urban power spoke the language of civil society and civil rights, total power of community and culture. Civil power clung to protect rights, emergency power pledged to enforce tradition. The former was organized on the principle of decentralization to check the concentration and power the latter around the principle of authority to ensure unitary authority (18).

This experience of stateform is the material of the corrupting despotism which characterises the lives of rural people, deforms civil society, and distorts any claims of genuine democracy and freedom.

Mandani's argument is deceptively simple and direct: initially the colonial rulers had a single-minded obsession to annihilate the traditional political system, but after vanquishing the tribes through this initial centralised despotism, the colonial rulers soon reversed this policy and ended up stabilising colonial rule on the social base of traditional rulers. Here lies the worm in the bud, African traditional culture and neo-colonial social structures became intimately interwoven with the apparatus of foreign domination. The idea did not arise specifically from the African experience, although it flourished in the continent, but rather it had its roots in earlier experience. He argues that 'In India, the imperialist, pursuing per excellence, had the perverse genius of being the first to systematically exploit the authoritarian possibilities in native culture. In reaction to

the rise of resistance employing traditional beliefs, British actions to prevent the dissolution of society are described by Mandani as being essentially regressive in India and preventive in Africa. The British rulers, operating under the overarching logic of Victorian free trade principles, functioned differently in the colonies as land was defined as customary communal holding. For all the exaltation of the individual under free enterprise capitalism, the African was defined not as native but as irresponsible. He quotes an orientalist on colonial administration as follows: 'The genius of British rule in Africa... was in seeking to vilify Africans as communalities, not as individuals'.

A one-sided opposition between the individual and the group, civil society and community, rights and traditions emerged which allowed a cheap and (for a fairly long period) largely effortless method of rule by a small number of Europeans over the colonial masses. This form of rule is supremely political, aiming at a bloodless domination over the African people. The respected colonial archivist and strategist, Lord Hailey, is quoted as stating frankly how African life was warped under colonialism:

The objective of African colonial policy has primarily designed to maintain the social equilibrium (31).

The success of this scheme was, in the view of colonial authorities, that it did not freeze social relations in a pre-conquest stage, but in a familiar phase, was a 'transitional stage' towards the integration of Africans as communities, and not individuals, into the modern world. Indeed, indirect rule which has led to the long-term forms of bondage of the rural masses was presented as an important colonial reform. What was actually achieved, in Mandani's memorable phrase was 'the entrenched despotism', the rule by foreigners over the masses indirectly through traditional authorities. Although the African masses were powerless, their immediate rulers were given considerable powers over their subjects which eliminated traditional checks and balances. These powers they used to the full. The model of decentralised despotism was monarchical, patriarchal, and authoritarian.

It was made king at the center of every party, a clack on every piece of administrative ground, and a partner in every home and school. Whether in the townland, the village, or the kingdom, authority was concentrated in the hands of a person, a despotism (39).

Such were the limits of colonial reform: foreign rule and colonialism was not openly maintained by the force of arms, it was effectively camouflaged for the vast majority of Africans by local rule through chiefs. On the one side was the entrenched despotism of Africa over African under the overarching colonial power, on the other was the limited civil society of the towns which largely existed in a fictitious form, available only to the white colonialists and deliberately excluding the African urban people.

Mandani follows this essentialist reading of colonial policy with a free-ranging exploration of the variety of experiences in Africa of British, French and Belgian colonial forms of rule, displaying an unimpaired skill in analysis and in

¹ In a subsequent, more extensive text he both more deeply explored in greater references to the rest of the world (idem).

which fitted range of retrieval of the literature of colonialism. The argument in the view of the reviewer is convincing, but it has been made before in less expensive histories, albeit without the desired knowledge, keen logic and self-confidence of the author. What is strikingly original and provocative are the next steps of the argument.

the cheap labour thesis

Mamdani argues that his locus of analysis is the *needs of domination* rather than the *needs of emancipation*. Working within this method he comes to the somewhat startling conclusion that apartheid is uniquely African rather than the political product of the working out of the operation of the cheap labour system, his thesis:

usually understood as instituting racial discrimination, apartheid was actually an attempt to soften racial antagonism by mobilising and thereby reducing the impact of racial domination through a range of Native Authorities (27).

Apartheid featured the ranks of the ruled along a double divide, ethnic on the one hand, racial-urban on the other.

More than a response to the crisis in securing cheap labour power in a semi-industrial setting, I have argued that apartheid needs to be understood as the outcome of an expanding quest for urban industrial setting, both semi-industrial and colonial. Without denying the importance of the semi-urbanist context, I have highlighted the significance of the colonial context in understanding apartheid as a focus of the state (293-4).

There is substantial claim and Mamdani has considerable intellectual power to back it. At one level, here is a startling new idea, at another we have to ask ourselves whether it is not a one-sided re-interpretation of what has already been established. An exclusively political interpretation of apartheid seeing only its state form while denying any economic logic has a certain advantage in pointing away the inconvenient. But something like superstructuralism for an explanation of the real living processes of apartheid appears to me to be an inversion of the necessary methodological approach.

It is undeniable that one of the routes to apartheid came from British colonial practice. In earlier writings I uncovered the unfolding of what later became the essential features of segregation and apartheid—including the idea of the colonial city being the property of whites, of blacks needing to be ruled by chiefs and fleeing chiefly control in urban areas, and—expanding from the contradictions over labour market forces in the 1870s in colonial Natal (Harrison 1886a). The apparatus of control was ready made, and what powered the development of pre-apartheid institutions further along these lines was an economic impulse, a mode of accumulation, but interlocked with a mode of domination. The point which needs to be made here is that while the differential and

provided an overarching framework of rule, the precise form of rule arose from the contradictions of colonial life and were not prescribed in advance. I would argue that the contradictory sides of the state (partially 'dominating civil society while also increased national oppression) were seized and reshaped by socio-economic pressures bearing on the political processes. There were indeed contradictions. During apartheid, for instance, for the first time in Africa the African majority were granted one item to pensions, albeit on a highly discriminatory basis. Although the primordial features of the apartheid state were present at Union, subsequent changes were not determined from birth but were accelerated by the contradictions of the break-up of older forms of rule. The astonishing material differences between a white bourgeoisie and a black proletariat, the prominence of labour migration, the absurdities of reserve policies, and the dynamics of class organisation among the black majority were to have a decisive effect in the cities which became the main arena of political battle.

Since the cheap labour explanation of segregation is under attack or revision from a number of sources other than Mamdani (see Hindson 1987; Posel 1983, 1984), a considered defence is in order. The spectacular theoretical advances of the 1970s have passed, and the complex reinterpretations of its essential tenets which I have followed can be seen as attempts to theorise an essential difference between capitalism and apartheid. The remarkable simplicity of the cheap labour-power thesis—that the reserves sustained the mobility to the cheap labour power of African workers—has a powerful explanatory power. The colonial state of impoverishment through migrant labour which was sustained for more than a century provided, as Wopse (1972; 1983) argued, a subsidy to the migrant labourer's wage. The argument, of course, went further than this elemental logic. The reserve and right to access to communal land in the rural areas distorted African urbanisation for an extended period, provided a political pole for the African migrant, and secured African women under direct or indirect control. For a whole period the argument is incontestable, its strongest confirmation appearing in the arguments advanced by the mining industry to Commissions. The results of the cheap labour system are available in the data of mining as real wages were held constant between 1911 to 1969 in the gold mines (Wilson 1970:65). It also helps provide an understanding of why conquest in South Africa was in a way 'incomplete', why it remained in this state, and why the imperial and Boer war machines stopped short of breaking tribes completely, and in a remarkably short period of time, turned a large 180 degree in showing the very system which had provided the primary phase of resistance. We need to remember just how far we have come from the cheap-labour-induced idea of the

Kuper-Berman (1990) to view the dynamics of civil society as part of an incontestable dynamic. It is my impression that liberation politics were not necessary, this misunderstanding the point too far, but undoubtedly social measures were crucial in breaking up the apartheid mode of accumulation. Kuper-Berman's affinity for tribalism as a defender of the basic right of democratic freedom as it has had nothing to do with the mass mobilisation of the oppressed in trade unions and cities which so effectively challenged apartheid structures. On the contrary, these movements are seen as a grace shown to the dominant role of the state accorded in KwaZulu-Natal.

² See also David Kuper (1971) 'A History of Native African Natal', and David Kuper (1979)

mobilisation of the tribal polity which was the first intention in the colonial administrator's mind. Fear of the complete proletarianisation of African labourers was crucial to the emerging policy.

This approach provided a clear link between economy and society but was not innocent of political elaboration, particularly in Teggasse's (1974, 1997) work. The support for attempts to reconstruct the reserves, the encouragement of a traditional petty bourgeoisie, the coercive nature of migrant labour whereby African migrants were forced to return and renew links with the rural area, all show a logical connection between the cheap labour strategy and the political superstructure. Later, of course, the cheap labour theory has been contested for relying on a functional and undynamic view of the relations between the political and the economic. It is well known that in the 1960s and beyond, the dysfunctional side of political oppression became clearly apparent and apartheid became in living reality a regime of crisis. The separation between politics and economics became a gulf, and intensified with the economic crisis endemic in late apartheid. But none of this amounts to grounds for rejecting the essential truths of the cheap labour argument in the foundations of segregation and apartheid.

