ORALITY, LITERACY, AND COLONIALISM IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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ABBREVIATIONS

BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
JAAR	*Journal of American Academy of Religion*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JRH	*Journal of Religious History*
JTSA	*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*
Neot	*Neotestamentica*
R&T	*Religion and Theology*

SCRIPT, SUBJUGATION, AND SUBVERSION: AN INTRODUCTION

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A colloquium of anthropologists, historians, literature specialists, and theologians is not a common occurrence.[1] The compartmentalization of academic disciplines, which emerged in the nineteenth century and was perfected in the twentieth, has meant that modern scholars have often been unaware of each other's discourses and resources. However, the new millennium seems, by some quirk of fate, to coincide with a significant erosion of the boundaries between disciplines, perhaps partly fueled by the loss of their monopoly and decline of the universities in the face of the emergence of technicons and other such institutions and partly by the loss of traditional academic certainties evoked by the hermeneutical crisis of modernity. This collection of essays was provoked by a growing awareness that the methodological problems and questions relating to the issue of oral tradition and literacy are essentially the same across a range of traditional academic disciplines and that we have much to learn from each other. The particular focus of the discussion in this book lies in a perception that literacy is not innocent. It is a form of control, not only of information but also of people. The emergence of literacy and that of empire are interconnected.

A juxtaposition of two societies has a destabilizing effect on both of them, even in peaceful circumstances. In order to maintain its coherence in the face of a difference that challenges its fundamental socialization, each society is forced into a twofold process of what Berger and Luckmann call

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[1] A Colloquium on Orality, Literacy and Colonialism was held in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa 28–30 August 2001 as part of a project funded by the Indigenous Knowledge Systems Focus Group of the National Research Foundation of South Africa. The essays are published in this volume of Semeia Studies and also in the forthcoming volume entitled, *Orality, Literacy and Colonialism in Antiquity*. The funding of the NRF and the University of Natal Research Fund toward the Colloquium and its publication is gratefully acknowledged. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the NRF.

"repression" and "legitimation." In the colonial situation, the unequal power relationships mean that the subjugated peoples of empire can only ever be partially successfully in defending their "symbolic universe." This produces a crisis that is particularly severe where the subjugated culture is an entirely oral tradition. The destruction of traditional settlement patterns and social structures threatens the process of transmission of culture, at the same time as the dominance of the imperial culture ensures that it will be heard everywhere. In colonial Africa the missionaries occupied a pivotal position as agents of imperial culture, even outside the boundaries of the empire. However, recent studies have emphasized both the resilience of oral culture in the face of subjugation and also the agency of the conquered peoples.

The ongoing work of Jean and John Comaroff over many years, but particularly in *Of Revelation and Revolution* (1991; 1997), has characterized the attempts of the missionaries and the response of the indigenous people of Africa as "a long conversation" in which each party was partly aware and partly unaware of what was going on. Religion, culture, literacy, and oral tradition were spheres of contestation as well as domination, and the appropriation of Christianity and literacy by Africa did not necessarily take place on the missionaries' terms. James Scott (1976; 1977), particularly in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990), has argued even more strongly for an ongoing resistance to hegemony "off stage" in the "hidden transcript" of the dominated, who constantly try to subvert the "official transcript" of the powerful by inserting their own agenda into the discourse of the public arena in coded form. Conversation is a powerful metaphor for the interactions between cultures and also within cultures. Hans Georg Gadamer (1993) has made language the basis for his hermeneutics, but it is a "slippery" metaphor, since language cannot only represent us to each other but can also systematically misrepresent and embody modes of "false consciousness" (Habermas). Conversation not only asserts culture against the other but also simultaneously modifies it. What is talked about becomes "real," while what is not talked about becomes "shadowy" and uncertain, since "language realizes a world in the double sense of apprehending and producing it" (Berger and Luckmann: 153). The studies of the interaction between orality and literacy in the context of colonial domination in this volume highlight this intractable dilemma in colonial Africa or, more subtly, in modern globalized South Africa.

The essays in this volume provide a broad overview of the theoretical issues at stake in the study of orality and literacy. Does literacy transform consciousness and enable linear, analytical thought? Are the media and the message separable, and how do new forms of orality in the modern era reintroduce aspects characteristic of earlier forms? Is there a diversity

within both oral and literary productions that make simplistic solutions to their interpretation problematic, and if so, which tools are most appropriate for us to use? In the first of the two sections of this book, the relationship between colonial domination and text, especially the Bible, is contrasted with the survival of indigenous culture in a continuing oral tradition that emerges in ever new forms (see Draper, Opland, Muller, Gunner). In a second section, these issues are traced through to modern outcomes and transcultural cross-pollination, whether in approaches to the land (see James and Nkadimeng) or modern countercultural music (see Brown), translation of the Bible (see Tshehla), initiation of diviner-healers (see Masoga), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (see Lenta), or memory boxes for families of AIDS victims (see Denis).

Among the issues raised in this discussion, a starting point would be to examine how indigenous oral traditions are preserved and remembered in the face of the hegemony of a literacy that is sponsored by and promotes the colonial culture. What mechanisms are there for remembering and transferring material from one generation to the next (e.g., *izibongi*), who are the cultural experts, and how are they changed by the colonial "conversation"? How do the oral forms and rituals themselves survive and mutate in a rich interaction with the new possibilities opened up by the literate colonial context. Here there are subtle similarities and differences between, say, the oral traditions of African Initiated Churches and the rap of Prophets of da City on the Cape Flats today, in terms of globalized appropriations and exploitation of local forms of resistance and their intransigence. How do traditional oral forms provide resources for memory in the face of the atrocities of apartheid in the process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission or in the face of the social catastrophe of AIDS?

Then there needs to be close attention paid to the differing reactions of the peasantry of a colonized society and the elite of the indigenous people. They have different interests and agenda. So, for example, it is essential to differentiate between illiterate peasant cultivators, and even more marginal rural artisans, and their oral traditions (what Scott calls a "shadow" or "little" tradition only fragmentarily preserved in the writings of the elite), and the indigenous elite with their retainer class who created, maintained, interpreted, and tried to enforce a written codification of the same cultural tradition (the "great" tradition). These dynamics are at work even in the relatively undifferentiated societies of precolonial Africa, as Vansina observes with his differentiation of "official" and "private" oral traditions:

> All traditions can be divided into official and private traditions. Most official traditions are accounts dealing with the history of the corporate group that keeps them. They were performed publicly, on occasions that

> had great meaning for that group and in the presence of the leaders of the group. The official character was evident to all. They told the "truth" as guaranteed by the group. Hence facts which do not help to maintain the institution or the group transmitting these accounts were often omitted or falsified.... Private traditions only defend private interests and conformity with more general official tradition is not required. Information conveyed by private tradition about groups other than the group that transmits this tradition can be relied on. (98)

However, Vansina does not sufficiently acknowledge the class and power dynamics inherent in the two categories, since even oral tradition is a "material production" subject to class interests (Finnegan: 206). In colonial Africa, we need to differentiate between the interests and practices of the literate "mission-educated elite" or *amakholwa* (such as Khambule) among the indigenous people and those traditionalists who resisted them (such as Shembe). Some of these were literate, but some were illiterate and operating with oral forms (e.g., the *izibongo* used to maintain and legitimate indigenous royal power and hence belonging to an indigenous "great tradition"). Class interests are at work in the productions of both the missionary-educated elite and the traditionalists.

When the missionaries used Western schooling to teach literacy and Bible and Western culture, to what extent did this "transform consciousness," as claimed by theorists such as Luria, Vygotsky, and Walter Ong and denied by others, such as Scribner and Cole? The missionaries used their control of the printing presses to try and control what was said in the public domain, but, as Opland (1998a) has shown, this was never entirely successful, and, as the educated elite liberated themselves from missionary control, traditional oral forms reasserted themselves in literary form. Indeed, new forms of the old oral literary traditions are constantly emerging (such as *isicathamiya*), showing the vibrancy of oral tradition in Africa. It could even be argued that the control of literacy and print by the missionaries, their control of the "public transcript," gave a particular impetus to oral tradition as a means of resistance "off stage." The dominated people spoke back to their colonial rulers in many ways, both through an appropriation of literacy, through exploiting its possibilities, and through continuing oral traditions in new forms.

Another issue relates to the collection and codification of oral tradition in writing. In the first place, this is often undertaken by colonial authorities or sponsored by them, with the object of controlling the indigenous people. Colonially appointed experts in "native law" are able to manipulate the appointment of local leaders, suppress "troublemakers," and present themselves as acting in the common good when they administer the subjugated peoples of the colonies (as in the work of Theophilus Shepstone, the first Secretary for Native Affairs in colonial

Natal, in establishing a code of "Tribal Law"). Anthropologists have sometimes served as conscious or unconscious "fifth columnists" for empire, just as missionaries did in earlier times. On the other hand, there were literate members of the "native elite" who undertook the same task for very different reasons as a form of resistance (such as Magema Fuze; see Draper 2000).

Cultural symbols were contested terrain. Because of their dense "metonymic reference" (Foley), such cultural symbols could never be fully co-opted or controlled by colonial authorities trying to enforce "tribal law," not even by a compliant "native elite." The continuing role of oral tradition would ensure that they lived on outside "official channels." At the same time, the fluidity of oral tradition, which does not exist in "fixed text," means that it is always changing without that change being a conscious process. In such colonial contexts, there is a constant interaction between local cultural symbols, metonyms, sacred stories and the dominating colonial culture and colonial textual traditions. This led to extensive, usually unconscious but sometimes conscious, experimentation, as the subjugated indigenous peoples tried to survive the harsh colonial reality. This process of *bricolage* meant that cultural symbols and doctrines ostensibly drawn from the missionaries and the Christian faith in Africa could change their shape and reference. They were turned back against their own proponents. The legitimacy of the "official" interpretation of texts could be challenged, or the authorities could be held to the letter of the text they themselves promulgated.

In this context, sacred text plays a particular role in colonial Africa both in imperial domination and in resistance, both the Christian Scriptures and the Qur'an. For example, just as the missionaries claimed that the promises to Israel were fulfilled in the church, so the African converts could claim that they stood in continuity with Israel more than their colonizers (a hermeneutical device still adopted by some African theologians today, e.g., Kwesi Dickson) and that they were building the new Jerusalem, as in the prophecies of both Shembe and Khambule. And they could do it in very convincing ways: for instance, because the missionaries worshiped on Sundays instead of Saturdays as commanded, because they ate pork contrary to the law, because they cut their hair, because they drank alcohol, because they forbade polygamy contrary to the practice of the biblical patriarchs, because they did not practice total immersion baptism, and so on. When military struggle seemed to be impossible for the moment, after crushing defeats, such as the Zulu War of 1879 and the failure of the Bambatha Rebellion of 1906 in Zululand, new possibilities were explored by means of prophetic revelation and heaven journeys. In such movements, the written text was seen to be only partial, in need of supplement by direct experience and

new knowledge of God delivered in oral form through fresh divine revelation. What God has revealed in heaven cannot be controlled or policed very easily on earth.

In the essays presented here, one constant theme running through the juxtaposition of orality and literacy in the context of colonialism is that of the land. The land is both economic base and symbolic space. Claims to the land made in terms of legal, written texts and claims to the land based on oral traditions of settlement and occupation jostle. Praise poems of the ancestors are also ways of positioning onself and defining oneself in terms of the land. Claims to the land attract to themselves also the varied imagery of sacred text, as the land of the fathers (and mothers) is identified with the promised land or the new Jerusalem. The whole process of naming and renaming the land is a dense metonymic ritual performance.

In offering here a series of essays, which are the fruit of a dialogue around the theme of orality, literacy, and colonialism in different contexts, we hope that the discussion will be taken further. Various studies of the early response to and reception of the biblical text in an oral African context show it to have been a "site of struggle" from the beginning and one that is far from over. Finally, the essays move on to explore the rich field of oral forms in modern South Africa and their interaction with literacy. It is an unending story.

Part 1

Orality, Literacy, and Colonialism in Historical Perspective

FIGHTING WITH THE PEN: THE APPROPRIATION OF THE PRESS BY EARLY XHOSA WRITERS

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Late in 1817, while he was residing on the mission station established in Xhosa territory by Joseph Williams just outside present-day Fort Beaufort, the Xhosa king Ngqika received news that Lord Charles Somerset was leading a commando against him. He immediately abandoned the mission station, sending back to Williams the following proud assertion of independence:

> You have your manner to wash and decorate yourselves on the Lord's day and I have mine, the same in which I was born and that I shall follow. I have given over for a little to listen to your "word." But now I have done, for if I adopt your law I must entirely overturn all my own. And that I shall not do. I shall begin now to dance and praise my beasts as much as I please, and shall let all see who is the head of this land. (Mostert: 458)

Ngqika preferred to pursue his own customs and traditions, which included dancing and chanting poetry in praise of cattle, rather than to follow the missionary's way of life, which included listening to the Christian word. Ngqika perceived the two cultural modes as antithetical: acceptance of the white man's word necessarily entailed overturning the Xhosa customary life. In the succeeding decades white settlers increasingly encroached on Xhosa territory, and a devastating series of frontier wars dispossessed Ngqika's successors and their subjects. Mission stations of various denominations were established throughout Xhosa-speaking territory, and with them came schools and centers of education, the principal of which was the Lovedale Missionary Institution, founded in 1841 (see Hodgson). Mission education developed slowly throughout these years of frontier hostilities, which culminated in the war of Ngcayechibi of 1878–79. When the military option of resisting white encroachment ultimately failed for the Xhosa, it was suggested that an alternative strategy of resistance might replace it, one that would

appropriate as a weapon the printed word introduced to the Xhosa by the missionaries.

For Isaac Williams Wauchope, who was named after Joseph Williams, the struggle would continue, with the weapons of war supplanted by the white man's written and printed word. In 1882 Wauchope wrote an angry letter about white treatment of the Xhosa chiefs to *Isigidimi samaXosa,* a newspaper published by Lovedale: "Where are the poets and orators today?" he asked. In conclusion, he offered the following poem in response to a cattle raid, commencing with an allusion to a traditional rallying call to arms, *Zemk' iinkomo, magwalandini!* "There go your cattle, you cowards!":

Zimkile! Mfo wohlanga,	They've gone! Compatriot,
Putuma, putuma;	Chase them! Chase them!
Yishiy' imfakadolo,	Lay down the musket,
Putuma ngosiba;	Chase them with a pen;
Tabat' ipepa ne inki,	Seize paper and ink:
Lik'aka lako elo.	That's your shield.
Ayemk' amalungelo,	There go your rights!
Qubula usiba;	Grab a pen,
Nx'asha, nx'asha, nge inki,	Load, load it with ink;
Hlala esitulweni,	Sit in your chair,
Ungangeni kwa Hoho	Don't head for Hoho:
Dubula ngo siba.	Shoot with your pen.
Tambeka umhlati ke,	Impress the page,
Bambelel' ebunzi;	Engage your mind;
Zigqale inyaniso,	Focus on facts,
Umise ngo mx'olo;	And speak loud and clear;
Bek' izito ungalwi,	Don't rush into battle:
Umsindo liyilo.	Anger speaks with a stutter.