In a sense capitalism appeared in South Africa in a weak form, able only to provide for the capitalist class itself, a white middle class and a privileged working class, while imparting misery and degradation to the majority. Its modernising mission was somehow blunted, its destructive edge against traditionalism held back. Indeed, the very opposite direction is undertaken in policy even though the extension of market relations worked increasingly, if incompletely, to dissolve prior modes of production. More than any other issue, the land question shaped the character of colonial society. The market in land was incomplete and would remain incomplete, and the sustaining of patriarchal relations on communal land became the watchword of the great and wealthy. Capitalism came late and, unlike the situation in post-war South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, the conquerors turned their swords toward the entrenchment of the old order. In those countries the essential hold of old authority on the land was decisively broken. But in Africa the process appears essentially defective as the old order is allowed to retain the allocation of land, by and large, and there is no general market in land. In South Africa the most productive and extensive tracts of land were appropriated by the whites, but the chiefs were reinforced in their power over the scraps which remained. Some of these were just sufficient to sustain, not a tribal mode of production, but a modicum of a base for traditional family life and custom. This was enough to disguise the insidious ebbings of the Bantustans from the rural poor. As could be anticipated, the African migrant held desperately on to these plots as a relatively cheap family home. The economic and the political interwove separately and recombined in different strands to reveal the essential relations of one of the most perverse and destructive societies of our time. The weakness of *Chibwe and Salinger* is that the role of political domination is foregrounded at the expense of these other factors. This said, one of the merits of Mamdani's book is its perception of post-colonial political development and the complexity of the broad processes of democratisation.

the post-colonial experience

The development of democracy in Africa in the aftermath of almost universal one-party states is highly problematic, full of the graves of initiatives by radical regimes to bring about real change and of conservative regimes to maintain stability. Mamdani develops a thorough-going analysis of the impasse of African social and political life and a critique of the attempts by urban political elites to bring about change. He forges the foundation for democracy extending essentially from the failure to expand civil society and to carry the arbit of democratic struggle into the rural areas. Nationalist movements have historically been preoccupied with exclusion from civil society and resistance to alien rule, but, he argues, rural power has not been detribalised and neither has it been joined to the question of democratisation with the result that anti-democratic remnants of 'the rural contaminated the urban'. He argues that the Achilles' heel of the 'second independence movement' aiming to expand civil society and democracy lies in a political failure to grasp what *modes of rule* need to be democratised. There is an infatuation with the notion of civil society in the towns, 'a plural organisation that conceals the actual form of power through which rural populations are ruled' (288f).

The neglect of the reform of the local state means 'democratization will remain not only superficial but also explosive' (288f). He points to the limited range of democratic rule in countries where the mass of the population may participate in elections which have no effect over the form of rule they experience:

An electoral reform that does not affect the appointment of the Native Authority and its chiefs... which leaves rural areas out of consideration as so many protestations is precisely about the reemergence of a decentralized absolutism (289).

The victor in electoral politics feels entitled to the right to rule over subjects through Native Authorities, to appoint chiefs, even 'the issue in a civil society centred contest comes to be who will be master of all tribes' (289). The clarity of the president is eroded as the rural is governed through patrimonial relationships, and rural constituencies are harassed through patron-client relations, a situation which leads to the depressing conclusion that 'tribalism is the only noncoercive way of linking the rural with the urban' (289). Yet this method of rule has explosive results because tribalism in the urban context is corrosive as it has no democratic impetus and carries within itself the promise of civil war. A form of 'tributationalism' (290) results with civil society itself becoming tribalised. On these foundations the hope for democracy is delusional.

Such are the results of continuing indirect rule by conservative post-colonial regimes. But Mamdani argues that radical nationalist movements, which have sought through militant and/or militia nationalisms to detribalise Native Authority and institute single party, face a similar impasse. Militant nationalism is a failure which creates a 'successful linkup between urban militants and rural insurrectionary movements against Native Authorities' (290), and offers a potential form of transformation. The single party attempted to create a new social and political fragmentation on lying at the heart

of Native Authorities, but democracy was deeply distorted as it was understood as a civil society-based electoral reform'. The nation's nationalists attempted to depoliticise a civil society whose politics appeared as civil society-based clientelism marked by 'deepening fragmentation among ethnic lines' (290). These regimes became increasingly authoritarian as the centre of gravity in the party-state shifted from the voluntary to the coercive. Development strategies were enforced from above on a reluctant peasantry, and the final result of the 'forced developmental march' (290) was to exacerbate divisions between the rural and the urban. In a chilling phrase from Fanon, the 'militants of yesterday turned into informers of today' as the transcendental goals of liberation were displaced by the sordid defence of power. Yet the exercise of centralised autocratic power does not necessarily abolish chiefdomship as there is continuity in administrative power and technique – a reinforced fused power, administrative justice and extra-economic coercion – all in the name of development' (291). The radical attempts at change come up against both the obstacles of the existing political culture and those thrown up by their own actions.

Mandani's analysis is persuasive and it provides a powerful critique of the many attempts to restructure African society from above or to arrive at an accommodation with existing structures. In this dynamic model of political radicalism civil society appears a feeble creature. The weight of a traditional society shored up and reinforced by colonial practice, the intolerance of military dictatorships, and a tendency to become aligned with political opposition movements which simply lay claim to the spoils of power for another excluded middle class group, gives little room for growth. In delineating the locus of power, rural society stands as a disenfranchised but weighty incubus, unable to participate in the broader movement for democracy as it is held in the grasp of a traditional authority revived and reinforced under colonialism. This analysis shows a keen insight into the 'saw-saw' (291) nature of African politics and the present impasse of development around the shared axis of despotism. Africans appear trapped on the treadmill of history.

Mandani's turning away from political economy and stress on the distastefully structural can become profitably rigid, even as it acknowledges the possibility of variance between two dead-end roads. Mandani rejects an Afro-peasant crisis syndrome – which he describes as the rejection of the idea that the continent can rejuvenate itself from within – for critically ignoring the *roads of colonial penetration* into Africa. The idea of neo-colonialism occasionally played with by this writer fails to come to grips with the very legacy of colonialism which has led to barbaric forms of structural violence. But he is very far from an any optimism (which often shows a callous disregard for the desperate conditions of the African majority), seeing in both the conservative regimes resulting in rural despotism and the centralised despotism of the radical one, very stark dead-ends for democratic advance. In a sense the book is both sceptical about the prospects for a revived and renewed civil society and democratic culture, insisting for the problem be clearly defined before solutions are indulged in. The argument marks a recognition of the structural, institutionalisation of the African state warped by colonialism, and trapped between attempts to overcome rural despotism of the chiefs and the alternative strategies of

compromising with the same despotism. All attempts at change come to fulfil in large part the inertial tradition which has an extraordinary weight.

Citizen and Subject presents a starkly realistic recognition of the vitiation of civil society in Africa, a landscape with no high ground above various despotic forms of rule. But for all the dazzling display of analytic synthesis and counterpoint, Mandani appears to stumble in confronting the very monster he reveals: the ecological reality of Africa's substructure is exposed but then the author retreats from bold proposals for change. If there are no proposals for change, then the reader is left with the fatalistic conclusion of an inexorable African reality. Division is ineluctable, between town and countryside, between civil society and rural despotism, between the striving for emancipation and the dead hand of tradition, all appear too weighty to move, too resistant to change for change to succeed. The analysis is sharply dualistic and bipolar as the two sides of the African divide are identified and mapped, and any shifts in the specific gravity of each are eventually drawn back to their original position of baleful inadequacy.

This argument presupposes an implicit comparison with the accomplishment of democracy in advanced capitalist countries where alternative traditions of democratic practice and civil society have flourished for an entire period. Implicit in the view of established democracy is the idea that these societies have reached their 'end of history', that there is nothing more to be said. While in the post-1990 period any hope in socialist forms of democracy stand vulnerable of being dismissed, I believe that the argument for workers' democracy and socialism as the full flowering of the human potential for genuine social democracy is undiminished. Certainly the expansion and safeguarding of democracy, even in its limited electoral form, is vulnerable in societies where there is sharply growing inequality and social inequity. In addition the contradictory experience of colonial history and democracy demands explanation: Britain which is the 'cradle of democracy' is also the most astute exploiter of the divisions, both ethnic and social, among the colonial oppressed. There is no simple line of comparative logic between the growth of democratic practice in the West and the present battles for democracy in the chronically devastated regions of the world.

The post-apartheid experience

Recent developments show that we in South Africa are far from having escaped from these contradictions. A curious contradiction is evident as traditional leaders must on the one hand claim to represent democracy, and debate about tradition alienated up in the most extraordinary verbal gymnastics with kings, chiefs, etc. all claiming to be democratic. The impasse in local government in South Africa's rural areas is witness to Mandani's accurate theoretical focus, and it would not be an exaggeration to state that local democracy in the former reserves does not exist at all. Chiefs were they will not tolerate the 'government's councillors' (i.e. those who were elected in the local government, first one of 1996), and nobody seems certain who these people are or whether elections took place in their area. The political background to all this uncertainty is clearly that no party wishes to confront the problem of decentralised

despotism. Rather they attempt to accommodate the chiefs, encouraging them in the belief they are somehow part of democracy in South Africa and, indeed, that their rule should be reinforced and privileges extended.

The revival of political life in the run-up to the 1999 election provides hard examples of the Realpolitik of South Africa which are now those of Africa, illustrating that national political leadership depends on traditional authority for power. The support of the rural people is solicited not directly by campaigning but through the chiefs. This is illustrated by the tendency for Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe to rediscover the cultural and religious significance of the African chiefs, to promise anew a strengthening of their position, and affirm their role in communicating with the ancestors before elections. Similarly there are displays of President Mandela moving familiarity among the chiefs of the Transkei, and our Minister of Constitutional Development promising an *expanded* role for chiefs in local government and their continued control over the allocation of land (SAIV 5 March 1998).⁴ Traditional leaders are alive to this courtship and play the game. The leader of CONTRALESA, Phathekile Holomisa, has expressed the fear that politicians want to take power from the chiefs who, he claims, represent the people in the rural areas. He argues that attempts at modernising local government have been made before in Africa and have failed, and they will fail in South Africa because elected councillors don't deliver and Africans are not properly represented in local councils in rural areas (SAfm 1 May 1998). Speaking on behalf of CONTRALESA, he objects to the Ministers deciding on the rank of traditional leaders, who is a king or paramount chief, etc. and demands the same pensions and salaries for traditional and elected leaders (SAfm 2 May 1998). Money is central to the debate about traditional culture. In rural areas where there are development projects, case studies have revealed that decisions about such projects are often taken autocratically by the chief and his councillors. Youth and women are denied participation. The first priority often seems to be to build a road to the chief's house. When food relief is provided it has been reported that the first person to benefit is the chief, who requires food for himself before the children can be fed. Communities complain to the Hearings on Poverty that the chiefs are the main obstacles to development. These are impressions of the actual power relationships in rural areas, and policy statements aimed at accommodating these realities.