(*Isigidimi samaXosa,* 1 June 1882: 5)

The shield would give way to paper; the rifle would be loaded with ink; the headlong bloodrush into battle had proved insufficiently eloquent. If anger stuttered, the cool rationality of the printed word might persuade. The Xhosa writer of Wauchope's generation was not muzzled, his voice silenced in passive acquiescence to white control of the printed word: he had recourse to the European technological media to promote his struggle for freedom. The mode of battle would be altered, not the will to resist. André Odendaal characterized the shifting strategies of this emergent generation as follows:

> The members of the new educated class of Africans which emerged in consequence of these developments soon became aware of the overall

> discrepancy between Christian doctrine and western political ideals on the one hand and the realities of white conquest on the other.... Prompted by unfulfilled expectations, the new class began to pose new challenges to the system of white control. Instead of trying to assert African independence as the chiefs had done, they accepted the new order and tried to change it. They mobilised themselves into societies and to voice their demands they made use of newspaper columns, electioneering, pamphleteering, petitioning, lobbying and pressure groups. Unlike the traditionalists they did not want to opt out of the system and did not reject European culture. They wanted to share political power with whites, they demanded to be allowed greater opportunities to assimilate European culture, they desired to advance economically, and most of all, perhaps, they wished to be recognised as a new class which had broken away from traditionalism. (Odendaal: 4)

This essay seeks to explore some of the ways in which two prominent nineteenth-century Xhosa authors, William Wellington Gqoba and Isaac Williams Wauchope, expressed in print their resistance to white domination, even in publications issued by the mission press.

The contest for control of the word met with varying results: oral modes of Xhosa discourse were never effectively controlled by the whites; journalism was initially subject to white control but successfully appropriated by the Xhosa in the last two decades of the nineteenth century; when Xhosa literature appeared in books early in the twentieth century it was fairly effectively controlled by missionaries, but not entirely so (see Opland 1998b, especially chs. 13 and 14). The two decades following the cessation of open warfare on the frontier in 1879 were characterized by black independence initiatives politically and ecclesiatically. The Native Educational Association had been established in 1879, and in September 1882 Imbumba Yamanyama was formed in Port Elizabeth, a black response to the foundation of the Afrikaner Bond three years earlier. Isaac Williams Wauchope was in the chair at the inaugural meeting and became Imbumba's first Secretary (see Odendaal; Kirk). In 1883 Nehemiah Tile led an African breakaway from the Methodist church in Thembuland, and this secession was followed by the formation of Ethiopian Church movements in 1898 by Pambani Mzimba and in 1900 by James Dwane (see James T. Campbell). The prevailing mood among black intellectuals, themselves the products of mission education, was reflected in their writings in both Xhosa and English. Free expression and promotion of these ideas initially necessitated the black appropriation of the press.

In the first issue of *Indaba* ("The News"), a Xhosa-language newspaper issued by Lovedale between 1862 and 1865, Tiyo Soga appealed for the preservation of Xhosa folklore in its pages: *Indaba,* Soga wrote, could be *isitya esihle sokulondoloza imbali, nendaba namavo, asekaya,* "a lovely dish

for holding safely the legends, news and sayings of the home" (*Indaba* August 1862: 10). In the event, *Indaba* failed to respond to Soga's appeal; the struggle for control commenced in the pages of its successor, *Isigidimi samaXosa* ("The Xhosa Messenger"), issued by Lovedale between 1870 and 1888. Initially the editorial policy of James Stewart, Principal of Lovedale, threw cold water on the hopes Soga had earlier expressed for *Indaba:* in 1871 Stewart rejected an appeal for the use of *Isigidimi*'s pages to preserve traditional Xhosa material, claiming that

> There is very little in old Kaffirdom worth preserving.... There is a portion of every nation's history which must be forgotten: and to this, that of the Kaffir people is no exception. "Nature brings not back the mastodon," nor need we try to bring back the sentiments and the rude inspiration of barbarous times and a savage state. (*Isigidimi samaXosa,* 4 February 1871)

These editorial restrictions did not sit well with John Tengo Jabavu, who edited *Isigidimi* from 1881 to 1884 (see Ngcongco). In search of greater political freedom, Jabavu raised funds from white politicians and founded his own newspaper in 1884, *Imvo zabantsundu* ("Black Opinion"). Jabavu was succeeded as editor of *Isigidimi* by W. W. Gqoba, who initiated a policy entirely consonant with Soga's aspirations for *Indaba,* but who was constrained to exclude political comment. Soon after Gqoba's death in 1888, *Isigidimi* ceased publication, the last of the major Xhosa newspapers published by missionaries. James Stewart himself ascribed its closure to a dearth of funds but also to the popularity of its politically committed rival, *Imvo:* "Within the last few years," Stewart wrote, "another Native newspaper has been issued more frequently, and more free also from its position, and the kind of support it receives, to discuss political questions and parties—both of which subjects are but rarely suitable for the columns of the *Isigidimi*" (*The Christian Express,* 1 January 1889: 13). Thus toward the end of the nineteenth century secular journalism had emerged under Xhosa editorial control. *Imvo* ruled the roost until 1897, when a second Xhosa newspaper was established, funded by rival white politicians, *Izwi labantu* ("The Voice of the People"). *Imvo* and *Izwi* remained keen competitors until 1909, when *Izwi* ceased publication; *Imvo* continued to be published until only very recently. The Eastern Cape Xhosa-language newspapers, especially *Indaba, Isigidimi, Imvo,* and *Izwi,* nurtured a new generation of writers, many of whom chose to fight with the pen rather than the shield or assegai. W. W. Gqoba and I. W. Wauchope were among the most prominent figures of this emergent generation (see Opland 1998b, especially ch. 11).

It is to newspapers that we must look for the free expression of black opinion in print, for the publication of secular books that commenced in

earnest in the first decade of the twentieth century was to a greater extent subject to white control. The first major book containing secular Xhosa literature, W. B. Rubusana's *Zemk'inkomo magwalandini* ("There Go Your Cattle, You Cowards!"), published in 1906, neatly sidestepped white control of access to book production: the author paid for its printing in England and had it distributed in South Africa through an agent. Authors of books generally had to be more oblique. A firm oral tradition held that the early Christian preacher Ntsikana received his inspiration independent of the agency of Christian missionaries, suggesting that the Xhosa had willed their own acceptance of Christianity without missionary intervention, that they had found their own path to the Christian truth, a line of argument echoed in a number of early publications: S. E. K. Mqhayi's novel *Ityala lamawele* ("The Court Case of the Twins," 1914), for example, was explicitly designed to demonstrate the integrity of precolonial Xhosa systems of justice; his later novelette, *Idini* ("The Sacrifice," 1928), concludes with notes drawing parallels between Xhosa and biblical practices. Both works tacitly assert the sanctity and antiquity of Xhosa custom despite opposition from Christian missionaries. Fighting with the pen most frequently involved arguing in print for the integrity of Xhosa custom, on the same battleground that Ngqika had laid out in abandoning Joseph Williams's mission station in 1817.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, much debate in mission circles centered on Xhosa custom (see Mills). Divergent attitudes to native custom occasioned tension between the Xhosa missionaries, who traveled from Lovedale to assist in the establishment of mission stations in Malawi from 1876 to 1888, and their white colleagues (see T. J. Thompson). In 1877, shortly after the mission party set off for Malawi, with Isaac Wauchope among them, Rev. W. C. Holden proposed to the Missionary Conference the formation of an Anti-Kaffir-Custom Association:

> The above title, or such other as the Conference may agree upon, is intended to indicate an Association, the object of which shall be to seek by the use of the best means, to remove or bring to nought all such Kaffir Customs as are either in themselves directly evil, or are in their influence and surroundings calculated to hinder the progress of Christian Missions, and retard the social and moral improvement of the Native races. (*The Christian Express,* 1 September 1877: 13).

Pambani Mzimba was invited to address the same conference "on the evils of certain marriage customs among Native Christians." In his opening remarks, Mzimba, who was "Pastor of the Native Church at Lovedale" at the time and who twenty years later would lead one of the African Independent Church breakaways, praised the tolerance of the early missionaries (obliquely implying criticism of the intolerance

of the missionaries of his own time): the subject of his talk, he claimed, was important,

> as it either directly or indirectly touches those questions which force themseves to the notice of the different Missionary bodies, such as what is to be done with national and social customs of the converted natives? Are they to be allowed? and to what extent; or, are they to be abolished, and those who practice them excluded from Church membership? One cannot help, I think, being struck with the wisdom of the Missionaries who had the honour to be pioneers of Christianity in South Africa. The rules they have laid down show that they did not aim at abolishing and extirpating all Kaffir customs as such, but only to abolish those that were antagonistic to the Word of God. (*The Christian Express,* 1 September 1877: 14)

Mzimba had previously addressed conferences on this subject to little effect. On this occasion he excluded discussion of the exchange of cattle as lobola, "having been before the meetings of this Conference more than once, and unanimously disapproved of" on this topic: clearly there was fundamental disagreement between Mzimba and his white missionary colleagues. Instead, he examined critically the considerable courtship and wedding expenses demanded of the bridegroom. At one point in his address, Mzimba digressed to launch an attack on the missionaries' futile opposition to lobola, and at this point, notably and significantly, he deploys metaphor and simile, switching registers. The somewhat florid passage stands out quite distinctly in style from his otherwise dry and technical presentation:

> In fact, the idea about Ulobolo is as deeply rooted as the grass on which the Ulobolo cattle graze. The sun's heat withers the grass, and it remains for several months without moisture, as dry as straw, but the first showers of rain will cause it to spring up again. Burn it if you will, still in a few weeks the grass will grow vigorously. So it is with the idea of Ukulobolisa in the Kaffir mind. Let the Missionary burn it as it were in his congregation, by saying it must be abolished, and insist firmly and persistently on its extirpation, by excluding from Church membership those who practice it, like grass, it shows its fresh leaves when opportunity offers. Further, let the Missionary prune the idea, and constantly cut it down wherever he sees it, like sheep eating bare their pasturage, but it only waits a chance when it shall show itself. Such has been the history of Ukulobolisa amongst Christian Natives. The Missionaries may have thought years ago that they had succeeded in putting it down and having it abolished. Undoubtedly, in a few cases, they have—but the Native Church as a church is *Lobolisa-ing* still. Like a chamelion changing its colours, the Native Christians have only changed the name. (*The Christian Express,* 1 September 1877: 13)

Lobola is presented as a natural force, like grass, that missionaries vainly attempt to eradicate. Mzimba has recourse here to heightened imagery to express his criticism; elsewhere he adopts the formal mode of mission discourse, concluding his address with a quotation from Saint Paul in appropriate conference style. This will not be the last time that we encounter stylistic switching to convey criticism within a dominant Christian discourse.

Pambani Mzimba was an associate of W. W. Gqoba at Lovedale and officiated at Gqoba's funeral in 1888. William Wellington Gqoba was born at Gaga, near Alice, in the Eastern Cape, in August 1840 (on Gqoba, see Gérard: 36–41; Jordan, especially ch. 7; and Opland 1999c). He was the son of Gqoba of the Cirha clan, who was in turn the son of Peyi, a disciple and close associate of Ntsikana. After attending school at Tyhume and Lovedale, Gqoba was indentured in the wagon-making trade. In 1858 he was installed as an elder of Tiyo Soga's mission church at Mgwali, where he commenced his career as a teacher and interpreter. After serving as pastor at Rabula church, he moved in 1881 to Kimberley, where he worked until the beginning of 1884. In his ultimate career move, he returned to Lovedale to succeed John Tengo Jabavu as editor of Lovedale's Xhosa newspaper, *Isigidimi samaXosa,* and to teach in the Translation Classes. Gqoba's death in April 1888 after a short illness was sudden and unexpected. Charles Brownlee rated him "one of the most competent, if not the best Native translator from English into Kaffir in the country" (*The Christian Express,* 1 May 1888: 65). The obituaries in *Isigidimi* and *Imvo* were unstinting in their admiration of his qualities, hailing him as

> Umzukulwana ka PEYI, um-Cirha omkulu, um-Xosa wama-Xosa kuma-Xosa; i Lawu lama-Lawu kuma-Lawu; um-Lungu kwabateta isi-Lungu; iciko kumaciko; incoko kumancoko; into ebuso buhle kuwo wonke umntu angamaziyo nomaziyo; umxoxi ezincokweni—ititshala ezititshaleni, umshumayeli kuba shumayeli bendaba zika KRISTU; umvuseleli we Cebo lombuso wo Sombawo. (*Isigidimi samaXosa,* 1 May 1888: 35)

> grandson of Peyi, a great man of the Cirha clan, Xhosa of the Xhosa among the Xhosa, Hottentot of the Hottentots among the Hottentots, a white man among those who speak the white man's language, wise among the wise, eloquent among the eloquent, affable to friends and strangers alike, strong in debate, teacher among teachers, preacher among those who preach Christ's news, who stirred up the counsels of court of our fathers.

At Lovedale Gqoba was a prominent member of the Native Educational Association and a keen member of the Lovedale Literary Society. He was a lively editor of *Isigidimi,* free of the confrontational controversy

attendant on Jabavu; he presided over an unprecedented efflorescence of literary and ethnographic contributions, many of which he provoked by his editorial comments and his own writings. Gqoba's literary career effectively commenced after he assumed the editorship of *Isigidimi;* he contributed religious poetry (especially poems of consolation on the death of parishioners), humorous stories, historical articles on the Xhosa and Mfengu peoples and on the cattle-killing episode of 1856–57, explanations of Xhosa proverbs, and two extended poems serialized in 1885 and 1888 that for a long time stood as the most sustained poetic achievements in Xhosa.

I want to consider two examples of Gqoba's work. *The Christian Express* published the English text of a talk Gqoba delivered to the Lovedale Literary Society in April 1885 entitled "The Native Tribes: Their Laws, Customs and Beliefs." In this talk, Gqoba presents an analysis of Xhosa custom in the interests of mutual reconciliation and understanding between black and white: "The deeper investigation goes into Native questions the more interesting they will become," he wrote, "and the two races will gradually understand each other, and all suspicions and grievances as well as all ill-feeling towards one another will be removed for ever" (*The Christian Express,* 1 June 1885: 93). He commences with an account of precolonial history and culture, peppering his exposition with Xhosa terms for artifacts and practices and setting out the lineages of the chiefs, drawing explicitly on oral tradition:

> The native tribes of South Africa, as some of us are aware, are supposed to have come from the North. We are not expressly told how they came in contact with some of the Jewish customs and ceremonies which prevail among almost all the *Abantu* of South Africa.
>
> From what we are able to gather from our ancestors, orally handed down to us from one generation to another, we learn, that, according to their history, *Untu,* was the first chief of the *Abantu,* and his subjects were called after him *Abantu.* (Ibid.)