The recently released White Paper on Local Government (March 1998:4.4.1.3) avoids confronting the issue of power and authority, light-mindedly arguing that there is no conflict between African customs and traditions and democracy, and promising 'additional functions' to be added to those of traditional leaders. The distortion of tradition under apartheid is not mentioned and neither are the obviously enormous problems such as the representation and rights of women, to mention only one crucial question. This policy statement from a democratic government promotes

the idea that the chiefs—who are regarded as 'being the stakeholders and generally of their communities'—are crucial to 'maintaining law and order' (4.1). The only impediment to the problem of development is relegated to the minor question of the overlapping between traditional authorities and municipalities. There is paralysis on the key questions. On the crucial issue of whether traditional leaders should have voting rights the White Paper comes to no conclusion at all. The blunting of the analysis attempts to conceal the accommodation with the anti-democratic traditional authorities. This is the Realpolitik which Mronzen is sharply alive to and which confound the main thrust of his argument. These examples of the articulation of modernising elites with traditional leaders illustrate a general tendency in African politics and society that of modern political change to reach its limits and to seek accommodation and joint rule over the rural people with the chiefs. Customary law unrefined by the embrace of colonialism, the chiefly system, and forms of despotic rule contain the seeds of Africa's emergence into independence.

in defence of political economy

Of greatest interest to South African intellectuals is Mandant's analysis of the inner connectivities between this colonial tradition, the scalpel of imperialism in the devious divisions of African society, and the malevolent flowering of apartheid. The argument that apartheid is the end product of colonialism in Africa, however, which appears so effective and simple, unfortunately also reveals the limits of his hypothesis. While there were intimate connectivities, colonial practice did not prescribe the outcome of apartheid. We have to draw on the insights provided by the cheap labour theory to explain its trajectory. Theoretically Mandant appears to lose the essential link between the political economy of South Africa and the nature of internal divisions; the lines of internal division among the population were most brutally enforced, but they were also fatally flawed. The solution to these manifest divisions, both in South Africa and beyond, lies not in the political or administrative, though both are vital in the reassembly of the nation of Africa; only and progress, but in the economic and the expansion of the modern sector and the eventual smoothing over of the gaping lines of division by the restoration of civil society. This is a function of rural as well as urban society. The early tradition of the Ujamaa villages of Tanzania which were originally the product of rural Africa's imagination before becoming the bureaucratic nightmare of a semi-modernised and authoritarian state, shows the great possibilities of African initiative and African solutions.

Mandant expresses severe reservations about the emergence of a vital civil society in Africa. The outlines of the landscape of African realities are presented in broad and effective strokes but the colours are sharply monochromatic, purely black and white. The grey shades of change, the slow evolution of society from the customary accession to authority and to the multi-various challenges posed by the individual and disparate interests revealed in civil society, the bending of custom and tradition to the dictates of urban and industrial life (most evident in South African urbanology, but also in the work of the Zambian school of social change), the initiatives of individuals

⁴ For some reason these displays of courtship are only registered in the electronic media and not in the press. Speeches are not lodged on the ANC's website of speeches, making recording of the actual promises and criticisms dependent on note-taking at transmission almost.

and communities organising themselves along democratic lines⁴, are elusive in this work. He gives priority to the political and administrative, both only portraying the digestion of custom under colonialism and explaining its self-perpetuation, rather than looking towards the contrary tendencies of evolutionary social change and the bending of tradition to the demands of modernity. The argument of *Citizen and Subject* is compelling at one level but inadequate at another because Mandant fails to grapple with the essential methodological fact that the process of the dissolution of traditional authority is inexorable and continuous⁵.

Compared to the ebb and flow of politics – the ability to manoeuvre and perform policy gymnastics – this trend seems slow and unconvincing. But without this perspective we can be insensitive to the contrary trends to traditionalism latent in urbanisation, a growing youthful population, and the painful but progressive emancipation of women from rural patriarchy. There are also the contradictory tendencies in public consciousness signalled by the crossing over to more 'modern' attitudes towards sexual identity, sexual abuse, land ownership by women, religious freedom, and inter-racial marriage, etc. These trends indicate the tendencies sapping away the raw patriarchal power of habit or traditionalism such as that of Inkatha. Once its war mobilisation subsides – as eventually it has to since it is committed to the stabilisation of social relations on a capitalist basis – then the national core of Inkatha's definition of tradition will be found to be absent and in its place a savage antipathy of 'leader against leader' remain. The main problem Inkatha faces is the growing divorce between itself and its business supporters now that the ANC leadership has wholeheartedly embraced the task of financial stability and monetary restraint, and prioritised the building of a black capitalist class rather than redressing of social needs. Yet such is the extent of the accommodation to the forces of tradition that even a radical commentator within the ANC defends a merger of the party of modernising nationalism with that of its most destructive traditionalist opponent (Cronin 1998). While this indicates the abiding power of decentralised despotism, it can also be read as indicating the possibility that decentralised despotism is not an immutable monolith but is under process – fluctuating vacillantly between dissolution and a wider consolidation. Such are the contradictions of contemporary South Africa.

In terms of the broader perspective required by a rejuvenated African studies *Citizen and Subject* is limited by a weak conception of the political economy of Africa: a lack of recognition that Africa is the Third World's Third World, a stagnant backwater of the international economy, a continent more financed and brutally exploited in which

people have been forced to endure more than 30 wars since 1970. All this adds up to is the portrayal of a national society in dreadful stagnation because of the lack of an economic dynamic, a society in which pride of place is taken by the military, and where ordinary people have to turn to the rural areas and traditional authority for some shelter from the ravages of modern society. But beyond this negative picture it is so important to register the effective challenges of civil society, the increasing participation of women in economic activities, the battle for survival and for property under these conditions, the growth of a landless proletariat with weaker and weaker attachment to the land. Quantity can change fairly rapidly into quality as has been witnessed in Zimbabwe where recently there has been the most extraordinary flowering of civil society around the fulcrum of the trade unions. These initiatives by Africans in Africa escape Mandant's eclectic purview.

Finally, it is worth stressing that structures, states, and civil society have forces, on a certain economic base, and this truly is not the exclusive property of a Marxist perspective. The relation between state and economy is central to the question of the state, and cannot be demoted as a regional obsession. Lines of analysis which pursue the relationship between state and economy as the basis for an understanding of the character of the state are suggestive of its future development. The African studies has to be located within the processes of continental disintegration and reconstruction, and within world markets. The most recent beginnings of an urbanised growth may prefigure better prospects for civil society. If Africa had the economic basis, then the real boundaries marking off civil society from rural despotism, the opportunities for the genuine revival of civil society in war-torn regions, could shift space. We need to remember that at the beginning of the various development decades in the 1950s, the per capita income of many African countries was similar to those of North East Asia, many of whom have doubled per capita incomes in a decade. What has been the critical factor in Africa's political and economic stagnation? The bifurcated state is a key element in the mode of domination, but is it the essential factor in explaining the upstate, or do we have to seek out the data of Africa's reorganisation in world markets, and combinations of state expropriations and the economy?

Conclusion

I would suggest that, despite Mandant's powerful methodological synthesis, we need to return to the elements of political economy for a comprehensive analytic apparatus.

⁴ In the work on the growth of civil movements in Iran, J. Harrison (1998) argues that the potential for democratic civil society does depend on the ability and commitment to change of civil groups, which a leadership cannot be guaranteed, but neither could the possibility of democracy through participation be entirely excluded. The role of mosques, schools, and organisation in the growth of civil society are not easily to be excluded. The vigorous contest for political rights is mainly opposed to a self-fashioned and largely ill-defined democracy which would not have meant a genuine democracy.

⁵ Peter Evans has used concepts such as 'embedded autonomy' to analyse the factors of industrialisation, as a factor with intense connection to the surrounding social structure (particularly industrial capital), as a formative element of the state's ability to develop a non-market economy. 'Predatory' states are located along with 'developmental' states within a continuum of the achievement of development. Some African states are specifically characterisable as being controlled by those who plunder without any regard for the welfare of the country, rather than a production for their needs. (Evans 1993: 44).

This does not require that we lose focus on the specificity of regional studies, or the necessity of situating South African exceptionalism within the continental context. As Lutz and Tarrow (1998) stress, there is a need for area studies to counterbalance the preoccupation with globalisation which has a 'natural allure' and carries with it 'new mysteries'. The integration of South African and African studies in a perspective for cross-regional studies involves working within the tension between the regional and the global, and this entails acknowledging the continuing importance of political economy.

There is much in *Global and Subject* which relates directly to our present experience and, despite his insistence on blending the South African into a unified African Studies, Marandani is not blind to the singularity and marked differences between South African and continental experiences. He sees the specificity of the country in the 'strength of its civil society, both white and black' (28), but he also carries a warning:

Independent Africa saw sequential South Africa one possible outcome of a reformed state structure, decentralised but not democratised—whether achieved through armed struggle or through negotiations, through independence from a foreign colonial power or through strategic engagement with an erstwhile colonising resident minority; a decentralised but decentralised despotism (63).

In the mind of this reviewer the warning is timely and to the point. Current tendencies towards accommodation with the decentralised despotism which will entrap the rural population in neo-colonial power relations are strongly evident and unopposed across party lines.

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Writing South Africa

Kelwyn Sole

Review Article

Writing South Africa

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Derek Parry (eds), 1979–1992

Edited by Derek Parry and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press,
1998. xviii + 288 pp.