Gqoba then passes on to consider custom and belief, explicitly establishing precolonial integrity:

> Among the native tribes, there is a system of law which has been, for generations past, uniformly recognised as well as administered. Although it is an "unwritten law," its principles and practice were widely understood, being mainly founded upon precedents, embodying the decisions of chiefs and councils of bygone days, handed down by oral tradition, and treasured in the memories of the people. (94)

Next he offers an account of colonial legislation affecting the Xhosa legal system, drawing on a Report of the Commission on Native Laws and

Customs, offering two examples of the deposition of chiefs in precolonial times, as if to argue that, even in this respect, Xhosa practice predated the arrival of whites and their interference in Xhosa affairs.

Gqoba considers lobola next, arguing that the term "never meant either to buy or to sell," one of the principal grounds for missionary opposition to the practice. Gqoba ends this section by quoting at considerable length the Commission's report countering misunderstandings of the Xhosa law of marriage. In his account of Xhosa beliefs, which follows, Gqoba stresses the burial "in very olden times" of a person who dies without speaking:

> The death of such a one was immediately announced at the great place, and a number of men dispatched to the deceased's kraal, to seize and confiscate all his cattle. They believed he had gone to a place of punishment, but the Amaxosa had no name for it. I do not know whether the other tribes have a name for this place, but they have one for a place of happiness although they cannot very well describe it. (*The Christian Express,* 1 July 1885: 110)

"Superstition pervades the whole of the *Bantu* family," Gqoba says. "They all believe in the spirit-world and in a resurrection from the dead, even of the lower animals. They believe that a new state of things is going to be, only in a different way from what our expectation is" (110). After treating burials and doctors, Gqoba summarizes the implication of these comments on superstition, that precolonial Xhosa religion shared many beliefs with Christianity, that it did not need Christianity to preach these beliefs to them since they already held them:

> That the natives have a distinct religious belief, there can be no doubt. This does not refer to what they may have heard since their contact with the missionaries; but one which dates long centuries back, before the missionary was heard of. They acknowledged the existence of a Supreme Being, who created all things, and who dwells in the Heavens, whose power is infinite.... All natives believe in a future world. They also believe that they have immortal souls. They also believe in the existence of good spirits as well as bad ones. (*The Christian Express,* 1 September 1885: 141)

In concluding, Gqoba dramatically switches into Christian sermonizing, adopting stock mission imagery to end on a pious note, exactly as Mzimba had done before him. The Xhosa may entertain many absurd notions, "yet in some respects they are much nearer the light, though they dwell in darkness, than many would suppose." In fulsome terms and high biblical style, he praises the missionaries:

> These white men, have out of love and obedience to their Lord and Master and His cause, faced death, being content to count all those things as nothing, provided only they may win the souls of us black men and women for Christ, and guide them out of darkness into the marvellous light of true religion. "Cast thy bread upon the waters," is the word of command; and although on this Continent, many Pauls have planted and many Apolloses have watered, in sadness of spirit, and amidst fearful trials, yet God giveth the increase, and He is doing so.... Whilst unto Christ has been given as His possession the uttermost parts of the earth, we must remember that we heathen were especially bequeathed to Him, as His inheritance; we heathen are His, therefore, provided we do not neglect so great salvation. Unto us, therefore, who have had all the advantages of Christian teaching from our earliest days, is the gospel preached; to us the gospel trumpet is being sounded on these South African plains.... May the day soon come when we natives of this country shall have altogether been freed from the power of heathenism in all its forms, and when we in turn shall willingly and out of the same love that prompted the Britons to sacrifice everything for Christ's sake, do the same for our benighted countrymen! (142)

This conclusion, preached within the mode and terms of missionary discourse, accepting the dependence of benighted blacks on enlightened whites for their salvation, is plainly at variance with the academic style of the preceding exposition of Xhosa custom, drawing as it does on Xhosa oral tradition and terminology and citing the report of a parliamentary commission in support of its implicit and at times explicit thread of argument that precolonial Xhosa custom and belief constituted a coherent system that anticipated many of the beliefs and practices of the Christian missionaries.

Gqoba's *Ingxoxo enkulu ngemfundo* ("Great Debate on Education") was the most ambitious and sustained work of original Xhosa literature in its time and remained so until the appearance of the first Xhosa novels a full generation later. It originally appeared in installments in *Isigidimi* shortly after Gqoba assumed editorship of the paper, commencing in January 1885 and concluding in the August issue of that year. In total, the poem ran to 1,150 lines. In its form, the "Great Debate on Education" signaled its identification with English literary tradition: it is written throughout in trochaic octosyllabics, a form quite foreign to Xhosa tradition. It acknowledges a debt too to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress,* which had been translated into Xhosa by Tiyo Soga in 1867, in that the participants are given allegorical names such as Bookworm, Sharptongue, Squint-Eye, Dimwit, and Die for Truth. The debate takes place under a chairman who introduces the topic and sums up at the end, with speakers politely taking turns, so the whole poem has the appearance of a Christian work participating in disciplined Western

cultural tradition. Furthermore, the chairman, an old, well-educated, thrifty, and successful farmer named Thankless, is ultimately swayed by the debate. Initially, as his name implies, he is sceptical of the benefits of the education he has enjoyed. The prose preamble to the poem concludes with this paragraph:

> Ivulwe ke njengesiko lentlanganiso. Usukile umpati sihlalo, umnumzana ongu-BEDIDLABA waquba into ekuhlanganelwe yona. Ute ngobuciko nenteto ehlabayo wabonisa indawo zokulunga kwe mfundo, nohlobo ebekufundiswa ngalo ezikuleni kwimini zanqangi, kunolu lwakaloku. Ucaze nohlobo olulona lulungileyo, kokwake ukubona, ebekuya kulunga kuti ukuba bekuqutywa ngalo, kuyekwe ezindlela kuqutywa zona zomona, namakwele, nolunya. Uvakele ekalima ngobushushu obukulu esiti,—'Nokuba kukwizindlu ezifundisa amashishini, nokuba kuse zikuleni zomtinjana, tu nto yona siyenzelwayo ngoku ngaba bantu. Mna okwam nindibona nje sendincamile, ingaba nini kambe madodana, nani mtinjana wakowetu eningaba nisakolwa; koko ningekabaqondi aba bantu kuba nisengabantwana. Asikuko nokuba ndiyayibulela lendawo nindibeke kuyo kwesi sihlalo, kukona namhla ndiyakuke ndizive izimvo zenu, ngohlobo abasifundisa ngalo aba bantu. Lempato basipete ngayo, nelikete likoyo kuzo zonke izinto; sahlala tina sibuyiselwa emva kuzo. Ndoke ndipele apo okwangoku; ndoti ukuze ndipume egusheni, ndide ndive okwenu manene akowetu, ndisazi nokwazi ukuba kwala manqakwana ndiwenzileyo, ayanele okwanamhla nje lengxoxo ukuba mayivutwe.' Utsho ke wahlala pantsi. (*Isigidimi samaXosa,* 1 January 1885: 4)
>
> The meeting was started formally. The Chairman, Mr Thankless, stated the purpose of the meeting. With great eloquence he outlined the importance of education, how people were educated in the past and how they were educated at present. He commented on how people should be taught in order to counter jealousy, greed and divisiveness. With great feeling he said: "Whether in trade schools or schools for youngsters, these people are doing nothing for us. I've lost all hope. I don't know: you may still be satisfied because you're young and don't know these people. I'm delighted you've asked me to chair this meeting, so that I can learn your views on how these people teach us. They abuse us, they discriminate and are not especially interested in our welfare. For the time being, let me end there. I'll expand on my comments when you've aired your views on the matter. You're now free to discuss the topic." With these words he sat down.

By the time all fifteen speakers have had their say, however, Thankless appears to have changed his mind and comes down firmly in favor of the white educational enterprise. The poem ends with these lines:

Ndoyisiwe kupelile,
Zinyaniso ndifeziwe,

Yon' imfundo iyalala.
Ndiqondile ngeligala.

Masifund' ukubulela,
Ndigalele ndafincela,
Mna ke ndiyaqukumbela,
Zenixele emakaya

Masitande amagwangqa,
Amabandla apesheya.
(*Isigidimi samaXosa,* 1 August 1885: 61)

I've been wholly whipped and beaten,
Truths have vanquished all my problems,
Plenteous is this education,
I have reached an understanding.

Let us learn appreciation,
I have poured it out then drunk it,
Now I've brought this speech to closure:
Won't you spread the word through homesteads,
Let us show our love for white men,
Tribes who travelled over oceans.

In form and structure, therefore, Gqoba's poem gives every appearance of being a piece of pious propaganda.

In depicting a debate on the issue, however, Gqoba is free to express a wide range of opinion. As A. C. Jordan remarked,

> There is an interesting variety of participants and therefore a variety of opinions, left, centre, and right, shading into each other. In this long discussion, no one says that the blacks are getting a square deal from the whites. The best defense that the extreme right can put up is that things are not so bad, and that if the ingrates will only exercise patience, the best is yet to be. (Jordan: 67)

Against this lukewarm defense of education is ranged an eloquent and outspoken set of arguments that moves easily on from the sphere of education to white attitudes and policies in general. The first spokesman for the left, for example, Bazamehlo ("Squint-Eye"), who is the second participant in the debate, scathingly argues in part against the differential system of education James Stewart introduced at Lovedale after 1870.

Ababantu bayaketa,
Kuyinene inanamhla,
Es'kuleni ndinonyana,
Sel'egqibe nomunyaka.

Isi-Grike akasazi,
Si-Latini, akasazi,
Si-Hebere, akasazi,
Ukukumsha akakwazi.

Wonke umntu onengqondo,
Engotanda kwa nemfundo,

All aren't equal to these people,
That's the truth now plain and simple.
I've a son who is a schoolboy,
His first year's already finished.

Greek's a language unfamiliar,
Latin's also unfamiliar,
Hebrew's also unfamiliar,
He's not learnt a foreign language.

Everyone with understanding,
With a love of education,

Woziqonda ezindawo
Azimisiley' ubawo.

Kule ngxoxo ndixabene
Nezwi lika-*Sweligukwe.*

Makavuswe amakwele,
Ozintuli baqatshuzwe.

Ababantu ba Pesheya,
Ngabaze kusibulala,
Basihlute nomuhlaba,
Asinawo namakaya.
(*Isigidimi samaXosa,* 1 January 1885: 5)

Will know all about these matters
Put in place for us by Daddy.

This debate has made me quarrel
With the speech pronounced by Guileless.
Bring it all into the open:
Let the dust rise as we argue.

Over oceans came these people
Fixed in purpose just to kill us,
Take by force our very country:
We no longer have our homesteads.

Others speak glowingly of precolonial times, criticize taxes and low black wages, alcoholism and dispossession. At the height of the debate, Scorched by Fire rises in anger to attack the suggestion that blacks should be grateful to whites.

Ndincamile ndonakele
Mz' wakowetu okunene
Ngamadoda atetile
Ab' ebonga amagwangqa.
Kanti noko lon' ikete
Noko sebe likanyele
Liko lona okunene
Kwinto zonke ngokumhlope.
Fan'selana sekupina
Umnt' omnyama esebenza.
Ekolisa, sele qwela,
Won'umvuzo uyintshenu,
Okunene kut'we kunu.
Oligwangqa uyinkosi
Nakuw' pina umsebenzi.
Fan'selana esidenge
Abantsundu bemqwelile,
Nange ngqondo bemdlulile,
Kupelile wozuziswa,
Umuvuzo owangala
Kwanegunya lokupata
Abantsundu, abamnyama.
Kwanelizwe xa lifile
Bomiselwa izidenge,
'Zingazange ziyibone
Lento kut'wa iyimfazwe,
Bapatisw' okwabantwana,

I despair. I'm all unravelled.
Really, house of my own people,
One by one the men have spoken,
Singing praises of the paleskins.
They maintain discrimination
Is a figment of our fancy,
But it really does affect us
Patently in every aspect.
Everywhere that people get to
You can find a black man working.
Usually, when he's all finished,
What he's earned amounts to nothing,
Any point it had is blunted.
As for paleskin he's the boss man
Everywhere there're people working.
He could be the greatest dummy,
Even though blacks finish sooner,
Even though their brains surpass his,
He alone will be rewarded,
Earning heaps and heaps of wages
And authority and power
Over darkskins, over black folk.
When the country's on armed footing
Blacks are posted under dummies
Who have never had experience
Of a wartime situation,
Just like children blacks bear burdens,

Ngezabokwe betyatyushwa;

Bat'we cintsi ngeqoshana
Bengo Vula ozindlela,

Amagwangqa etyetyiswa.
Kwi-ofisi kukwanjalo
Abantsundu, tú nto, nto, nto
Kwanalapo bay' zuzayo.
Niti kodwa makowetu
Alibala elintsundu,
Masifihle, masincwabe
Ezondawo zimuhlope?
Siteta nje kukw' i-Bondi
Ebuqili buyindoqo;
Ifungele, ibinqele
Ukuti e-Palamente,
Ezimali zifundisa
Oluhlanga lumunyama,
Mazihlutwe, mazipele.
Ngamanina law' anjalo?
Eyona nto soba nayo,
Imihlaba sel' inabo,
Ozigusha, nozinkomo,
Zonk' izintw' ebesinazo,
Bajojisa ngale mfundo?
Pendulani Sweligukwe
Bazamehlo, Felinene,
Sibulele ndawonina?
Nale voti ikwanjalo,
Kukw' ikete kwa nakuyo,
Asivunywa kany' impela
Tina bantu abamnyama.
Pikisani ezindawo
Sihlangene kule ngxoxo;
Nditsho ngoko ke manene
Ukuti sendincamile.
Okukona kukudala
Ungenile kweli gwangqa
Kokukona ungumfiki,
Kokukona ungumzini.
Ndiyapinda ndiyabuza
Kuni bandla elimnyama,
Nihlangene ngeli gala,
Sibulele ndawonina,
Ubukaya bubupina?
Ezindawo zamaqetsu

While they're urged along with sjamboks
With mere crumbs by way of profit
Though they might have blazed the pathways:
Only white men fill their pockets.
It's no different in an office:
While blacks garner nothing, nothing,
Even there whites rake in earnings.
What then do you say, my people,
With a dark skin as your colour,
Must we cover, must we bury
Everything to do with white men?
As we talk a Bond's been set up,
Artfulness is its one cure-all;
Oaths it's sworn, it's set its sights on
Getting Parliament to plunder
All the funds it's set aside for
Educating this black nation,
Terminating them completely.
What kind of people live like this?
What is left to us of value?
All the land is theirs already,
All the sheep and all the cattle,
Everything we own's their quarry,
Hounded by this education.
Won't you answer me then, Guileless,
And you, Squint-Eye, Die for Truth too,
Where's the forum to give thanks in?
It's no different with this voting,
Based upon discrimination,
We're completely unaccepted,
People black like all of us are.
Quarrel as we might on these points,
We have met in this discussion;
So then gentlemen I'm saying
That despair's already claimed me.
Just as long as you continue
To have dealings with this paleskin,
Just so long you'll be a stranger
Just so long a new arrival.
Once again I pose my question
To you nations of black people,
Gathered here before this meerkat,
Where's the forum to give thanks in?
Where are we to live together?
All these places with their pitfalls,

Aziko-na ke mawetu?
Nawo onke lamasheyi,
Siwenzelwa em-Lungwini?
Xa kulapo kuyinene
Sonke, sonke simanyene
Kuba sonke sikatele,
Masiwal' amagqebeqe
Nakwezo zi-Palamente,
Ngokuteta ngezw' elinye
Ukucasa zonk' indawo
Zembulawo ezinjalo,
Asiboni mubulelo.
(*Isigidimi samaXosa,* 1 May 1885: 36)

Do they not exist, my people?
What about all these deceptions
Fashioned for us in white places?
So then, it's the truth I'm speaking,
All of us, we're all united,
Since we're all of us exhausted;
Let us fight these machinations,
In those Parliaments if need be,
With one voice let's do our talking
Damning every single item
Of destructive legislation.
No appreciation's called for.

This defiant nationalistic appeal for black unity, for the political mobilization of blacks in opposition to white discrimination, appears in a fictional debate poem in a mission newspaper with a strict policy of excluding political comment. Despite the chairman's capitulation and concession of defeat at the conclusion of the debate, despite the benign facade of form and structure, Gqoba aired incisive criticism in his poem.

Isaac Williams Wauchope led a public life more politically committed than Gqoba's (on Wauchope, see Opland 1999b; T. J. Thompson, especially ch. 8). On both sides of his family, Wauchope had strong connections with the pioneering Christian missionaries to the Xhosa people. His great-grandmother Tse, together with her daughter Mina, were early disciples of J. T. van der Kemp, following him to Bethelsdorp in 1802. Mina died in Port Elizabeth in 1887 at the age of 96; her daughter Sabina was Wauchope's mother. In 1816, Joseph Williams established a mission station near the home of Citashe, Wauchope's grandfather; Williams accorded the family the Scottish name Wauchope. Citashe's son Dyoba married Sabina Heka in November 1850; Isaac Williams was the eldest of their ten children, born at Doorn Hoek near Uitenhage in 1852. Wauchope was one of four pupils at Lovedale to accompany a missionary party to Malawi in July 1876, but he fell victim to fever and was sent home in December 1876. On his return, he served as a teacher in Uitenhage (where he taught the young Charlotte Maxeke: he is the "Mr Joba" in McCord: ch. 1). In September 1882 Wauchope played a key role in the establishment of Imbumba Yamanyama, one of the earliest political associations for blacks in South Africa. He served as clerk and interpreter to the magistrate in Port Elizabeth before responding in 1888 to an appeal for "native" ministers. He studied theology at Lovedale, where he became an active member of the Lovedale Literary Society. On 6 March 1892 he was ordained as Pastor of the Congregational Native Church of Fort Beaufort and Blinkwater, close to the site of the kraal of his grandfather, Citashe. In

1906 Wauchope became an active supporter of the campaign to establish a black institution of higher learning, which culminated in 1916 in the foundation of the South African Native College, now the University of Fort Hare.

In 1907, at the end of a controversial trial, Wauchope was found guilty of forgery and was sentenced to three years' hard labor. He was committed to Tokai prison and after two years was released early in 1912. Four years later, in 1916, Wauchope volunteered for the South African Native Labour Contingent, a party of black auxiliaries who sought service in the First World War. On 21 February 1917, the troopship *Mendi* sank in the English Channel with the loss of over six hundred black South Africans. Numerous survivors testified to the absence of panic among the black ranks as the ship sank: legend has it that they assembled calmly on deck for a death drill, in which Wauchope exhorted them in strongly nationalistic terms to die like African heroes.

Active and prominent in church, political, community, and educational affairs, Wauchope also led the black temperance organization, the Independent Order of True Templars, for five years between 1893 and 1898. In addition, Wauchope can claim a significant role in the history of Xhosa literature. His earliest contribution to a newspaper was an article on liquor in *Isigidimi samaXosa* in July 1874. After his return from Malawi, he continued contributing from Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage articles with a religious bent, critical of drinking and encouraging education, lifelong preoccupations. In May 1882 he contributed his first poem, exhorting his readers to transfer the heroic resistance of their forefathers from war to rational argument: "Fight with the pen!" Wauchope contributed to *Imvo zabantsundu* in 1891 and 1892 an extended discussion of Xhosa proverbs, a number of hymns in 1896, and numerous historical articles. Particularly noteworthy is a series of poems he published in *Imvo* in 1912 under the collective title *Ingcamango ebunzimeni* ("Reflections in Darkness"), written while in prison in Tokai, to date the only prison literature in Xhosa. Apart from his prolific contributions to newspapers, Wauchope published one book, *The Natives and Their Missionaries,* in 1908.

Gqoba's grandfather was one of Ntsikana's followers, and Gqoba himself bore great respect for the Xhosa prophet. During his final illness, Gqoba had a vision of Ntsikana and his congregation in bright clothing: "*Bendingamazi nje la NTSIKANA wembali,*" he remarked, "*namhla ndiyamazi*" ("While I never knew the legendary Ntsikana, today I know him," *Isigidimi samaXosa* 1 May 1888: 34). Wauchope, too, venerated Ntsikana. The name of the political organization that Wauchope was involved in establishing in 1882, Imbumba Yamanyama, is one of Ntsikana's images, a symbol of national unity. It refers to the scrapings from the inside of a

pelt that when compacted form an indissoluble ball: it came to represent a political ideal in which the diverse black groupings might be welded together into one nation. In his first poem, Wauchope urged resistance with the pen, engagement with the white encroacher and dispossessor in intellectual debate. In March 1884 *Isigidimi* printed a poem by Wauchope (writing under the pseudonym Silwangangubo-nye) in praise of the fledgling political organization in which he acknowledges Ntsikana as a source of inspiration and identifies education as the key to the nationalistic struggle:

IMBUMBA YAMANYAMA	A BALL FROM SCRAPINGS
Walil' umzi akwatyiwa	Our home wailed and there was fasting
Mhla sashiywa ngu Ntsikana;	On the day Ntsikana left us;
Wancw'atywa ke waselelwa	He was buried, covered over,
Washiyw' apo kwagodukwa.	He was left there, we turned homewards.
Amhlope pantsi komhlaba	White they are beneath the surface,
Amatamb' ento ka Gaba,	The bones of the son of Gabha,
Yahlum' inc'a kwelo dlaka	Grass arose upon the grave of
Lomlwel' omkulu wohlanga.	A great fighter for the nation.
Kant' useko usateta,	Yet he lives and keeps on speaking
Izwi lake linamava,	In a voice of full experience,
Linencasa linomkita	Sounding sweetly and appealing,
Ele 'Mbumba Yamanyama.'	Talking of "a ball from scrapings."
Kanivuke nipakame	Rouse yourselves and stand up proudly,
'Sapo ndini lwakwa 'Mbombo,'	All you children of the Ngqika,
Nilandele eli lizwi	Take your lead from what this voice says,
Lomtyangampo wo Manyano.	"Unity" it keeps on crying.
Kanivuke nipakame	Rouse yourselves and stand up proudly,
'Sapo ndini lo Tukela,	All you children of the Zulu,
Kuba nani nasulelwa	You have also been infected
Lishwa lomzi wakwa P'alo.	By the house of Phalo's mishap.
Mazipole izilonda	Yes, it's time our wounds were mended,
He, nenqala zentiyano;	Animosities and grudges;
Siyazalana sibanye,	We're related, we are one stock,
Sikuluma 'lwimi lunye.	Speaking in a common language.
Safelwa ngu Krestu Emnye,	In His Oneness Christ died for us,
Sine lifa linye Ngaye:	Leaving to us this about Him:
Umanyano lungamandla—	Great strength can be found in union,
Olwe 'Mbumba Yamanyama.' . . .	Power of a "ball from scrapings" . . .

Shukumani ningalali
Bafundisi abantsundu,
Kunje sakulila ngani
Xa lupaleley' uhlanga.

Lumanyano ngokwe Mfundo!
Nants' Imbumba itelela
Yixobise, yinkwe' yako,
Yifundise eli Dabi.
(*Isigidimi samaXosa,* 1 March 1884: 2)

Keep on stirring, you black teachers,
Never pausing in your efforts,
It's like this when we bewail you,
With the nation lying shattered.

Union's found through education,
See Imbumba join our forces,
Give it weapons, it's your offspring,
Teach it how to fight this battle.
(cf. T. J. Thompson: 195–96)

Wauchope celebrated Xhosa custom and tradition, and collected folklore, as Gqoba had done. On 9 November 1889 he read a paper to the Training Society at Lovedale on "Kafir Proverbs and Figures of Speech." On 1 May 1890 under the title "Some Sayings" *Imvo* carried his list of fifty-six "Kafir Mottos" with their English equivalents. This led in 1891 to the publication of a series of Xhosa idioms and expressions with accompanying discussion under the title *Izintsonkoto zamaqalo* ("The Hidden Meanings of Proverbs"). After the appearance of the eighth installment, Wauchope wrote to *Imvo* on 3 November 1891 setting out his reasons for declining the request of numerous readers that he publish the series as a book. In so doing, he outlined the aims of his endeavors:

> I am, however, still carrying on my collection, not necessarily for publication in your columns, but for the sake of preserving what will soon be buried in the dead past. I have hitherto taken none but those of which the historical connection can be still traced, and among them, those which specially bring out the ethical aspect of Native life.... There is a tendency in the Native mind to regard civilized moral standards as foreign and strange. My object is to show that corresponding moral standards exist in chrystalized forms in their own National Mottoes, and that by living up to these they would not fall far below the civilized standards of morality. (*Imvo zabantsundu,* 15 November 1891: 3)

Wauchope's collection of proverbs was thus designed to instill black pride in his readers, to convince them that they need not view their own moral codes, enshrined in their folklore, as inferior to "civilized" European standards.

Wauchope was an active and senior member of the temperance movement. On 30 September 1887 a paper he had written on "Strong Drink and the Natives" was read on his behalf at a meeting of the Lovedale Literary Society. In it Wauchope inveighs against drunkenness for two reasons: it undermines black access to the labor market and thus the means for social improvement, and it destroys customary life. In arguing the latter case, Wauchope defends, valorizes, and romanticizes the threatened customs:

> So powerful a hold had the drink on [the Ngqika] tribe, that old and dear customs and ceremonies were gradually replaced by the bottle. The guest, who used to be received by killing a beast, and combining in innocent festivity, was now received with the bottle and its accompanying riot. The man that had been imprisoned had, formerly, first to be purified by a doctor before mixing with his fellows, and a sheep or goat had to be slaughtered as a token of welcome. Now the bottle is sufficient for both the cleansing and the welcoming. When the doctor was called in to see a patient, or to smell out witch-craft, he was received with a present of a lamb or a kid; now brandy is the sine qua non. The young lover must now soften the hearts of the parents of the maiden he wants for a wife, by keeping them supplied with drink. (*The Christian Express,* 1 November 1887: 173–74)

Wauchope appears to be inconsistent in his defense of Xhosa custom, however. In 1894 he offered a vigorous attack on custom in an article entitled "Uku-lobola": "we must take all—*Intonjane, Abakweta, Uku-Lobola* and *Polygamy*—as links in the great chain of barbarism which binds our people to the service of sin and Satan" (*The Christian Express,* 2 April 1894: 52). Yet in "Primitive Native Customs: Their Moral Aspect" (*Imvo,* 4 March 1901: 3; and 6 May 1901: 3) Wauchope defends circumcision ("All that is immoral or base in the rite is the result of corruption due to later innovations") as well as lobola, seeking compromise ("It would appear that what we now need is not stringent prohibitive laws, but regulative laws by which the *good* that is in these customs could be retained and improved, while the bad is rejected"). This inconsistency might well be an expression of "the divided self" I argued for in presenting the urban, Christian poetry of Nontsizi Mgqwetho in the 1920s (see Opland 1998b: ch. 10), but perhaps another explanation might suggest itself if we take under consideration the medium and the intended audience of the writing. Of all the items we have so far discussed, there is greatest consistency and most explicit criticism if the work is written in Xhosa, published in *Imvo* or *Isigidimi,* and addressed to a black audience; such is the case with the Gqoba debate poem, with Wauchope's two poems and his articles on Xhosa proverbs. Wauchope appeals to his countrymen in the opening line of "Fight with the Pen," he appeals to black teachers in the penultimate stanza of "Imbumba Yamanyama," and he himself asserts that his articles on proverbs are designed to instill in his readers pride and faith in their own system of morality. Newspapers with Jabavu and Gqoba as editors published in Xhosa incitements to black readers even when those newspapers were owned and controlled by the Lovedale Mission.