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This collection consists of essays, interviews and position papers not published before, with the exception of Adichie's well-known 1989 intervention and an interview with Ntambi Andile Zuko. Assembling the contents and framing an exploration of the relationship between art and politics in South Africa, they approach issues relating to the writer's responsibility, the interrelationship between class, gender and racial identities and representations in literature, the relationship between aesthetics and ethics, and questions of form and language. In addition, the specificity of the country's literary traditions, and their relationship to wider African and metropolitan traditions, is under scrutiny: underpinned with examinations of the usefulness of designations of 'modernism', 'post-modernism' and 'post-coloniality' to an understanding of the field. These are, of course, all crucial concerns for anyone trying to comprehend the complexity and diversity of our literary and cultural practices.

Of the essays in this collection, few are complex enough to demand a basic summary. The interchange between Parry and Adichie about the effects of the fiction of John Coetzee is one of these instances. Despite Coetzee's efforts in his novels and critical writing to disrupt the social and discursive authority of the Western colonialism, Parry suggests that his work can be eventually seen to sustain Western modes of interpretation. This is because he represents the oppressed in his fiction via characters and viewpoints situated as objects of representations and qualifications which offer them no place from which to resist the modes that have constituted them' (131); thus effectively pre-empting non-Western knowledge. The withholding of any gesture towards a politics of 'fulfillment' or any prospect of a different, transformed, social order results in a textual practice which 'disrupts the engagement with political conditions it also (is a) chosen' (134). Similarly, his refusal to engage with the textures of the South African landscape results in a critical criticism of 'white writing' that does not, ironically enough, demand a re-possibility of recognition to the land. Adichie responds by pointing out that

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such options are not available to Coetzee. Given his theoretical bent, such options would render him liable to problems of epistemological and cultural misrecognition based on a disregard for the limitations of his own positioning and viewpoint. Coetzee's narrative mode rather erodes its social vision in terms of its commitment to aesthetic self-reflection. Thereafter diverting somewhat from this point, Adichie seems prepared to concede some of Parry's point vis-à-vis works like *Life*, but suggest that 'age of iron' thematizes, as Young, and thus reflects on, various modes of alterity' (167).

Adichie's decision to focus on one work in order to convey Parry's more general critique is somewhat disappointing. Moreover, it becomes apparent that he is taking the opportunity to read Coetzee in terms of his own endeavour to rid South African postcolonial theory of the problems associated with 'strong' othering; stating that Coetzee does not wish to suggest a version of alterity that would leave no grounds for 'intersubjective recognition', and that both Ntambi and Coetzee refuse to 'obtain a dogmatic insistence on absolute difference' (170).

While questions of 'identity' are visible in many of the discussions, it is Wacziarg's article on the position of the 'coloured' within the national construction of South Africa past and present which examines this issue forthrightly. Her article focuses on the textual construction, ethnographic self-fashioning, and political behaviour of 'coloureds' as a resolution of postcoloniality (92). The 'shameful note' of the 'coloureds' for the Nationalist Party in the Western Cape shapes much of her argument, and she finally pleads for 'new discursive spaces in which modalities of blackness can wipe out shame' (106). It becomes increasingly clear that 'shame' is principally mobilised as a moralising term in this essay, which results in an emotional tone insufficiently harassed to her attempts to understand and explain 'coloured' stereotypicalisation, behaviour or self-identification. An assumption that certain kinds of blackness are more authentic than others (at least as far as political conduct is concerned) therefore hampers and contradicts the theoretical firmness and logical process of her argument, which is in turn noticeably ill-kept and fragmentary. The references to gender are not carried through, and her suggestion that there is a need to revise popular definitions of postcoloniality to include the co-existence of oppositional and complicit forms of behaviour, while true, is nothing new. In particular, the proposition that socio-economic imperatives and notions of self-interest might have influenced voting behaviour in the Western Cape appears rather as an afterthought, rather than being positioned as fundamental to the issue.

The interest in the relation of post-coloniality and postmodernism to notions of 'blackness' are echoed in Nkomo's essay on black writing and postmodernism. Herein he makes a number of observations he has made elsewhere, reiterating his belief that a racial split continues in South African writing between 'on the one side an ingrained need to document and to bear witness and on the other the capacity to run on furlough, to loiter, and to experiment' (75). This point can be partly acquiesced and Nkomo's vehement assertion that what is read off as cultural diversity in the different means of writing between races is sometimes a sign of social disparity and 'ideological discrepancy' (75) stands out particularly starkly against some of the other postmodernists in this collection. His scepticism about the arrival of the 'post modern' in recent South

African literature is also well-founded, given (as he argues) the incompleteness of any modernist agenda, generally speaking, among South African writers; but his insistence that the examination of indigenous and vernacular literary traditions would demonstrate that they derive from, and serve, rather different narrative and linguistic traditions and systems to mainstream European-derived writing demands no further discussion. His conviction that postmodernism, as it has taken root inside the country, is 'a movement wholly occupied, managed, or dominated by white critics' (77) seems overhasty. In addition, his position as an expatriate renders him liable – and he is certainly not the only person in the collection who does this – to make sweeping generalisations which do not encompass the full scope of contemporary literary practice in South Africa. For example, and despite his caveats, the sole manner in which he argues what he calls 'oppositional' black literary practitioners with nationalistic agendas and agendas cannot make sense of contemporary poets such as Rampolekeng and Ntshweni or critics such as Mtshali and Losanje, while he does not demonstrate in what sense black writers and poets who now make a living praising foreign delegations, or Nelson Mandela, or (like Mzwakhe) performing for CNN and SpoorTV TV advertisements, can be called 'oppositional' at all. As with Pechey and Brink's articles in the collection, the broad gestures of his argument contain a degree of stereotyping and generalising that is extreme.

It becomes increasingly apparent, speaking more generally, that these articles serve a polemical as much as a scholarly purpose. The editors, and a preponderance of their contributors, appear to subscribe fully to the hegemony current in the South African literary academy. This can most obviously be seen in the manner in which Sachs' and Ndlebele's interventions in debates over the last decade are consistently reiterated – rather than discussed – as sources of legitimation and authority, as well as in the frequent positive valorisations of the placements and example of J.M. Coetzee, both as writer and commentator.

For this is a collection with a mission. While there seems to be an uncertainty prevailing as to precisely how to define the critical tools used, or characterise/periodise South African colonial- and postcoloniality (Wicomb's definition that it is a discursive field exhibiting a variety of meanings such as 'oppositionality, resistance, the practice of radical readings, neo-colonialism, as well as the interrogation of the very term' (92) is indicative), among the theoretically-concerned essays at least there is a credence that the dismantling of apartheid may allow the opening up of possibilities to move past the stifling ideological and stylistic inhibits and compulsions of the apartheid era, critically and creatively speaking. The desire is for a bolder, 'carnivalizing' (in Pechey's words) practice, for experiments with new, anti-realist and fantastic forms for multi-generic interference. For Pechey, it is 'the interaction of European and African oral and literary traditions, especially in their contemporary urban contexts, which announces most clearly a new cultural hybridity that (making particular use of the energies of South Africa's African majority) will begin to form a cultural expression imprinted in the assertions of her African diaspora for centuries – an expression which may not only evade the canons of the metropolis, but transform these in a "reverse colonization" (66). In similar vein, Madhubuti observes in her essay that it is the 'marginalization' of contemporary South

African identities and cultures which represent 'a challenge to writers of fiction, a transformative way of addressing a rapidly transforming world' (70). Furthermore, it is the mixing of forms in literature she hopes will not 'which will supply 'an occasion and a framework for new imaginings' (47). Polyphonic utterance is positively viewed, as is a pluralising spirit now possible in literature. John, Boehmer, Brink, Pechey and others agree that there is the potential for a multi-valued South Africa to move forward now in a spirit of heterogeneity and transculturalism free from nationalistic and, presumably, other master-narrativising constructions.

'Opening the spaces' that beset apartheid South Africa is an opportunity to destabilise centre and margin; to create and fashion a new society free of prejudice and hierarchies. Pechey approaches by parable in his discussion of these possibilities: despite the rising crime rate and the possibility that South Africa might merely be entering the latest of its neo-colonial phases, the country 'still bids fair to be the *Gesellschaftswunder* of the late twentieth century' (59). Ndlebele's stories may 'transform the victory over apartheid into a gain for postmodern knowledge' (58), and so on.

These essays are therefore filled with a utopian spirit which occasionally verges on the evangelical, and one feels somewhat mean-spirited pointing out that the beauty of the country into the world community means that we are now merely one of many polities striving to deal with a global system overdetermined by unequal and often unjust structures. Nevertheless, Soto's acute observation that, for some time to come, 'the two opposites, the ideal world and the real world, are going to form the basis of a very strong articulation' (183) in the work of younger writers will probably be borne out.

At worst this utopian tendency verges on a romanticisation of the 'marginal/unwritable' (so to speak) spaces available for resistance and potential counter-narrative. This is especially noticeable in the way in which the disavowals and perceptions of indigenous and oral societies and non-Western epistemologies are constructed, especially on the part of some of the white critics who seem to subscribe to a stronger notion of 'othering' than Attwell. These become an 'other' space beyond the cognition of – but central to the desire of – Western-white critics: places where subversive and transformative counter-urges four beyond limits. At its most extreme, there is a tendency (visible here to John) to place all his objects of approbation within this realm, and then elide them within a discussion ranging freely from one to the next. He thus sees no problem in blurring discussions of orality, myth, political silencing and the unconscious as analogous to, and incommensurability with, official and dominant discourse.