When we turn to works written in English, we might draw a distinction between those published on the one hand in the English-medium *Christian Express,* which had a largely white readership and was published

by the Lovedale Mission Institution, and those published in the bilingual *Imvo,* which had a mixed readership and was owned, edited, and published by Tengo Jabavu. *The Christian Express* carried Mzimba's conference paper on lobola, Gqoba's address to the Lovedale Literary Society on custom, and two of Wauchope's articles, on drink and on custom. The latter is the only work under consideration that explicitly condemns Xhosa custom out of hand, dismissing arguments for tolerance and speaking in terms of degradation, idolatry, and immorality, describing lobola as "an instrument for filthy lucre." It bears Wauchope's name at the end and seems to have been contributed as an article, not a letter or the text of a lecture intended for oral delivery. It seems to have been intended for a white audience, since it opens with the statement that "The above subject [Uku-lobola—implying an awareness in the author of typographical layout in print] is one upon which Native opinion is divided and will remain so, until the Churches take a firm stand either for or against it," and he asserts "I am writing as a Native born and brought up in Native society. I have kept my eyes open in these matters for the last twenty-five years." There can be no doubting Wauchope's courage in resisting white hegemony when he chose to: he was an architect of the political organization Imbumba Yamanyama, he successfully took a white shunter to court for insulting his brother while a railway passenger, and later took a white ticket inspector to court for insulting him. Yet when we compare his anti-custom statement in *The Christian Express* in 1894 with his conciliatory position in *Imvo* in 1901 and his condemnation of drink for its erosion of custom in *The Christian Express* in 1887, it is difficult not to find Wauchope guilty of a charge of hypocrisy. All that can be said in mitigation is that his criticism of drink was originally read as a paper to the Lovedale Literary Society, a mixed audience, and his 1901 defense of custom appeared in *Imvo,* again for a mixed audience, but his 1894 assault on custom is designed for white readers. His condemnation of lobola, circumcision, and puberty dances in 1894 is quite unequivocal: "No argument in the world can convince me that Uku-Lobola is good for Christians.... Are we as Christians to continue sacrificing to this idol?" This is Wauchope as a native Christian exploiting biblical imagery in writing for an audience of white Christians in opposition to native custom.

With this sole exception, when Gqoba and Wauchope write in Xhosa for Xhosa readers in *Isigidimi* and *Imvo,* they express criticism and political exhortation, notably in poetry; when they address mixed audiences in English, they speak the language of their white missionary colleagues but introduce coded signals to their black colleagues, stylistic shifts that suggest black independence or equality, appeals to black pride and unity. This is a tactic employed by Pambani Mzimba in his conference address on lobola in 1877, by Gqoba in his record of Xhosa custom in 1885, and by

Wauchope in his criticism of drink in 1887. Their addresses are clearly acceptable to white members of their audience and are subsequently published in *The Christian Express,* yet at the same time they have different connotations to attentive black ears (cf. Kelber's comment on Mark's strategy: "the anti-Roman resentment is encoded in the exorcism story and recognizable as such only to the informed hearers who have ears to hear": infra 273). These coded stylistic switches may draw attention to themselves through poetic language; as we have seen, they stand out in a sober context by virtue of their colouful prose marked by elaborate simile and metaphor. They often say one thing but are perhaps meant to be understood as implying the opposite, reminding one of the advice of the grandfather of the unnamed protagonist of Ralph Ellison's novel of the African American experience, *Invisible Man,* who on his deathbed exhorted his grandson on how to deal with whites: "Live with your head in the lion's mouth. I want you to overcome 'em with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open."

Let us consider one more newspaper article. In May 1885 *The Christian Express* published the text of a lecture Wauchope had delivered "at a social meeting of the Native Church" in Port Elizabeth. It was presented to readers of *The Christian Express* rather patronizingly "very nearly as sent to us by the writer. It contains a great deal of vigorous common sense—and its chief interest is that it is a *purely Native production*" (67). Under the title "The Christianization of the Natives," in the presence of the Patersons, a white missionary couple whom he celebrates as his personal patrons, Wauchope outlines in elegant and scholarly terms the growth of missionary activity among the Xhosa. He concludes with encouragement for the missionaries in this task, underscoring the dependence of the Xhosa:

> But I am encroaching on your time. I thank you all for listening to me. My object is to draw your sympathies to this great work of the Christianization of the Natives. Remember that we need your sympathy and support, for, as yet, we cannot get on without you. (*The Christian Express,* 1 May 1885: 68)

Pious stuff, well received by a proud Mr. and Mrs. Paterson, no doubt, and proudly displayed as a splendid trophy by the editor of *The Christian Express.* Yet in the midst of the vigorous common sense in his talk, Wauchope slips in a florid paragraph redolent with the imagery of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress:*

> We know that in making a railroad there is first the surveying and defining of its locality, then the clearing of bushes along its course, the

> making of embankments across deep ravines, and cuttings along the mountain slopes. Tunnels must be bored through mountains, and rocks removed, and bridges built across rivers. The time taken and the expense incurred in making such a road are in proportion to the nature of the localities through which it passes. Now Christianity had to make its way among a people deeply sunk in barbarism and superstition. There was first of all that formidable mountain of *Witchcraft* to be removed. Then there was that Slough of Despond called *Polygamy,* where many a promising Kaffir Christian has turned back or sunk in the attempt to pass through. Then the deep and dark valley of *Superstition,* with its dismal shadows, had to be filled up. How many fat oxen and hundreds of tons of corn were sacrificed to this idol in 1856! How many lives were lost because this idol could neither hear nor answer prayer! And *Mount Immorality* with its thousand summits of national indecencies stood right in the way and had to be overcome. Besides all this, there were many customs and practices which the Kaffirs had to give up before any real progress could be made. All their barbarous rites and ceremonies which were repugnant to the teaching of the Bible, had to be sacrificed. Their sons were no longer to enter manhood by undergoing the national rite of their forefather. They were no longer to part with their daughters, when given in marriage, for a consideration in the shape of cattle. Their midnight festivals and revelry had to be discontinued. The polygamist had to discard the surplusage of his wives and keep only one. All the *Amakubalo* or secret charms which fell under the department of the smelling-out doctor, had now to be disbelieved and abhorred. All these customs which they regarded as binding them together into a complete whole, were to be sacrificed. Christianity demanded a change, a radical change, and a complete decomposition of the whole ancient structure. There was to be a general reform, morally, socially, and domestically, in fact in all the relations of life. (*The Christian Express,* 1 May 1885: 67)

Does Wauchope regret this necessary transformation of Xhosa society, this destruction of customary life that constitutes a stumbling block to Christian progress? The customs are clearly depicted as barbarous, idolatrous, and benighted; their valiant opponents clearly tread Pilgrim's heroic path to salvation. The white members of his audience must have been pleased to hear this from an articulate "native." Yet black members of the audience might have received the climactic sentence somewhat differently: "All these customs which they regarded as binding them together into a complete whole, were to be sacrificed." Accepting Christianity entailed, for blacks, a sacrifice of their customs, which bound them together into a complete whole. Now that last phrase is particularly pregnant: it is a close translation of Ntsikana's *Imbumba yamanyama,* and I very much doubt that Wauchope would be willing to sacrifice Ntsikana's ideal, an ideal of indissoluble political unity and community of purpose

that Wauchope himself had adopted as the name of his fledgling movement founded only three years earlier. A seemingly innocuous English phrase serves to subvert the general tenor of the passage, a subversion to which black members of the audience might have been alerted by the sudden and radical stylistic shift.

I want finally to examine an extension of this paper by Wauchope. *The Natives and Their Missionaries* is a forty-seven-page book published by the Lovedale Mission Press in 1908. The title page identifies the author only as "A Native Minister," but the text concludes with the intials "I.W." This is the only book we will consider, written in English: in this tightly controlled medium, does Wauchope plough the missionary furrow? The monograph is composed in three distinct styles. The frame, with which Wauchope starts and to which he returns in conclusion, is in formal, high-toned academic style. The volume, for example, opens in this manner:

> The advent of Missionaries forms a distinct epoch in the history of the Natives of South Africa. For a century and a half before this period the rule of the Dutch East India Company had spread terror among the Native tribes. The Hottentot Chiefs in the West had been gradually dispossessed not only of their large herds but of their lands as well. (3)

Wauchope places the missionaries in a position of prominence at the head of his first sentence and passes on in his initial pages to sing their praises in unequivocal terms, but here, as consistently throughout the work, Wauchope subverts impressions. The missionaries are located in a latter period in the history of the indigenous inhabitants of South Africa, forming a part of the "Native" history that envelops and absorbs them. This figure of encapsulation echoes the very title of the work, *The Natives and* Their *Missionaries,* which signals the concept that it was up to the natives to accept and embrace the missionaries who entered their history at a particular time, in effect assuming possession of them as a conscious act. The second sentence then immediately introduces a note of dispossession, signaling an ultimately political aim and intent in what seems to be a pious tract by "a Native Minister," a display piece published by the missionaries but written by someone not important enough to identify by name anywhere in the publication. The missionaries might seem to have something of utilitarian interest in this "purely Native production" they are publishing, but they have more of a tiger by the tail than a tame dancing bear.

Wauchope casts the Dutch as the enemies, the missionaries as the friends of the Xhosa, which places the Dutch in opposition to the spirit of the Gospel text espoused by the missionaries, "God made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (4), a slogan of

social and political inclusion. Wauchope states clearly that he does not aim to describe the experiences of individual missionaries or of the various missions, but "What I wish to present before you is the Native as the Missionary found him" (7).

> They found that instead of a shifty, nomadic race the Natives had settled homes and settled institutions. There were the Chiefs and their Councillors, who represented Law and Order, and administered laws based upon equitable principles. They found existing in the heathen society a complete system of ethics.... There was much that harmonised with Christian ethics; there were also many things which were repugnant to the Christian sense. Could the whole structure be pulled down and a new one set up, or was there room for wise discrimination? That was the problem the Missionary had to solve. (7)

Wauchope himself argues for accommodation, that "discarding the structure and replacing it by a new has proved a failure, as witnessed to by the state of the present Native Christian generation, which has lost the good things their fathers had, but has not taken easily to the new" (7). He proceeds to describe in positive terms the coherence and morality of the all-pervasive precolonial Xhosa custom, explicitly omitting reference to "those customs, rites and ceremonies of the Natives which convey a sense of impropriety or are revolting to our Christian sensibility, and which represent the dark side of native social life" (13). (Wauchope at times identifies himself through the first-person plural pronoun with the native—for example, on missionary expenditure "for our benefit," he remarks that "the amounts are beyond the grasp of our minds, accustomed as we are to compute wealth by the number of heads of cattle" (6)—at other times with the Christian community, as here.) Opposition to Xhosa custom leads to the disintegration of Xhosa social and political life, to which "the Government" is committed while the missionary seeks to establish a new social order: so, craftily, Wauchope conscripts the missionary in the struggle for black political rights. The subtlety of the argument is quite delicious and worth citing as an example of how Wauchope turns an initially placatory position into an argument for political mobilization:

> One by one the old institutions went over the fence dividing the Christian from the heathen community. With the fouler customs and practices went also those which guarded the political and social life of the people, and while the Missionaries were absorbed in founding such institutions as were calculated to form a new basis for the social and religious life of their converts, the Government was propounding schemes for the complete annihilation of the political existence of the Native, and the latter, kneeling over a stone to whet his assegai was swearing by his ancestors that he would die physically before he died politically.

> A new community sprang up. It is existing to-day. Call it "semi-civilised" or "in the transition stage," if you like. But it is there. Standing still or moving on? If moving on, where to? To a social equality with the white man? I do not think so, because it has no basis. For want of a basis the Native convert has been unable to find his feet. (14)

Thus the Xhosa convert calls for a return to his old traditions, "to the annoyance and discouragement of the Missionary." The suggestion is that if the missionary provides the basis for a gospel of social and political inclusion (textual support for which Wauchope has cited in his opening pages), the work of conversion will proceed unhindered. Explicitly, "in spite of the limitations of our race, despite the restricting and impeding circumstances, some men believe that there is a future for the native races of South Africa, and those men are the Missionaries and their friends," friends in Parliament like "our Searles, our Schreiners and our Wilmots, and all we need now is the concentration of all our energies, in harmonious co-operation with our Missionaries, sinking all minor differences and petty jealousies and rivalries, upon the one object of the amelioration and up-lifting of the Native races." When all are compacted into one ball, in other words, blacks together with missionaries and well-disposed white politicians, injustice and discrimination will be eradicated and Ntsikana's vision will merge with that of the missionaries: "when we have all come into line, with our hands to the rope, God will give the signal, and there will be a strong pull, a long pull, and a pull all together, and Africa will be won for Christ" (17). Wauchope dangles a tantalizing carrot before his missionary readers: Africa will be won for Christ with the eradication not of Xhosa custom but of social and political exclusion and inequality. Then the tug of war will be over.

At this climactic point, Wauchope interrupts his discursive mode for twenty pages to provide a narrative account of the endeavors of the pioneer missionaries to the Xhosa, J. T. van der Kemp and Joseph Williams, despite having previously asserted that "It is not my object to give in detail the experiences of individual Missionaries nor accounts of various missions" (7). The narrative of the two missionaries is sustained by documentary references and quotations in the proper style of a historian but is less formal and high-toned, more anecdotal in that Wauchope is frequently at pains to locate his historical narrative in the present-day landscape: he introduces first-person accounts of his searches for traces of habitation or irrigation, always taking care to provide the sources of his information. Thus, for example, he re-creates the possible route Van der Kemp took to Ngqika's kraal:

> An old road passing through Mr Richard Joninga's erf at Banzi would take him across the Nyolonyolo valley, thence, keeping along the west

> bank of the Debe and rounding a small kopje covered with euphorbia trees, he would suddenly come within a few yards of Gaika's kraal. I have frequently visited this spot, as it is only two miles from my station at Knapps Hope and only half a mile from my Debe church, which is named after Van der Kemp. There are still traces of the site, the cattle kraal and corn pits.
>
> . . . Soon the presence of this solitary white man among the Kafirs made a deep impression, and the Chief visited Van der Kemp frequently and watched him while he was building his hut of raw bricks, of which some traces were pointed out to me by the late Joninga. (19–20)

The effect of this strategy, apart from being sound historiographical practice, is to reinforce the tenor of the title *The Natives and Their Missionaries* by situating missionary activity in a precolonial Xhosa landscape, even to relate the present-day landscape to the physical features of precolonial times: ultimately that landscape absorbs and obliterates traces of white activity. It has the same effect as arguing, as he does earlier in the monograph, that the Xhosa had a perfectly coherent and ethical system before the arrival of the whites, to center present confusion in a pure and secure precolonial past.

Just as this Western historical mode interrupts his Christian discursive argument, so too is the narrative of Van der Kemp and Williams disrupted by yet a third mode, this one in the style of the Xhosa folklore genre of *ibali,* a historical narrative. *Amabali* are the most elusive of Xhosa folklore forms and have attracted no editor as yet; Jeff Peires (170–75) has come closest to defining the genre. The *amabali* that Wauchope interjects into his anecdotal historical account bear very strong stylistic resemblances to the peerless Zulu historical narrative dictated by Msebenzi to N. J. van Warmelo about Matiwane and the amaNgwane (1938). Strikingly, both Msebenzi and Wauchope cite praise poetry for authentication. Wauchope marks his switch to a Xhosa mode of speech by identifying a speaker and by occasionally quoting the Xhosa version of an English phrase, thereby underlining its dependence on a Xhosa oral genre. The first such major interruption occurs in his account of Van der Kemp, one of whose disciples was Ngo, renamed Mina, nine years old at the time of Van der Kemp's arrival in Ngqika's territory in 1799, and Wauchope's future grandmother. Wauchope sets in inverted commas "her account of Van der Kemp and the impression made upon her young mind" (20), signifying typographically that he is repeating her very words, albeit in English. After Mina's narrative, Wauchope comments:

> I used to sit for hours together listening to my grandmother. At the end of her long story she would also sing to me the songs they sang under the tree, the music of which was borrowed from the chorus of the Kafir National song *Umdudo,* with this difference, that the strain is disguised

> by the dropping of the many slurrings common to the vocalised Kafir song, in order to adapt it to the words, so that ideas may be expressed. Both the primary and the secondary strains in the refrain are thus abbreviated. After singing this song she would break into tears. (22)

Wauchope is locating his narrative within the context of the actual sounds of Mina's voice and the sound of her singing: Xhosa folklore genres and the Xhosa voice comprise the ultimate matrix of his narrative, just as much as the precolonial landscape forms the context in which the historical narrative is set.

The story of Williams that follows that of Van der Kemp is interrupted by another switch to the style of a Xhosa *ibali* for a contrast between Ntsikana and Makhanda centered on the internecine battle of Amalinde in 1818. As in Msebenzi's Zulu saga of Matiwane (and, curiously, as in medieval Icelandic sagas), Wauchope occasionally shifts into direct speech, citing snatches of authenticating praise poems and employing distinctive Xhosa turns of phrase, proverbial expressions, and names; he offers Xhosa versions of some of his phrases to show the origin of his English narrative in Xhosa speech. Thus, for example, we read:

> From the Ntaba ka Ndoda heights the Ndlambes and their allies swept down, crossed the Keiskama and carried off all the cattle between that river and the Tyumie. Then Gaika spoke. "Children of Umla[w]u, the cattle have gone. You must follow, and die."
>
> Then he addressed his son Maqoma—
>
> "You of little horns,
> Facing the dawn of day,
> You have been a boy all along.
> You must become a man to day,
> This is your day."
>
> To his one-eyed son, Tyali, then a "boy" of 20—"You must learn today to tie and milk a kicking cow." To the brave Monxoyi: "I see you are already thirsting for human blood."
>
> To Mcoyana, the crooked-necked son of Fuleli, whose assegai never missed its mark—
>
> "Son of Fuleli whose neck is twisted,
> Pointing towards the Great Place,
> Breaker of hard things with the teeth,
> Go, let me not see you again." (27–28)

When restrained by a reminder of Ntsikana's prophetic warning, another warrior in the heat of battle asks, "'who has ordered that the destinies of our land should be guided by dreamers?—*Huk!* let us die if we die, one kind of death is like any other kind' (*ukufa kuyafana*)" (28).

A second *ibali* comparing Ntsikana and Makhanda later interrupts the Williams narrative once again, this one focusing on Makhanda's

failed millenarian prophecy and the Xhosa attack on Grahamstown in 1819 (33–37). We are left to guess the sources of these two vivid, colloquial narratives, but Wauchope pointedly informs us that his uncle Ndyambo was present at the battle of Grahamstown and showed him scars to prove it; Wauchope's grandfather Citashe did not fight at Grahamstown, having himself been wounded at Amalinde, but he was present at Cove Rock near East London to witness the failure of one of Makhanda's prophecies, a scene included in Wauchope's *ibali.*

At this point Wauchope drops his narrative of the two pioneering missionaries with its disruptive *amabali* and returns to the formal style of his suspended disquisition on the missionaries: "From 1820 to 1908 the Missionaries have been hard at work. The question is—*What have they achieved?"* (38). One of their achievements is that "They have transformed our race":

> If our fathers who fell at Amalinde were to rise and see their children, they would not know us. Even the reds of to-day are different from the reds of those days, and while many of us deplore the subversion of many native institutions that were of service in keeping us together socially and politically, no man of sense can say we would have done better without the missionaries. (38)

Whatever a "man of sense" might say, the idea that an ancestor would not recognize a descendant could not have provided much cheer for a Xhosa, especially one of the many (including Wauchope, by virtue of the first-person plural pronoun in the phrase "many of us") who deplore the subversion of custom. If this is to be counted a success to the credit of the missionaries, Wauchope continues, then it is true that the missionaries in turn have come in for criticism from segments of both the black and white population. Yet they were sustained at times by the Xhosa chiefs. In defense of this thesis, Wauchope offers two sources of evidence: the memoirs of the missionary James Laing, which Wauchope cites (39–40), and a Xhosa *ibali* narrating the assistance offered to Frederick Kayser by Namba son of Maqoma, who saw Kayser safely into Fort Hare before leaping into the saddle of his horse Pokkies and rejoining his warriors in the frontier war in 1850. The *ibali* thus disrupts not just the narrative of Van der Kemp and Williams but at the end bursts its bounds to interrupt the frame of argument about the missionaries in general. The implication is that Xhosa folklore forms an underlying matrix within which the story of the missionaries must be located, as well as any discussions about the success of the missionaries: ultimately, the intrusion of the *amabali* suggests, the natives have appropriated *their* missionaries, incorporating them into *their* history.

Within four pages Wauchope closes, having praised the missionaries for the introduction of printing. On his last page, he recapitulates the

political argument in his opening pages. The Dutch, who were initially the enemy of the Xhosa, now number in their ranks some friends, because the Dutch have entered the mission field. Thus the missionaries have initiated their work of transformation among the Dutch as well as the Xhosa:

> Then the Dutch Church became a missionary Church, sending out missionaries to the heathen. Some of the greatest friends of the natives to-day are found among the Dutch. Look at that distinguished Dutch Negrophilist, Mr. Sauer, who at a time when the Native question was the rock upon which the reputations of statesmen were wrecked, stuck through thick and thin to the principle that the Kafir was a human being and must be treated as such. (46–47)

Wauchope concludes with the wish that the missionaries might flourish and ends with a pious quotation, slipping in at the same time a reference to social unity as an ideal:

> May their number ever grow, and may their God be our God. Then we shall see the dawn of the real unification, a union of regenerate souls, "Children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (47)

In its use of Xhosa folklore genres to subvert the seemingly favorable assessment of the missionary enterprise, the strategy of Isaac Wauchope's *The Natives and Their Missionaries* bears comparison to that adopted by Sol Plaatje in his pioneering historical novel *Mhudi.* Phaswane Mpe has recently argued that

> Oral forms [songs and proverbs] in *Mhudi* are mediators in important discussions in which both the authority of established wisdom—though subject to questioning and revision—and good interpersonal and social relationships, are required. They serve, also, to criticise and subvert certain ideological tendencies and the political as well as cultural practices resulting from those tendencies. (89–90)

I have suggested that Wauchope's choice of the *ibali* to subvert his argument has political implications. But there are also implications in the specific *amabali* he chooses to interpolate. The stories of Namba and of Ntsikana and Makhanda are set in the context of heroic militaristic conflict. The role reversal is significant in the story of Namba: the civilized Xhosa chief takes time off from war to minister to a missionary. Namba's story establishes a triangular set of forces that mirrors the present time: the generous gesture of the chief in support of the missionary while he himself is engaged in war with the Cape government must give way to

an unarmed conflict in which members of the Cape government must align themselves with the missionaries and the Xhosa for the elimination of social discrimination and the achievement of inclusion. A potent example of that discrimination and social differentiation is provided by the narrator of the first *ibali,* Mina, Wauchope's grandmother. After her story about Van der Kemp, Wauchope supplies her personal history. As a child, with her mother Tse, she follows Van der Kemp to Bethelsdorp, where the two women live for some years.

> Her mother afterwards got employment near Hankey and so they got separated for a time from their missionary. Her mother, having lost some sheep which she was herding, was beaten to death by her mistress, a very big and powerful Boer woman. My grandmother left the farm by night and fled to Bethelsdorp where Dr. Van der Kemp took her statement. This was about the year 1807. In the following year her friends took her away back to Kafirland, but she was no sooner there than a summons reached her calling upon her to attend the court of the Landdrost at Uitenhage to give evidence in connection with the killing of Tse her mother. At this enquiry she is described in the records as, "Mina, a Kafir girl aged 17 years." (22)

No wonder she burst into tears when telling her grandson the stories of those years. This shocking story, introduced by Wauchope into his narrative of Van der Kemp, contains images of exclusion and incorporation: Tse is beaten to death for losing sheep in her care (Van der Kemp having previously lost them from his flock), Mina is mentioned in the court records, and Wauchope himself enters his historical narrative. Also underlying it is a pregnant story of migration and travel, from the safety of Ngqika's kraal in Xhosa territory to the mission station ministering to the marginalized "Hottentots and Coloureds," to violent death on a Boer farm, and back to Xhosa territory. But we lack space to entertain those discussions here.

Postcolonial critics write, as Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin do, of "the control of the means of communication by the state" gagging "the voice of the individual" so that "Even those postcolonial writers with the literal freedom to speak find themselves languageless, gagged by the imposition of English on their world" (84). Karin Barber (1995) and Graham Furniss have fired telling broadsides against this school of criticism for its devaluation of African language literatures. But whether they write in English or Xhosa it is clear that Gqoba and Wauchope are anything but gagged and voiceless: the very multivocality of Wauchope's *The Natives and Their Missionaries* alone puts paid to that wrong-headed notion. Their lectures and published writings promote black pride in their support for the integrity and morality of Xhosa custom and lore; they constantly subvert

their high Christian tone with stylistic switches and coded slogans, none more potent than Ntsikana's symbol of nationalism, *Imbumba yamanyama,* and the call to arms as cattle are being raided, *Zemk' iinkomo, magwalandini!* ("There go your cattle, you cowards!"); and they deploy Xhosa oral genres as a tool of subversion and a means of "talking back." As such, they reveal similar cultural attitudes and strategies to those discerned by Daniel Kunene in early Zulu, Xhosa, and Sotho novelists:

> In order to discharge his moral duty, the writer has a variety of methods at his disposal, some of which are inherent in the Western novel as a genre. But some, too, derive from oral art as the author adapts them to the new medium. In communicating his message and revealing his feelings, the modern writer either digresses in order to give himself a chance to deliver his lesson direct to the reader, or he adopts a poetic stance in which approval or disapproval is carried within the tide of the narrative, making it more pleasing while at the same time conveying the writer's feeling ruled by his moralistic intent. (1043)

They used code switching for much the same purpose as it is used elsewhere in Africa: Myers-Scotton concluded from Kenyan data that "Code choices, and specifically [code switching], become means of conveying intentional meanings of a social nature" (179). And they anticipate by over sixty years the strategies adopted by Xhosa poets under apartheid: G. V. Mona has argued for the infiltration of Mkhonto we Sizwe slogans into published poetry, concluding that

> the suppressive state apparatus of the Apartheid regime failed in its endeavour to absolutely dissipate the alternative ideology from Xhosa written poetry texts. The foregoing post-Sharpeville Xhosa written poems are evidence of resistance through culture by the oppressed. The attempts at the political level by the Nationalist Party government to make people consent to apartheid governance and White supremacy was reciprocated by resistance at the cultural level which strove for elimination of inferiority complex amongst Blacks, and dissent to apartheid governance. (224–25)

Eight years after the appearance of Wauchope's book, in an article published in 1913 and entitled "'Zemk' inkomo, magwalandini!' ('The Cattle Have Left Us, Ye Cowards')," the Catholic missionary Godfrey Callaway wrote about the loss of Xhosa custom and about that same shift in the rules of engagement that Wauchope appealed for in his poem "Fight with the Pen":

> But the cry which, together with shields and assegais, has almost disappeared from the normal life of the people, has been revived lately in

> quite a new way. Apart from the fact that as a title it has been stamped upon the covers of a good-sized volume, it is also the substance of many an article in Xosa newspapers.
>
> The neutral zone is now the wide ocean, and the raiders are the knights of European civilization. The spoilers are the Europeans, not excluding the missionaries. Again the cry, "*Zemk' inkomo, magwalandini!*" is coming from the spoiled. . . .
>
> The destructive forces of civilization came just as the East Coast fever came. Nothing will stop them. The kraal in which the national assets were secured is custom (*isiko*), but the walls of the kraal have been broken down. (69–70)

Now, Callaway claims, it is more likely that "white friends of the natives" would be seeking to preserve the Xhosa heritage, friends who might find themselves confronted by ingratitude for their efforts. To those blacks who urge the preservation of their customs and traditions, Callaway suggests that these well-disposed whites might reply:

> Do you not see all that we have been doing during the long years that you have been asleep? Do you not see that we have tried to save your language, your folk-lore, your good customs, your best characteristics? Do you not see that the very pen with which your attack upon us was written, the ink into which that pen was dipped, the paper upon which the characters were made, the alphabet by which the words were spelt, the grammar by which the sentences were constructed . . . all these things and many more are the gifts of these very people against whom you are raising the cry? (72)

Callaway's sensitivity to the irony, his own recourse to the battle imagery of the nineteenth century, is at one and the same time testament to the success of the Xhosa appropriation of European print technology. Wauchope's poetic appeal for the new Xhosa elite to lay down assegai and shield and fight with the pen had evidently not fallen on deaf ears. As the nineteenth century was drawing to a close, the Xhosa voice was far from silent: the print media introduced by the whites had been conscripted in the struggle for political and social equality.*

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FROM THE BIBLE AS *BOLA* TO BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AS *MARABI:* TLHAPING TRANSACTIONS WITH THE BIBLE

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INTRODUCTION

The Tlhaping people of southern Africa were not particularly interested in "the gospel," "the Word of God," or even the words of the missionaries; they were more interested in guns, tobacco, candles, and the controlled presence of missionaries. If they were at all interested in the Bible, and there are signs that they were, their apprehension of it was substantially different from those who brought it into their midst.

Similarly, but shifting now to the present, Tinyiko Maluleke cautions us to probe more carefully at the Bible's presence in Africa. Commenting on a familiar anecdote about the arrival of the Bible in Africa—"When the white man came to our country he had the Bible and we (Blacks) had the land. The white man said to us 'let us pray.' After the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible'[1]—Maluleke asks what precisely it means to say that black people "have the Bible" (Maluleke 1998b: 134).

These, then, are two of the impulses that drive this essay. What holds them together is a third impulse, derived from the work of Vincent Wimbush, an African American biblical scholar. Wimbush argues that not only can the reception of the Bible among African Americans, that is, African slaves in America, be separated from the reception of missionaries and Christianity but that early African American encounters with the Bible have functioned "as phenomenological, socio-political and cultural

* I acknowledge the financial support of the National Research Foundation and the University of Natal Research Fund in enabling the research that is reflected in this essay.