In line with current trends, there is also a vigorous drinking of the realist and mimetic modes of expression with which, it is suggested, anti-apartheid literature was saturated. Such a persistent reiteration of horrendous 'facts', Brink tells us, 'liberates the mind' (21). 'History' is perceived as a tyrannical form of discourse in South Africa, that claims a representativeness and a connection to truth. It does not rightfully progress. In such a scenario, 'fiction' and the uses of the imagination are given enormous subversive and transformative power; for, according to Klein, they can 'further the power of the

possible which is negated and silenced by the documents that claim to represent the nation (31); while Brink in turn regards it as an important task now to 'imagine the real' (24). Of the writers working within this ambit of conception, only Ntshongolile qualifies his attack on realism as referring to the 'poor realism' he believes bars South African literature is suffused with, with its 'formal insufficiencies, its disappointing breadth and wisdom and firm disapproval of irony' (77). In all these discussions, though, there is scant incisive or prolonged discussion of the exact relationship between 'history' and 'discourse', 'real' and 'fantasy', apart from Bochner's qualification that they must not be seen to simply binary opposition to one another. As a result the discussions about 'history' and its relation to language and discourse are sometimes facile, at worst leading to Marusskii's idealist reference to 'that incoherent and fundamentally linguistic dream we know as apartheid' (200).

There are a few positive aspects to this anthology. Peckey's attempt to place South Africa and its literature within the fraught experiences of global modernity and discontents of modernism is to be welcomed; and his readiness to try to understand and theorise the 'toppling' of the demise of apartheid in terms of Russian thinkers of their immediately pre- and post-revolutionary period (such as Bakhtin) is both courageous and stimulating. His suggestion that the criticism caused by the lateness of Russia's transformation into the modern world gave Russian intellectuals a position from which to probe, albeit briefly, on the effects of modernisation more deeply than any available to other Europeans whose countries were modernised 'on time' is interesting; and the analogous opportunity he hints has been afforded South African intellectuals to diagnose and avoid the 'social and spiritual pathologies' (61) modernism has elsewhere spawned is exciting. Indeed, the insistence by contributors such as Peckey, Bochner, Parry, Wieman and Mendi that South Africa's apartheid and colonial past continues to shape its present is salutary. Mendi initiates an interesting discussion about the transformations that happen when oral forms are taken from their lived environment and transcribed to the page (his focus is Watson's *Return of the Moon*), giving voice in addition to a scepticism as regards the limits of scope and effectivity of the F.R.C. His observation cannot be disputed that the pathologies and psychoses occasioned by apartheid will remain, even if some of the truth silenced by the previous regime is rediscovered. Wieman's critique of the marginalising of 'coloured' activists after the demise of the mass democratic movement and the failures of A.N.C. policies bent on securing the 'coloured' vote in the Western Cape will also, hopefully, prompt further examination.

In the long run, though, a glaring weakness of this collection lies in the manner in which Allidice and Jolly have selected material to try and address the period in question. Noting the national 'his book claims to cover in its title, one could suggest that it is well-nigh impossible to cover such a complex and diverse history in the limited space those circles afford. As a result, the omissions are multiple and glaring. There is only one article on poetry – and that on a single poet – while little space is given to fully examine so many literary figures of importance. Nadine Gordimer is only the most obvious of these. In the final analysis, the ideological positivities of this volume are so pronounced and enshrined as to allow practically no empathetic or, indeed, scholarly

study of the two decades of literature prior to 1990. This is true not only of two decades of literary texts, but also of the debates surrounding literary, cultural, socio-economic and political events and issues which have taken place. There is a general sense of a lack of detailed knowledge of these periods, and minimal gestures towards them except dismissal. For instance, the attacks on the realist predilections of these decades rarely used at least to acknowledge, and temper their commentary with, some reference to the debates on 'organic realism' that Tarcuș Asvat initiated in the columns of *The Southern* and live forums in the early 1980s. Bochner's definition of apartheid South Africa as 'a unique situation of internal colonization in a post-colonial world' (72) would benefit from further discussion, given the debates that flourished from as early as 1975 amongst intellectuals and activists such as Wolpe, Hudson and Cronin about 'Colonialism of a Special Type'; while her belief that anti-apartheid writers' 'obsession with realism and concomitant lack of urge to experiment stylistically, even if this appears aware that some writers of this period voiced as part of their project a wish to break with received stylistic and aesthetic traditions' surely there should be some musing on, and dissection of, the avowal by Black Consciousness writers that they were producing a 'new writing', or of Mafokeng's 1980 polemic in *Forced Landing* urging black writers 'to pee, spit and spit on literary convention ... to experiment and probe and not give a damn what the critics have to say', or his usage of a new experimental form he called 'proemdra'. It is furthermore odd to read Brink's sweeping generalisations about the acceptance of the binaries of 'history' and 'text' and the tripartite mode of thinking he claims is present among all literary activists and critics during the apartheid period, or about the supposedly uniform approval of the usage of realist and mimetic modes, without wondering how much he has missed of the critical arguments in process at the time concerning *inter alia* historical representation, ideology, authority and form. In line with Sachs' simplifications, all critical activity and discussion (1990) is made to seem merely an aspect or effect of 'solidarity criticism', which is not the case.

The literary and cultural production of the 1970s fuelled by the Black Consciousness Movement, and of the period of the States of Emergency, serve as negative reference points for the majority of authors here represented, including the editors themselves. Given the fact that the early 1970s produced the most noteworthy and theorised effort to date by black writers to undermine white and liberalised neo-colonial assumptions, there is a woeful lack of effort to understand (re)changes in the cultural and literary production of two decades of the quarter of a century under purview – surely a prerequisite for critique. Indeed, there is little evidence of research in the field apart from the reading of creative texts. Writers and performers enormously popular in the period of Black Consciousness hegemony are simply disregarded – the 'Soweto poet' Mafokeng appears only in the bibliography, as do Gwama and Sepato, who were important theoretical as well as literary contributors in their time; a popular fiction writer such as Marshobu receives only passing, and denigrating, comments. The 1980s far outlasts. Disavowals merely assume the a priori characterisation of his literary output as below par, overcast, born with political function and minefields. All the attempts during the period to democratise culture, explore different notions of form, mould artistic expression or even criticise prevailing political practices are simply

scribble away. Thus, Asvat's challengingly provocative poetry collection *A Celebration of Names*, critical of the intercommunal conflicts among the oppressed during that decade, evinces an interest apart from its bibliographical mention; trade union and worker initiatives in culture are ignored, except in the position papers by Mda and Maponya and in vague asides by Peechey; and Mzwakile—possibly the most popular and well-known poet in South Africa even today—does not even get into the bibliography. What results, I would argue, is an exceptionally distorted picture of two decades of the twenty-five years this collection purports to examine. These two decades are presented, with few exceptions (the three articles by Barnard, Meyns and Walder; the position papers and Tshah and Serote's responses in their interviews) in a manner which reduces them to a mere promulgation of cliché, labor made to bolster up the general ideological direction of this book. Thus, what began as a legitimate critique of the crudities and assumptions of the literature of the apartheid years flounders on its own glibness and, it must be said, historical ignorance.

A glaring problem with this volume (and this point can be generalised to rather too much of the critical output taking place in journals at the moment as well) is that, while 'post-colonial' thought acknowledges the implication of literary practice in a wider cultural provenance, there is very little evidence of explorations of the wider materiality that informs and responds to literary production and discussion. One looks in vain for any reference to recent sources which discuss political and economic issues, such as Fine and Rustonjee's *The Political Economy of South Africa*. One also looks in vain for any discussion—apart from two of the position papers, asides by Serote and brief mentions in the articles on theatre—of the wider institutions of cultural activity during this period, such as censorship boards and policy, literary magazines, cultural venues and spaces, or community cultural groups. Absent is any debate over changes that have taken place in literary practice occasioned by economic or political transformations: in the post-1990 period, for instance, it could be expected that changes in publishing brought about by increasing multinational involvement and control, the dearth of bookshops, bulk buying practices, the rise in book prices etc. would be of interest.

Even more tellingly, despite the invocation of concepts relating to the local and the 'ordinary', there is little effort to look at the regional and local economies and effects of culture, where current notions of identity diversity and associational politics would presumably be useful. When *écrire* about the 'local' appears, it is in the single instance of its effect on the oeuvre of J.M. Coetzee—and even here little recognition is forthcoming that all local cultures are diverse and differently experienced (one thinks, for instance, of aspects of Cape Town—how that Coetzee chooses to ignore, such as its Trotskyist and left-wing traditions). Moreover, the concept of the 'ordinary/veryday' is accepted on faith; it is rarely useful only if it is preheralded.

If one looks for any evidence of ordinary research or careful social investigation done, in the long run one is likely to be disappointed. Too many critics are preoccupied with texts about texts about texts (I am, of course, using the narrow meaning of 'text' here), with the final effect of an infinite regression of mirrors. On the other hand, it is striking that (Witcomb's brief remarks about Buthe's and Amod's excepted)

there is little sign of efforts to resign and re-evaluate overseas critics engaged in debates about postcoloniality and colonial discourse theory to fit in with local conditions at all. On a different plane, one could query the relative lack of interest in questions of language usage and indigenous literatures generally, apart from Nkomo. While one can but wonder at the wearisome display of inaccessible expression and antiquage in several of the essays, it seems to have escaped some of these critics that political practice in criticism includes the question of how to reach an audience beyond the theoretically adept.

Despite the fashioning of a notion of 'materiality' in line with much post-structuralist argument, what the project here assembled appears to accomplish is one that simply inverts the emphasis of the old literary-literary-inform-control binaries: previous South African literary criticism is criticised for assuming, What begins as a legitimate assertion of the relative autonomy of writing (and its non-availability to political injunction) goes at times far further into a realm where literature is given extraordinary ability to save South Africans' experience of modernity and modernity from drowning in a bog of politics and history. For Peechey the echoes of Ndebele are strong here; literature can promise more appropriate forms of wisdom and longer-term political commitment, relating to its environment as 'self-reflexive self-knowledge' (57); while its mythologising properties and centralities can free it from the marginalising urges of Western forms of rationality. To turn, the novel in particular is 'the great generic invention of early modernity by which late modernity might be saved from itself' (62). In turn, Attwell reinterprets Ndebele and Coetzee to highlight the latter's 'emphasis on allowing writing to circumvent prevailing socio-ethical conditions and assert an alternative frame of reference' (171 etc.).