1 In his retelling of the anecdote Maluleke recasts the anecdote in inclusive language, referring to "White people," thereby implicitly capturing the role white women (madams) played in missionary and colonial enterprises (see, e.g., Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 67–70, 135–38, 144–46; Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 236–39, 276–77, 292–93, 299–300, 320–22, 374).

foundation" for subsequent periods (Wimbush 1993: 131). If Wimbush is right in asserting that the array of appropriative and interpretative strategies forged in the earliest encounters of African Americans with the Bible are foundational, in the sense that all other subsequent African American readings are in some sense built upon and judged by them, then historical hermeneutical analysis has tremendous significance for our current hermeneutical context. What Wimbush's work suggests, and its contribution lies in its heuristic capacity rather than in its detail, is that ordinary African American readers of the Bible embody a long history of biblical hermeneutical strategies that can be traced back to their formative encounters with the Bibles in the hands of missionaries, masters and mistresses, and that were forged both by watching how whites used this book and by fashioning their own interpretative and appropriative resources to wrest control of this potentially powerful book from them (Wimbush 1991; 1993).

This essay, then, attempts to track the traces of what might be called an indigenous hermeneutic by beginning at both ends of the Bible's presence in southern Africa: the very earliest encounter with the Bible among the Tlhaping and current African Bible "reading" practice.[2]

Early Encounters

The complex and protracted processes that constitute missionary notions and practices of conversion and civilization in Southern Africa have been carefully analyzed by many others, but with particular insight by Jean and John Comaroff in their historical anthropology of mission (Comaroff 1985; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; 1997). Their thorough and theoretically astute work on missionary (and colonial) activity among the Southern Tswana provides a detailed backdrop to my own contribution, an attempt to probe the place of the Bible in the transactions that take place between the Tlhaping and the various Bible-bearing travelers they received. While their work does take note of "the Bible" in the "long conversation," a recurring metaphor of the Comaroff's, between the Nonconformists and the Southern Tswana, and while there is much talk of "the Word" (see also Landau 1995), on closer examination these terms tend to stand for the missionaries' message in general and not the Bible in particular. That the Bible is seldom treated separately from the arrival and reception of Christianity is not surprising, particularly as it can be argued that the Bible is analytically (in the philosophical sense) bound up with Christianity (Barr 1980: 52). I do not want

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2 Since writing this essay I have dealt with each of these more fully: see West forthcoming a and forthcoming b.

to dispute the interconnectedness of the Bible and Christianity, but I do not want to conflate them either.

I want to prise the Bible from the Christian missionary package if I can. I may not be able to, but the attempt is important to me as a socially engaged biblical scholar who is trying to understand the role of the Bible in the struggles of indigenous South Africans for survival, liberation, and life.[3] I do not want to too easily assume that the Bible appeared to Africans as it did to the missionaries who b(r)ought it.[4]

For the purposes of this essay I will limit my analysis to one of the very earliest accounts of a Southern Tswana encounter with the Bible that I have been able to find. Unfortunately, this requires that I am largely dependent on missionary narrative constructions of such encounters, but socially engaged biblical scholars (and anthropologists; see Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: xi, 171, 189) have become adept at "reading against the grain," particularly in contexts such as South Africa, where, Itumeleng Mosala reminds us, "the appropriation of works and events is always a contradictory process embodying in some form a 'struggle'" (Mosala 1989: 32).

Following the death of Dr. van der Kemp, "that valuable man who [pioneered and] superintended the African missions" on behalf of the London Missionary Society (John Campbell: v),

> the Directors thought it expedient to request one of their own body, the Rev. John Campbell, to visit the country, personally to inspect the different settlements, and to establish such regulations, in concurrence with Mr. Read and the other missionaries [already in Southern Africa], as might be most conducive to the attainment of the great end proposed—the conversion of the heathen, keeping in view at the same time the promotion of their civilization. (Ibid.: vi)

John Campbell, a director of the London Missionary Society, had been commissioned and sent to the Cape in 1812 in order "to survey the progress and prospects of mission work in the interior" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 178). Campbell made his way from mission post to mission post in the Colony, and when he came to Klaarwater, which was

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3 My task is a genealogical one, in Michel Foucault's sense, in that it is a "union of erudite knowledge and local memories ['popular knowledge'] which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today" (Foucault 1980: 83).

4 My project is similar, but with a twist of perspective, to that proposed by Paul Landau, when he argues that historians of religion have too readily subsumed indigenous practices into religious categories that make sense to European researchers generally and missionary Christianity in particular (Landau 1999).

then some distance north of the boundary of the Cape Colony, though the boundary was to follow him some years later (in 1825) almost as far as Klaarwater, he heard that Chief Mothibi of the Tlhaping people a hundred miles farther to the north had expressed some interest in receiving missionaries (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 178). With barely a pause in Klaarwater, spending no more than a week there, Campbell and his party set off for Dithakong ("Lattakoo"), then the capital of Chief Mothibi, on 15 June 1813.

Though not the first whites or missionaries to make this trek, theirs is the first sustained visit, and during this visit there is the first documented engagement with the Bible by the Tlhaping. We pick up the missionary trail and tale as they arrive on the outskirts of Dithakong in the afternoon of 24 June 1813. Having crested a hill, "Lattakoo came all at once into view, lying in a valley between hills, stretching about three or four miles from E. to W." (John Campbell: 180). As they descended the hill toward "the African city," they were "rather surprised that no person was to be seen in any direction, except two or three boys," and the absence of an overt presence continued even as the wagons wound their way between the houses, save for a lone man who "made signs" for them to follow him. The stillness continued, "as if the town had been forsaken of its inhabitants," until they came "opposite to the King's house," at which point they "were conducted" into the chief's circular court (*kgotla*), "a square,[5] formed by bushes and branches of trees laid one above another, in which," for this space was not forsaken, "several hundreds of people assembled together, and a number of tall men with spears, draw[n] up in military order on the north side of the square." And then the silence was broken! "In a few minutes the square was filled with men, women, and children, who poured in from all quarters, to the number of a thousand or more. The noise from so many tongues, bawling with all their might, was rather confounding, after being so long accustomed to the stillness of the wilderness" (ibid.: 180). All was not as it had seemed to the missionaries!

Signed upon and conducted into a dense symbolic space (Comaroff 1985: 54–60; Landau 1995: xvii, 20–25) not of their choosing or understanding, Campbell and company become the objects of Tswana scrutiny. With a feeling of being "completely in their power," Campbell confesses in a letter written some days later, "They narrowly inspected us, made

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[5] The "square" would have been round (see references cited above); that it is described as "a square" demonstrates both some recognition of the political space into which they had been brought and the desire to re-vision what they found (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 182–83; 1997: 287–93).

remarks upon us, and without ceremony touched us."[6] The Tlhaping "see," "feasting their eyes," they "examine," and they "touch."[7] Having been momentarily "separated" and having "lost sight of each in the crowd," the missionaries soon gathered themselves, though they "could hardly find out each other," and devised "a scheme, which after a while answered our purpose; we drew up the waggons in the form of a square, and placed our tent in the centre" (John Campbell: 180). Being led into a round "square" not of their own making, they construct a square that they (only partially) control.[8] From this site of some control they plot and execute "the real object" of their visit, which they explain in the following terms to the nine local leaders, representing Chief Mothibi in his absence from the city, who gather in their tent "a little after sun-set" (ibid.: 181).

> Through three interpreters, viz. in the Dutch, Coranna, and Bootchuana languages, I informed them that I had come from a remote country, beyond the sun, where the true God, who made all things, was known—that the people of that country had long ago sent some of their brethren to Klaar Water, and other parts of Africa, to tell them many things which they did not know, in order to do them good, and make them better and happier—that having heard since I came into these parts, to see how our friends were going on, that the Matchappees were a people friendly to strangers, I had come to Lattakoo to inquire if they were willing to receive teachers—that if they were willing, then teachers should be sent to live among them. (Ibid.: 182).

The leadership reply that they cannot/may not give an answer until Mothibi returns, after which there is an informal, it would appear, exchange of gifts: tobacco and milk (ibid.: 182). A number of observations, interactions, and transactions are recorded over the next few days as Campbell (impatiently) waits for the arrival of Mothibi. But in the evening of the 27th, when the uncle of the chief, "Munaneets," comes to their tent with an interpreter, there was "much interesting conversation," during which the Bible is explicitly designated in discourse. Two days earlier, on the first morning after their arrival (25 June) Campbell and his party hold worship in their kitchen—a house in "the square, used by them for some public purpose" but assigned to the missionaries as their kitchen—which is attended by "some of the people" (ibid.: 181). It is hard

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6 John Campbell, Klaarwater, 26 July 1813 [CWM. Africa. South Africa. Incoming correspondence. Box 5-2-D].

7 Ibid.

8 Campbell never quite copes with the way in which local people, mainly the leadership, just walk into "our tent" (John Campbell: 181, 184).

to imagine the Bible not being present and not being used as either an unopened sacred object or an opened text during this time of worship. Similarly, during worship in the afternoon of the 27th, at which "About forty of the men sat round us very quietly during the whole time" (ibid.: 191), the Bible too must have been present. But the first explicit reference to the Bible in this narrative, where it is separated out from the normal practice and patterns of the missionaries, is in the discussion with the chief's uncle.

In their constant quest for information and opportunities to provide information, scrutinizing as they are scrutinized, the missionaries "enquired of him their reason for practising circumcision" (ibid.). It is not clear what prompts this question, but quite possibly what appear to be a series of ritual activities each day involving women, perhaps the initiation of young women (ibid.: 185–86, 188, 191, 194–95; Comaroff 1985: 114–18), may, by association, have generated a question to do with male initiation (see Comaroff 1985: 85–115). The chief's uncle replies that "it came to them from father to son." Sensing, no doubt, an opportunity "to instruct," the missionaries persevere, asking "Do you not know why your fathers did it?" To which the chief's uncle and his companions answer, "No." Immediately the missionaries respond, Campbell reports, saying: "We told them that *our book* informed us how it began in the world, and gave them the names of Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac, as the first persons who were circumcised" (ibid.: 191–92, emphasis added).

The illocutionary intent of this information is clearly to establish an earlier, and therefore superior, claim of origin. Origins were becoming increasingly important to the emerging modernity of missionary England, and so the Bible was seen as particularly potent, containing as it did "the Origin" of all origins.[9] However, what impressed the chief's uncle and his colleagues was not this claim to an all-encompassing origin but the naming of the missionaries' ancestors, Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac, which is why "This appeared to them very interesting information, and they all tried to repeat the names we had mentioned, over and over again, looking to us for correction, if they pronounced any of them wrong. Munaneets, and the others who joined the company, appeared anxious to have them fixed on their memories" (ibid.: 192). The book—the Bible—appeared, from the perspective of the Tlhaping, to contain the names of the missionary ancestors, and perhaps, if they picked up the intent of the

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9 The English were, of course, about to have their views on origins thoroughly shaken and stirred by an English explorer and naturalist, Charles Darwin (1963); the beginnings of this paradigm shift (in the Kuhnian sense) can be detected in the missionary message (see below).

missionaries' proclamation, the ancestors of their ancestors. This was, indeed, interesting, and potentially powerful, information. The missionary attempt to subsume the Tlhaping's oral account of circumcision under their textual, biblical account may have marked the Bible, in the eyes of the Tlhaping, as a site worth watching, and perhaps even occupying; or it may have demonstrated the dangers of this strange object of power.

Impressed, but probably also a little perplexed by this intense interest in the names of Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac, the missionaries persist, asking next "if they knew any thing of the origin of mankind, or when they came." The people reply, "saying they came from some country beyond them, pointing to the N. which is the direction in which Judea lies.[10] That two men came out of the water; the one rich, having plenty of cattle, the other poor, having only dogs. One lived by oxen, the other by hunting. One of them fell, and the mark of his foot is on a rock to this day." With no apparent attempt to probe this African origin story in more detail, but with a clear indication of its (and their circumcision story's) inadequacy, the missionaries immediately "endeavoured to explain to them how knowledge, conveyed by means of books, was more certain than that conveyed by memory from father to son" (ibid.). The chief's uncle, "Munaneets," is quick to realize the source of this "knowledge," knowing long before Michel Foucault theorized it, the articulations of power and knowledge on each other,[11] for he asks "if they should be

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10 This is a puzzling reference; could it mean biblical Judea, and if so, might the missionaries have here "seen" confirmed the origin of all peoples, even these "sons of Ham," from this distant land in and of the Bible? That Campbell thought in such categories is evident from a letter to Mr. David Langton dated 27 July 1813, in which Campbell apologizes for not having written sooner, saying that he has "written much from this land of Ham." Campbell then goes on to present him with an account of his visit to Dithakong (John Campbell, Klaarwater, 27 July 1813 [CWM. Africa. South Africa. Incoming correspondence. Box 5-2-D]).

11 I use the terms *power* and *knowledge* in close conjunction here and the term *power/knowledge* a little later deliberately, realizing the hard-working hyphen (in the French *pouvoir-savoir*) and slash (in the English) bear a heavy load of theory. Accepting Foucault's invitation "to see what we can make of" his fragments of analysis (1980: 79), my use is intended to allude to this theory, especially to the fragmentary nature of Foucault's theory (79), to the implicit contrast of "idle knowledge" (79) with local forms of knowledge and criticism, subjugated knowledges (81–82), and their emergence as sites of contestation and struggle over against "the tyranny of globalising discourses" (83) and their appropriation as genealogies that wage war on the effects of power of dominant discourses (84), whether scientific (Foucault's focus) or other forms of dominating discourse. In particular, my use picks up on Foucault's analysis of the articulation of each on the other, namely, that "the exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information," that the "exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power," and that it "is not possible for power to be exercise without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power" (52).

taught to understand books." The use of the modal "should" perhaps conveys, as it often does in English, a sense of asking permission; Campbell's reconstruction and representation of this dialogue (via three other languages!) may accurately capture a concern on the part of the chief's uncle that, given the evident power of the book(s), so openly exhibited by the missionaries, they the Tlhaping may not be granted access to the book(s).[12] That the missionaries and the chief's representatives have in mind "the Book," in particular, is clear from missionaries' answer: "We answered they would; and when the person we should send (provided Mateebe consented), had learned their language, he would change the Bible from our language into theirs" (ibid.).