However tempting it may be, it is perhaps never simplistic to see South Africa's 'post-col' turn as merely a retreat into an aestheticism and idealism freshly shined up for the twenty-first century. Attwell mentions an aspect of the South African version of post-colonial thought that, as it stands, increasingly appears to me to be the core of any debate around the local turn of 'post-col' theories. In more recent work by critics such as Attwell and Leon de Kock there is an insistence on the importance of the ethical dimension of literature, which Attwell reiterates here as part of his attempt to explain Coetzee's belief that writers need to follow a 'transcendental imperative' at a time when 'any transcendental basis for ethics is being denied in the name of politics' (quoted 172) in a context (such as that sketched in *Age of Iron*) where the problem is whether 'the society in question has a culturally embedded code of ethics to which many of its members have shared access' (176).

It is accurate to claim that questions of civil society are central to cultural and other debates in South Africa today. But there is a specific political agenda at work here. I have suggested elsewhere that the post-colonial project in South Africa is not simply a reorientation and refurbishing of critical and expansive modes, an ahumanistic and (as suggested already) a utopian project, based on a notion of recovered ethical behaviour and literature as a vehicle for the transmission and enactment of more appropriate (open, pluralistic, non-judgemental) values through acts of language and reciprocity. In line with this, Bink appears to embrace a notion of literature as a

potentially enormously powerful tool in the transmission of values and appropriate modes of behaviour via individual writers and readers communing through the artistic 'text' as well as in the economy of nation and staging of what it is (im)possible for an individual to represent and claim authority for in 'other' contexts. In more rigorous formulations, Attwell (citing Michael Bessing) claims that the self-conscious sexualisation and deconstruction of discourse someone like Coetzee undertakes in his fiction translocates authorial responsibility from writer to reader (178), while Parry cites Attwell's suggestion that Coetzee's fiction 'hang[es] ... with--to paraphrase, confer, approach, exploit--a humanist "general" ...' (51). Thus, Attwell speaks of Coetzee's 'debbling into the "arenas of the sublime" as a sign of the latter's "innate ethical stoicismism ... a universalism that amounts to an attempt to work around the curial of reciprocity that seems entrenched in colonial relationships" (177).

In the long run, and despite the post-modern deflection of its covenant, I remain sceptical as to how a relationship between writer and reader based on 'transformative acts of language' is in essence different in conception from more conservative forms of critical theory taught in South African universities for years. In a manner analogous to--but paradigmatically different from--Nichols, what is being suggested here is that literature can serve as a powerful modelling tool and performative process for readers. The point may be argued that, at a project of ethical modelling, it made from a 'post-all' position, lays itself open *later aie* to charges of complicity.

It is symptomatic in many of these essays that certain 'multiple terms' of a new orthodoxy (such as 'storytelling', 'the local' and 'the ordinary') are not interrogated at all, for these are the key terms of a new dispensation to be internalised and narrated. One finally comes away from this volume with the sense of a generally uncritical approach to the hegemony currently dominant in the academy. Bochner notes his 'very' 'displeasure' in his 1990 *Pretoria* article that the language of South African literary criticism is still very much one of 'insulation', where gestures towards openness founder on 'ideological' strictures. In light of this, while the desire to subject conceptual and aesthetic conventions to scrutiny and confront literary-political canons in post-modernist and post-structuralist practice is welcome, with this volume comes to realise--and there is evidence elsewhere as well--is that a new set of assumptions about literature and its relation are being put in place with remarkable celerity, often by proponents of theories and aesthetics who proclaim themselves as eschewing such essentialism. It is also remarkable how often models for the new canon resemble the very last 'correct books' earlier radical critics in the country have sought to displace. This is evident in Schneider's positive evaluation of *Abdullah* and *The Story of an African Farm* due to their 'multilayeredness' (43), their multi-generic aspects, the indeterminacy and heterization of their endings and their authors' desire 'not to fit a single frame or the firm reified language of 1940s white Headline Criticism, nor their stylistic wish to return to the "patches of idiosyncrasy" in which they have come to work. But at the same time it is conceivable that such character features are qualified to certain kinds of, or are inferior than, universally imposed. For example, the ending in *John's Progress* is argued away as 'emerging in a different, less dramatic, less human, as are the features of the end of the

'Sovereign novels' of the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the texture of generic excursions and options in a work such as *To Every Man His Blood* is compromised, presumably because it belongs to the literary practice someone like Bochner is wishing to expunge. Even as one accepts Bochner's discussion about how the use of 'form and endings of Schreiner, Plaatje and Nkomo in "Lucie" differs in kind from the others mentioned, one begins to suspect that it is not the formal aspects that differentiate these examples in her mind as much as the social and political conceptualisations that underlie them. If this is a general phenomenon, which I suggest it is, it renders problematic the supposed aesthetically-based emphasis essays such as hers claim to be involved in, or the teleological certainty of the move towards 'better' literature than any of these critics assume.

It is ironic, then, that it is usually the less rhetorically weighty and stylistically outrageous essays that contain the more interesting insights. Walder's article on race, gender and the politics of South African theatre is particularly stimulating and thoughtful, while Heyns' explorations of gay writing under the States of Emergency and Colfer's on the reception and re-imagining of South African theatre in the United States open up a number of fascinating areas for further study. Walder asks a number of pertinent questions about the taxonomy of the new South African State, and its relation of cultural and theatrical practice. He also provides an interesting critique of Fugard, especially this playwright's selective marshalling of the 'universal' and 'local' to forestall criticism of his work. Heyns' readings of Gray, Prinsloo, Nel and *et al* are suggestive, while his discussion of the claims that gay oppression is analogous to and interchangeable with black oppression is debate similar to one that already exists around gender is to the point. Indeed, what this raises is the precise nature of the imbrications of the personal and political in a concrete situation, and this is refreshing after the more nebulous formulations contained elsewhere. Walder's positive evaluations of the 'local' and 'storytelling' however seemed to me slightly overblown; it is noticeable that his discussion of the former ignores the way in which the apartheid authorities bypassed the fact that (in Mazama's words in *New Classic* in 1977) 'the microphone is difficult to censor' by eventually simply banning and killing activists. Furthermore, his discussion of gender and storytelling relies only on non-South African sources for its characterisation of the circularity of women's stories: some reference to *Intsimi* would be more convincing. It would be fascinating, as well, to study Geina Mhlophe's, and others', use of oral storytelling on SABC television, in order to see how the tendency towards identity-plus-community-through-storytelling Walder isolates as gender-specific would articulate with the overdetermining nation-building ideologies present in the national broadcaster.

Colfer's sketching of the vagaries of the reception of South African theatre in the United States (where it fluctuates between being characterised as 'familiar' and 'exotic') shows that more of this kind of work is necessary if South African literature is going to evolve a literary culture independent of metropolitan acceptance or rejection: in this regard further exploration of the way in which the revolutionary aspects of the South African struggle have been appropriated (for instance as part of a black civil rights struggle) is essential. Durrard's sermonic examination of the literature of the

Status of literature is also interesting, although her desire to read place a South African 'people's culture' as an expression of a 'poor' literature intent on 'remaking' the world sits uneasily with her realisation that elements of such expression hold the potential, even under apartheid, to transform them-selves into just another hierarchical discourse of power. At the same time Maponya's and Mda's position papers, although brief, raise questions relating to 'more routine' issues of the fortune and survival factors of literary practitioners (232-3) and appropriate forms of theatrical practice in a new dispensation in a compelling way: Mda's criticism of the weakness of a 'theatre of resistance' in creating a critical audience consciousness, and his discussion of an alternative 'theatre for development', will prove interesting to many readers. Mmamagill's examination of the overlapping of 'lyrical feeling' with materialist habitus and socialist impulse in Jeremy Cronin's poetry makes a few useful additional points to previous scrutiny of this poet, although it is noticeable that he tends towards perceiving an absolute split between poetics and politics—an ultimately conservative move depressingly familiar to all who have followed debates about poetry in this country over the last quarter of a century. It is instructive to point out, as he does, that Cronin's poetry allow him to 'stage a passion' unavailable to him in the discourse of his critical essays, but one feels that Cronin's essays about literature could have done with greater discussion and it is a pity that his critique of Campbell's 'Rounding the Cape' (in a 1984 *English in Africa*) is not considered. It is also noticeable that poems from *Inward* which fit less easily into Mmamagill's hypothesis, such as 'Death Row' and 'Makheke motion', get short shift.

Yet, when all is said and done, the teleological vision underlying the omnipresent discourse of an obvious progression from the (formally and politically badly past to the (formally and conceptually more promising) future belies the gestural openness made. There is an overall sense that the terrain of South African literary studies is being limited to certain themes and certain questions; which, as it is transmitted to less adept critics, will result in the reiteration of a new set of stultifying clichés about cultural production in this country. At worst, one gets a feeling that the present 'post-colonial' imperatives of manipulative theory are being utilised without sufficient musing on what their strengths and weaknesses in a local context might be; in particular one carries away with the uneasy feeling that the present psychological and linguistic imperatives of a guilty Europe are simply being transmitted by (predominantly) white critics who can identify with this guilt. This is coupled with a distaste for any discourses and practices of politics ('history') which appear to invade their subjectivity, whose of the future, or crisis and social interests. As a result of this, only those who have some knowledge of the period will find beneficial aspects to this collection. For those with only a passing knowledge of the debates, discussions and controversies that have influenced and characterised South African literature since 1970 this book will not clarify and stimulate as much as puzzle.

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Playing the Postmodern Game

Stephen J. Gray, *Reading*
by Michael Coward Green
Sunderland: Penguin, 1997. 164pp.
ISBN 054656790

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... the text is not a line of words following a single 'ideological' meaning ... but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, stand and exist. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable other texts ... (Roland Barthes, 'Death of an Author', quoted in *Reading* 45).

This is an unusual text to review, to say the least: from the seemingly novel form that the book takes it would appear to be that Coward Green has been 'nothing if not brave and adventurous'. What we have with *Reading* is a text that describes itself as a 'verse novella' and deals with the nature of written texts as historical records, and which not only takes on board but also seems to assert the primacy of poststructuralist theory and modes of literary and cultural analysis. Coward Green is described in the text itself as 'the father of historiography and the petty thief of poetry' (109). In reviews in the *Sunday Times* and the *Mail and Guardian* its postmodernist pretensions have been looked upon unfavourably, the suggestion being that they 'spoil' the poetry. Linde Abrahamson sees this text as indicative of the 'theory critics taking over the production of literature'—hence the 'self-swallowing' quality to the text, as it pre-emptively criticises commentary by itself covering all its critical bases—saying that there is nothing in the text that has not been taken care of; there is nothing that is not under control. Indeed, *Reading* does at times play a self-indulgent and tiresome 'game' between the narrator and the ostensible identity of the author's 'ideal' identity as both academic literary critic and (with this text) literary creative writer.

My own feeling is that there is nothing wrong with postmodernism *per se*, far from it, but that *Reading* takes the text of its own postmodernism. Part of the text's postmodernist strategy is to present itself as a meta-critical text. What it does not do is convey a sense of the South African modernist 'big picture'. If at all apathetic was South

... Review by Leonard Achermann, 1997, *A Postmodern Way of Reading: Some Half-Dozen Critics Reading Derrida* (October). 9; review by Leonard Achermann, 1997, *South African Literary Journal* 46 (and *Guardian* September 1997).

Africa's great modernist project, and that it has strong links to the right-wing policies of Apartheid and nationalism. It is not, for one, a successful experiment in post-modernist literary practice. At its best, postmodernism challenges, if not contends, the various categories and modes of modernist thinking and literary practice; at its worst it can be accused of being self-serving and narcissistic. With *Sinking* there is an unfortunate shift in emphasis and primary concern away from the characteristically postmodern interest in the self-reflexiveness and self-reflexiveness of narrative fictions (i.e. with the ontological and epistemological questions of the text), towards a rather narcissistic obsession with the identity of the author.

Sinking is divided chronologically into three sections: 'Past', 'Mediation', and 'Present', which are united either thematically in that they are concerned with the tragic sinkhole incident that took place at Blyvenutricht mine in 1961 (which constitutes the 'black hole' at the heart of the text), or with the identity of the poet/narrator, his history, and the story or significance of what he has written – which is viewed from 'outside' the text, the cycle of poems dealing with the disaster (Section I: 'Past'). Viewed from the 'outside', however, Cawood Green is the author of the whole text; it is his name that is proudly displayed on the book's cover and on its title page. As we shall see, the referential/narrational game of Greens and Cawood Greens is one that the reader is expected to play. The identities involved here are Michael Cawood Green the poet/scholar and author, and Michael Green, the writer of preening and voracious author of the book's 'future history', with both of these textually represented figures, could have some connection with figures in the real world, who share their names, but have a single reference. I am not entirely sure what pleasure (in Barthes' sense of the word) the reader, who needs to be familiar with postmodern literary forms and poststructuralist critical strategies, will find in playing these games. The danger, is, of course, that the reader will, now immanent with the whole project, and see it as fatally marred by an unethical pretentiousness. Although there are some attempts at self-deprecating irony, a sense of pretentiousness engendered towards sinking into itself. As we have already seen, the text wishes to jump start the process of literary canonization – which is even partly advertising its own complexity, thus hoping to qualify as viable academic commodity.

In Green's account of things the sinkhole disaster takes on a special significance, providing analogical connection between the idea of the historical and diachronal, between a 'post-hole' South Africa and a post-decolonial nation world. In terms of its ontological metaphor and Cawood Green involves, what we appear to have then as a 'sing, baby', a small black hole suddenly appearing at the (chronically named, in the circumstances), Blyvenutricht mine. Reflecting a postmodern fascination with all such boundary-crossing portals as ventholes, dimensionally porous and near-death zone experiences, the narrator talks of the possibility that black holes have personalities, that there is something strangely human in their eternal business. The role ascribed to the black hole is not purely theoretical, but serves to key in the text's darker feelings, particularly as rather nihilistic feelings (albeit obsessive) of causal misunderstanding. The danger of the sinkhole's preoccupation with death that

we find in this text is one of sliding into morbidity, satisfaction only on the other extreme, cold callousness. This sentimentality seems to be connected to the fear of many White South Africans of a sudden loss of stability and guarding. The text explores this White paranoia at a conscious level, but it would also seem to operate at an unconscious level, a level at which it informs the actual writing of this text and is a kind of blind-spot in the writer's critical reflexivity.

Where Green's use of the sinkhole incident works best for me is where it is treated as historical metaphor, or harnesses the 'sign' of the impending collapse of a White South Africa (the false economic boom of Verwoerdian apartheid policies, violently corroded from within by the ravages of a rapacious capitalism, totally bereft of any economic or geological/ecological foresight). Green's use of the disaster as symptom of a society's malaise, and of the sudden shock of history (haunting for its victimity, worse, much better than his attempts to explore its significance in terms of what he himself would appear to see as the bleak, but theoretically essential, axioms of post-structuralism. Green is able to communicate a strong sense that there is a pre- and historical significance to the disaster as the first rumbling of the new (even if, it may seem), if not the prototype of, the event that will sweep away the demons of political security and safety of White South Africans; the Soweto student insurrection of June 1976.

Cawood Green puts the significance of the sinking into the mouths of his characters, as an allegory the truth of which they are able to speak. He does this in preference to allowing the reader to come to his or her own conclusions about the symbolic meanings of things in the text. Green self-consciously means the text's symbolism as something which is obvious, as a 'given', rather than as something that needs to be explained:

—just in time, of course,
for other sorts of underground problems
To surface:
But with this is allegory
Becomes rather heavy-handed (74).

This maneuver raises the problem of what the voices 'know' and the degree to which they have been 'informed' by the poet to the extent of becoming quasi 'literary' figures able to 'forecast' the disaster. Cawood Green provides a rather enigmatic confession regarding the nature of this knowledge (such as it is) before it is translated into the language and conceptual framework of the poem: 'Nothing, not down here, would have been in English, of course' (61). The poetry of the last section of the book includes political, geological, scientific, economic and other discourses as its own raw material, 'giving a certain scientific rigour to what the text itself refers to as "grains of absurdity"' (67). Sometimes the poem seems to clearly provide in order to enhance the quality of the various things, as far as possible, from the inside:

The words that lie beyond you, that in
Written so solidly,

And you all cry out that returned home
Only to disappear
Far more permanently
Between the playground and the factory,
You under a newspaper
For a loud carpet cleaner
On special offer
Fish on the weight of fat the earth
That covered you (52).

The problem of mixing tones and registers, particularly when it comes to mixing the serious and the comic/tragic, is surely one of effect, the ideal being one of a tension or interplay between contrasting or opposing elements. In *Sinking* however, the poetry sometimes oscillates uncomfortably between harsh, blunt, factual and physical treatment of things and a sympathy for the characters that verges on sentimentality. The closer the author gets to the subject of the unfortunate family the more this happens. One of the questions that the text poses but perhaps does not explore adequately enough is the status of the various poetic voices in the poem, particularly those in the opening cycle in the first part of this tripartite text. This part of the text, its 'core', if you will, is surrounded and explained by so much meta-discourse and yet the status of these voices, whether totally imagined, or translated into these poetic spaces, is something that the author might have done more with. The sense that this reader was left with was one of authorial power as the poetic voices are created and appropriated by a theoretical discourse.

This brings me to the problem of the extensive use of allusion which at times verges on cunnings. This is particularly true of the allusions to, and incorporation of, parody/pastiche or, high literary modernism in the shape of T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*. The link between *Sinking* and Eliot's poem is not fully realised because the degenerative collapse of White South Africa's apartheid capitalism is simply not comparable to that of European civilisation in fiction. The 'Tiresias' theme seems to work, like so much in this text, purely at an intellectual or cerebral level rather than to be connecting the idea of false consciousness/historical blindness to the real experiences of the ghost voices who speak the lines of the cycle of poems. Put in other words, Green's primary allegiance is to academic criticism. Whereas in his campus novels a writer/critic like David Lodge subjects the literary academy to a parodying and relativising textual play, Green reverses the polarities: subjecting this self-same play to the truth of his academic discourse including the poststructuralist 'truth' that comes from knowing what textual play is all about. The reviewers have mistakenly labelled this postmodernist: "I think a better term would be 'academic imperialism'." If, as Harries suggests, the text is a tirade of quotations drawn from innumerable sources of culture, *Sinking* remains monocultural in its privileging of academic discourse.

For me *Sinking* fails because ultimately it either takes itself too seriously, or allows this misreading to take place because it is unclear where the ironic deflections and postmodern poses are taking place. The fact that the reader (particularly the non-academic reader) is correct to suspect that satirisations contemporary intellectual theories do not

have all the answers, that they are not replacements for the old republican values (bringing new identities and elevated priestly status for their exponents, the new illuminati) But perhaps Green is too seriously committed to the idea of being an academic to have entertained this possibility.

Thompson Nguyen

Deafening Silence

Deafening Silence

by John Miles

Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1997, 320 pp.
ISBN 0783130015

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Originally published in Afrikaans in 1991, the English version of *Deafening Silence* comes at the most opportune time in our history as South Africans attempt to come to terms with their turbulent past through the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In a country with a history of institutionalised racism and disregard for human rights, a writer who chooses to present history as fiction runs the risk of being accused of trivialising inherently sensitive historical events. In *Deafening Silence* John Miles deftly merges history and fiction in an attempt to re-create racial tensions within the South African police force which often had disastrous consequences for those involved. As shown in the applications for amnesty before the TRC, junior police officers or agents sometimes had to be 'silenced' because they posed a threat, for a variety of reasons, to people in positions of power within the police force.

The extent of both the historical and literary value of Miles' story may be judged by the fact that his book won the CNA, M-net and Helgaard Steyn awards and has not only been translated into English, but has also been serialised on television. This life-history which is presented in the form of a novel is the story of Tumele John Moleko and his wife Dusi who are murdered by police agents for demanding that a senior white police officer who assaulted Moleko at work should face trial for misconduct. Miles attempts to create a convincing and comprehensive portrait of his main character by tracing the growth and maturation of Tumele from his childhood in the rural village of Senekai in the Orange Free State to his first job as a sergeant at Hammarskruif police station. In his admiration for the police and his desire to serve his country as a patriotic policeman, the young Moleko is shown to be oblivious to the nature of the apartheid police force as an inherently racist and destructive machinery of the state. When he is killed at the age of 33, he is gradually discovering the deviousness, hypocrisy and moral

inconsistencies which belie the formalistic formality and orderliness of the police force. Moleko's brutal murders here are partly attributable to his own failure to grasp the informality and sheer callousness of his enemies. Africans who hold senior positions in the South African police force, Moleko never realises, and it is too late, but one cannot expect to be treated with justice and fairness by an institution in which those values are hardly recognised.

After reading the start of Miles' novel, my immediate reaction was that this was just another story of a white man with power who "treats and, ultimately, murders" a junior black colleague whom he considered to be 'cheeky'. However, after reading a few of the book's short chapters, I realised that I was dealing with something different. I was impressed not only by Miles' attempts to re-create, as authentically as possible, Moleko's ill-fated life, but also by the thoroughly fascinating and ingenious manner in which the story is narrated. Written in that conventional metafictional mode, Miles' novel constantly reminds the reader of its process of construction as well as its dual statuses 'history' and 'fiction'. The writer is a character in his own story which has been pieced together from Moleko's lawyers, friends, relatives and colleagues. The thematic focus of the book's chapters falls ultimately on Moleko's life-story and on the writer's attempt to weave together various aspects of Moleko's short life. Miles succeeds in creating vignettes of Moleko the country boy, the enthusiastic trained policeman, the family man devoted to his wife and son, and of someone who is slowly learning to distinguish between illusion and reality in the contumacious of South African politics of the 1980s. Thus the research which went into the writing of the book is skillfully interlarded with the narrative of Moleko's life. The writer's relationship with his character is both fascinating and curious, as exemplified in the following remarks by the novel's protagonist:

I don't make something or, at all times, I don't think I can, well have to be not as close to the police as and the writer, the black man and the white, and confined to his own territory, yet both caught in the power of a predatory system who surely, he thinks, are superior to him, are free from it, and history is a story of a country's affliction (17).

Textual self-reflexivity, authorial intervention and constant changes in narrative point of view are not simply a manifestation of Miles' fascination with postmodernist narrative strategies, but a realistic representation of the difficulties facing a writer who attempts to paint a relatively well-rounded portrait of a man whose life-story can only be gleaned from police records, lawyers' files and uncertain oral testimonies.

Miles' book has ensured that the sad fate of Richard Moleko (Moleko's real name) will not be consigned to the dustbin of history as his murderers wanted it to be, not well received by millions of readers world-wide. This story of a 'Mr Nobody' (228) who grapples with his struggle for justice and personal vindication has become part of our literary/cultural heritage. Although it may seem that *Defending Science* unnecessarily flatters the style of collectivism as well as its status as a discursive construct like most postmodernist novels, perhaps it is one of the most fitting narrative

strategies to capture the uncertainty, indeterminacy and fragmentation that characterised Moleko's brief and unhappy life as policeman in the turbulent 1980s.

While *Defending Science* tends to blur the boundaries between history and fiction, it also alerts us to the inescapable ethical basis of both discourses. Naturalisation tends to have the effect of attenuating the shock of 'actual' historical facts which may be too hideous to contemplate in their raw state. John Miles has again reminded us that literature does have a social function, after all.

This Day and Age

This Day and Age

By M. Nicol

Cape Town: David Phillip 1992. 267 pp.

ISBN 0-86-486-219-9

Reviewed by Emmanuel Mqwasha

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Warm yesterday, that is the happy days of enlightenment, only the despotic power of the monarch had seemed to stand between me and his freedom-wart (Nicol 1992:2).

Mike Nicol's *This Day and Age* can be characterised in Barthes' terms as a 'text of bliss', a text whose meaning is never-ending but constantly offering meanings that are different and yet related, a text that tends to demystify our habitual responses to the reading process through the use of paradoxical elements and strange juxtapositions on the one hand, and an infusion of the ordinary with a sense of mystery that conveys a feeling of unreality on the other. This novel confronts a reader with unpredictable and perplexed elements that disrupt the ordinary logic of cause and effect.

First the lightning slashed: I saw with when she ran into the street, he, and she changed into a frog. Then the wind came from north and caught in the fog at night, it higher and higher and it turned to dust (Nicol 1992: 32).

Given these characteristics, Nicol's novel can also be categorised as a magic realist text—a text that uses myth and legend in its construction of a magic realist modes of realism. Problems of categorisation multiply when we consider that magic realism may denote a particular strain of the contemporary movement inspired by

postmodernism:

what is post-modernism in the text, the world used to be called magic realist in South America and still goes by that name in Canada (Lament in *Zemra* 1995:134).

This Day And Age exhibits characteristics associated with post-modernist writing, particularly the way the text draws attention to its own structure. Nicol's novel succeeds in demonstrating the writing process as a constant and parasitic reference to other texts shaped by socio-historical process. The notion of the 'ex-centric', in the sense of seeking 'from the margin, from a place 'other'', is an essential feature of that strain of postmodernism called magic realism. Nicol questions the traditional boundaries between genres, while revealing the dynamics around the process of writing to point out that there are no privileged centres of culture, race, or politics.

The 'novel' starts by appropriating the techniques of historical and documentary realism and uses them to create an alternative world to existing reality. The 'Prologue' is simply a quotation from other texts that anticipates for the reader what is to follow. By choosing to introduce his text in this fashion, Nicol explicitly shows the reader that writing involves a constant reference to the already existing texts. This tends to 'deconstruct' the notion of an author as an originator, an inventor with imaginative genius, which makes him/her unique. The process of self-reflexiveness continues in the following section of the novel entitled 'Afterwards'. In this section the reader is given the whole plot of the novel and the circumstances that surround its theme:

Between the time that was before and the time that came afterwards there happened a moment (Nicol 1992:3).

Ritual moments characterise this novel. The reader witnesses characters with a variety (and sometimes contradictory) of world views, and this disjunctive narrative strategy is made clear from the outset:

An end for this. An end for that. What to believe? Who to trust? On the one hand. On the other hand. My story. History. The struggle for truth continues afterwards (Nicol 1992:3).

But is this really a narrative strategy, or does this novel move towards rejecting narrativity altogether? Is it even (im)possible to narrate the end of a narrative? One consequence of defamiliarising narrativity is the problematisation of the notion of history as a 'true' reflection of reality. Instead, history is viewed as a fabrication and as a manipulative discourse that, as exemplified by Enoch Miasas in the novel, may be

useful for political agendas:

Besides the manipulation of history, the blurring of fiction and reality, Nicol mixes oral tradition in the 'Fairy Tale' section of the novel. Here the reader witnesses an interaction between the strange, invisible voices and Enoch Miasas—the figure of the Messiah in the novel:

How obvious yet it's not right. We are talking about gross inequalities here, the great number two. 'Specially where there is such abundance' (rough land for food for very badly). It just needs redistribution (Nicol 1992:92).

Nicol takes a character from the fairy tale—Tasmairne, and places her in the characters within the novelist genre (from oral tradition to writing tradition). Besides breaching the generic boundaries, Nicol presents an auto-generative nature of fiction, whereby fictional genres mix and differentiate to produce a refracted narrative. Enoch Miasas, a character from the novelist genre, finally finds out that Tasmairne, a character from the fairy tale, does not have a female sexual organ. This upsets her at the time when Enoch wants to make love with her, and evokes a range of interpretations: on the one hand, perhaps Enoch cannot have sexual intercourse with Tasmairne because he is a Messiah—an appointed one. This 'divine role' would not allow him to commit such a deed. On the other hand, there is the possibility that they cannot make love because they are from different worlds—fairy tale and novel. The issue is indecidable and this reader at least waits for some sort of revelation.

Guidelines for Contributors

Manuscripts must be submitted in English (UK). If quotations from other languages appear in the manuscript, place the original in a footnote and a dynamic-equivalent translation in the body of the text.

Contributors must submit *one computer-generated and three double-spaced printed copies* of the manuscript. The computer-generated copy may be on double density floppy or *stiffie* in Word Perfect 5.0, Word for Windows 6.0 or ASCII. If accepted for publication, the disk or stiffie will be returned together with 10 original off-print copies of the article.

Manuscripts should range between 5000-8000 and book reviews between 500-1000 words. However, longer articles may be considered for publication.

Attach a cover page to the manuscript containing the following information: Author's full name, address, e-mail address, position, department, university/institution, telephone/fax numbers as well as a list of previous publications.

Maps, diagrams and pictures must be presented in print-ready form. Clear black and white photos (postcard size) may also be submitted.

Use footnotes sparingly. In order to enhance the value of the interaction between notes and text, use footnotes and not endnotes.

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Except for bibliographical references, abbreviations must include fullstops. The abbreviations (i.e.) = 'emphasis added'; (i.e.o.) = 'emphasis in original'; (i.e.) or [...] = 'insertion added' may be used.

The full bibliographical details of sources are provided only once at the end of the manuscript under References. References in the body of the manuscript should follow the following convention: Dladlo (1994:14) argues or at the end of a reference/quotation: (Dladlo 1994:14).

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- Molophe, Geina 1990. Nkomo's Wedding. In Van Nieuwerck, Annemarië (ed): *Raising the Winds: A Century of South African Women's Stories*. Parklands: Ad Donker.
- Mingoshi, Siphumhazo 1994. 'Popular Memory' and Social Change in South African Historical Drama of the Seventies in English: The Case of Credo Mutwa's *Chiwanga*. *Alternation* 1, 1: 37-41.
- Paton, Rensie 1986. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Marlmann, Charles Lam (trans). London: Pluto Press.

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