One of the local participants was clearly worried about this portent of outside instruction, including perhaps the presence of the Bible as a new (outside) site and source of power/knowledge, though this is less clear, for during the conversation, Campbell reports, "an old man who is averse to our sending teachers, asked how we made candles, pointing to that which was on our table. He also said," Campbell continues, "he did not need instruction from any one, for the dice [*bola*?] which hung from his neck informed him of every thing which happened at a distance; and added, if they were to attend to instructions, they would have no time to hunt or to do any thing" (ibid.: 193). This fascinating transaction, representing as it is a complex exchange, seems to suggest a profound grasp by this "old man"—possibly an *ngaka* (an indigenous doctor/diviner/ healer), given that he is wearing a "dice," one of the elements among the bones, shells, and other materials making up the *ditaola* used in divining[13]—of the dangerousness of nonindigenous instruction. The context of the discussion, and the centrality of the Bible in the discussion, if not also centrally positioned on the table in the meeting space,[14] makes it likely that he assumes that the missionaries book(s) are their equivalent of his "dice." My conjecture finds some support from Robert Moffat's account of an incident among the same people in which he writes, "My books puzzled them." "They asked if they were my 'Bola,' prognosticating dice" (Moffat: 384; see Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 345).

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12 William J. Burchell's earlier stay among the Tlhaping, and his more secretive employment of text generally and the Bible specifically, may have contributed to this question (see Burchell: 391).

13 I am grateful to Mogapi Motsomaesi and Mantso "Smadz" Matsepe for elucidating elements of this encounter. For a more detailed discussion of the "bones" used by Tswana diviners and of Tswana divination, see Schapera and Comaroff: 57–58.

14 Some days later during a visit from Mothibi's senior wife, Mmahutu, the Bible is clearly positioned on the table in the missionaries' tent.

Whether his aversion to "instruction" is an aversion to both the source (the Book) and the interpreter (the missionaries) of the source is not clear, but is a question that sits at the center of my study. We must not assume that this "old man" shares the assumption of the missionaries that the book and its instruction are one and the same thing. His concern that "if they were to attend to instructions, they would have no time to hunt or to do any thing" may reflect rumors of the time schedules and modes of production of established mission-station church and school routines to the south (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997),[15] in which case the focus of his aversion is the instruction regime rather than the source of power/knowledge itself, the Book.

I pause here, though this is only the opening movement in the Tlhaping's transactions with the Bible during Campbell's stay. Already, however, there is plenty that points to potentially emerging forms of appropriation and interpretation among the Tlhaping people. Biblical interpretation and appropriation among this southern African people begins with the Bible as *bola,* an object of power, whether for good or ill, with the Tlhaping uncertain as to which of these will predominate. In the next scene, which we cannot take up here for it is time to move to the present, the Tlhaping probe the missionary hold on the Bible, wondering perhaps just who controls the Bible—just who throws the bones.

Ordinary African "Readers" of the Bible

Just what does it mean to say, as the anecdote says, that "black people have the Bible"? Most commentators on this anecdote simply assume that blacks do have the Bible (T. Mofokeng: 34; Mosala 1987: 194; Dube 2000: 3, 16–21), but not Maluleke.

In the present the Bible is central to the lived faith of ordinary African Christians. While some Black and African theologians may wish this was not the case, even those who raise real questions about the Bible in Africa—Takatso Mofokeng, Itumeleng Mosala, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Musa Dube, and Maluleke—acknowledge that the Bible is a significant resource for African Christians. Maluleke himself acknowledges this quite specifically, pointing to the many ways in which the Bible is a resource in Africa: as the most widely translated book it makes a contribution to the construction of indigenous grammars and texts; it is a basic

15 This entire volume of the Comaroff's might be described as a detailed study of such routines and regimes.

textbook in primary and higher education; literacy has been closely tied to Bible reading and memorization; it is the

> most accessible basic vernacular literature text, a storybook, a compilation of novels and short stories, a book of prose and poetry, a book of spiritual devotion (i.e. the "Word of God") as well as a "science" book that "explains" the origins of all creatures. In some parts of Africa, the dead are buried with the Bible on their chests, and the Bible is buried into the concrete foundations on which new houses are to be built. In many African Independent Churches it is the physical contact between the sick and the Bible that is believed to hasten healing. (Maluleke 2000: 91–92)

However, cautions Maluleke, though many African biblical scholars and theologians are locked into a biblical hermeneutics that makes "exaggerated connections between the Bible and African heritage," "on the whole, and in practice, [ordinary] African Christians are far more innovative and subversive in their appropriation of the Bible than they appear" (Maluleke 1997a: 14–15). While they "may mouth the Bible-is-equal-to-the-Word-of-God formula, they are actually creatively pragmatic and selective in their use of the Bible so that the Bible may enhance rather than frustrate their life struggles" (Maluleke 1996: 13). The task before us, then, is "not only to develop creative Biblical hermeneutic methods, but also to observe and analyse the manner in which African Christians 'read' and view the Bible" (Maluleke 1997a: 15).

Clearly African Christians relate to the Bible in various ways, but, and this is Maluleke's point (and mine), we must recognize and analyze the diverse ways in which ordinary Africans *actually engage with the Bible.* This, I would argue, is a task for *African* biblical scholarship, and taking up this task is what has led me down the converging paths of this essay. As Maluleke has suggested, there are two related components to the task: to analyze how ordinary Africans actually *read* and *view* the Bible.

There is as yet no precision as to the interpretative and appropriative techniques and strategies or interests of ordinary African "readers" of the Bible, and this is despite the accurate claim by Teresa Okure that African biblical scholarship "is inclusive of scholars and nonscholars" (Okure: 77).[16] My own work in this area is an attempt to tackle the first of these components—how ordinary Africans actually read/interpret the Bible[17]—

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16 I discuss this claim at length elsewhere (West 1999).

17 For an account of the former, and the inseparability of these two dimensions among ordinary African users of the Bible, see Adamo 1999; 2000.

but succeeds only in sketching the domain of their interpretative interests in rather broad strokes (West 1999: 79–107). I play with and explore a range of metaphors in an attempt to grasp some of the dimensions of ordinary Africans' engagement with the biblical text, arguing that ordinary African "readers" of the Bible "re-member" a "dis-membered" Bible, by means of "guerilla exegesis" (Hendricks), by reading with the nose (Oliveria), by a process of "engraf(ph)ting" (Fulkerson: 152), by "a looseness, even a playfulness" toward text (Wimbush 1991: 88–89), and, I would add, by "conjuring" with text (T. H. Smith). All of this is wonderfully suggestive and provides a host of impulses for digging deeper and becoming more precise. And these impulses must be attended to, if I and others are going to do justice to the reading resources of our students and the local communities of the poor and marginalized with whom we in the Institute for the Study of the Bible read the Bible (West 2000).

Fortunately, emerging work in the interface between orality and literacy and my own preliminary analysis of "indigenous" forms of biblical interpretation presently found among the Tlhaping have yielded a finer, though still tentative, account of what might be called a "neotraditional" hermeneutic. This phrase, which I have borrowed, together with a whole series of yet-to-be-developed associations, from Christopher Ballentine's fine study of early South African jazz (Ballantine: 26), denotes the derivation of early forms of South African jazz, *marabi,* from traditional African musics. Fundamental to indigenous African musics is "a cyclic harmonic pattern." This rhythmic repetition of harmonic patterns, provided traditionally by a drum or, in an urban situation, "a player shaking a tin filled with small stones," formed the "root progression" on top of which melodies (and sometimes lyrics) were superimposed. These melodies too followed a cyclical form, with

> cyclical repetitions of one melody or melodic fragment yielding eventually, perhaps, to a similar treatment of another melody or fragment, and perhaps then still others, each melody possibly from a different source. And in this manner "you played with no stop—you could play for an hour-and-a-half without stopping." (Ballantine: 26–27)

The cited quotation within my quotation, from an interview conducted by Ballantine with *marabi* musician Edward Sililo, captures another aspect of this neotraditional form of interpretation: its duration. That *marabi* goes on and on is an element of its form, but duration is not an end in itself, which becomes clear when we listen to Wilson Silgee's recollection of what it was like to attend a *marabi* party:

> Marabi: that was the environment! It was either organ but mostly piano. You get there, you pay your ten cents. You get your scale [drinking

> vessel] of whatever concoction there is, then you dance. It used to start Friday night right through Sunday evening. You get tired, you go home, go and sleep, come back again: bob a time, each time you get in. The piano and with the audience making a lot of noise. Trying to make some theme out of what is playing. (cited in Ballantine: 28–29)

There is almost an element of contestation in this description; *marabi* is a communal attempt to make some common sense or theme "out of what is playing." *Marabi* is a communal and cyclical (and, perhaps, contested) act of interpretation.

While *marabi* was the interpretative form (of music) of secular social occasions (Ballantine: 26), particularly in black urban areas, its form mirrors the interpretation of the Bible in countless African churches of all and every denomination and in both rural and urban contexts. *Marabi* as music and *marabi* as a metaphor for biblical interpretation are examples of those "purposive act[s] of reconstruction" in which indigenous peoples have "created a middle ground between a displaced 'traditional' order and a modern world whose vitality was both elusive and estranging," by "the repositioning of signs in sequences of practice," a *bricolage,* that promises "to subvert the divisive structures of colonial society, returning to the displaced a tangible identity and the power to impose coherence upon a disarticulated world" (Comaroff 1985: 253–54).[18]

But my use of *marabi* to designate forms of indigenous African biblical interpretation is more than a metaphor; the hermeneutic moves that characterize *marabi* are found in other neoindigenous forms. In his attempt at "developing a new critical methodology for oral texts," Duncan Brown tracks, historically and hermeneutically, the traces of a "cyclical construction" that, in his words, "appears to be bound up with African ontology which (in contrast to the linear, progressive, and teleological colonial-Christian model) emphasizes the circularity of religious, social and historical life" (Brown 1998: 107). Brown finds this cyclical patterning in a diverse range of African oral forms: in the songs and stories of the /Xam "Bushmen" (66), in the formal public praise-poems (*izibongi*) of the Zulu praise poets (*izimbongi;* 107), in the hymns of Christian prophet Isaiah Shembe and the Church of the Nazarites (150), in the Black Consciousness poetry of Soweto poet Ingoapele Madingoane (184),

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18 The work of Jean Comaroff cited here is profoundly relevant to my study, particularly as the subjects of her study are near neighbors of the Thlaping, the Tshidi. Her study provides a remarkable analysis of how this people appropriate aspects of Protestant orthodoxy and European colonialism, which are then "resituated within practices that promise to redirect their flow back to the impoverished, thus healing their afflictions" (Comaroff 1985: 253).

and in the political resistance poetry of Mzwakhe Mbuli and Alfred Qabula (229).

Brown's description of the hymns of Isaiah Shembe is remarkable for its resonance with my discussion of *marabi* above. Brown reminds us of the work of Bengt Sundkler in which Sundkler stresses that "The hymn is not first of all a versified statement about certain religious facts. The hymn is sacred rhythm. And the rhythm is naturally accentuated by the swinging to and fro of their bodies, by loud hand-clapping and by beating the drum" (Sundkler 1961: 196, cited in Brown 1998: 150).

> The start of the dance is signalled by the beating of the ughubu drum [the Nazarite drum which has a central place in their worship], and the hymn leader then begins to sing. She or he may begin at any point in the hymn, offering a lead which is taken up by the group of singers. Rhythm takes precedence over textual fidelity to linear structure (beginning-middle-end), and the singing of a four-verse hymn may last for up to an hour, with the leader taking the group through the hymn many times, not always in the same verse order, and ending at any point in the hymn. (Brown 1998: 150)

Moving from description into analysis, via the work of Carol Muller (1994: 136), Brown underlines Muller's argument that

> Shembe's "reinsertion of the traditional concept of cyclicity into the articulation of ritual time and space" has political implications in the colonial context of the hymns' generation and performance: "Isaiah's insistence on this trope most powerfully reflected the symbolic contest between colonized and colonizer, whose organization of time and space was symbolized in the principle of linearity." (Brown 1998: 150, citing Muller 1994: 136)

The particular usefulness of Brown's study is that it does have a historical dimension. Both the songs and stories of the /Xam and the praise-poems of indigenous southern African peoples predate the missionaries and colonizers. Though not always as detailed as I would like, Brown's hermeneutic analysis is suggestive for my own project, identifying as he does a communal cyclical interpretative process, founded on a rhythmic form (whether of drumming, dancing, singing, or praying). The emerging "text" is constructed on cycles of repetition which participants may contribute to by making "cuts back to a prior series through an explicit repetition of elements which have gone before" (Brown 1998: 107–8).

We find just such a communal and cyclical process of interpretation of the Bible in almost every southern African church. To date the only analysis of this interpretative phenomenon is found in the work of Musa

Dube (2000: 190–92; 1996: 119–21). She characterizes this form of interpretation, what she calls a *Semoya* (of the Spirit) reading, as a communal and participatory mode of interpretation through the use of songs, dramatized narration, and repetition (Dube 2000: 190). The text, decided on for the occasion by an individual, once read, becomes the property of the group. All, both young and old, women and men, clergy and laity "are free to stand up and expound on the text in their own understanding." While they are doing this, listeners may "contribute to the interpretation by occasionally interrupting with a song that expounds on the theme of the passage," or the "interpreter herself/himself can pause and begin a song that expresses the meaning of the passage" (ibid.). Listeners, through song, participate in the interpretation of the passage. Such interruption-interpretations are particularly significant, suggests Dube, because of the form that exposition tends to take.

The predominant form of exposition is largely grounded on the assumption that "a story well told is a story well interpreted."

> This indigenous method of interpretation capitalizes on recalling, narrating, and dramatizing the story without explicitly defining what it means. Instead, the meaning is articulated by graphically bringing the story to life through a dramatic narration. (ibid.)

Even those who lack a particular gift for dramatic representation recall and retell the story, "almost verbatim." In every case, whether the performance is dramatic or pedantic, the nuances of interpretation are "to be read in the interjected songs and the repeated phrases" (ibid.). Particular songs, interjected in particular places and particular repetitions constitute and contribute to the communal interpretation, contending for meaning for as long as it takes around the cyclical axis of preaching.

Wilson Silgee's account of *marabi* above could be an account of a revival service or an all-night vigil, with a few modifications. Exchange the Spirit for the alcoholic concoction and the Bible for the piano, and you have ordinary Africans "trying to make some theme out of what is playing/preaching." Although I cannot elaborate here, my own unfinished fieldwork among the Tlhaping, made possible by the respectful and resourceful fieldwork of Gopolang Moloabi (himself a member of the BaTlhaping), resonates strongly with the interpretative patterns discerned by others. Moloabi's transcripts of four revival/vigil-type services amply demonstrate and document the interpretative devices detected in the work of those discussed above. Again, more detailed analysis is required, but that awaits another essay. However, enough has been done to indicate that there are interdisciplinary resources for taking up Maluleke's task of analyzing how ordinary Africans actually *read* and *view* the Bible.

Conclusion

So, while much more detailed work needs to be done, and while connections need to be established between the Bible as *bola* and the emergence of *marabi*-like interpretative moves, there is clear evidence of indigenous hermeneutic forms, forged by a host of factors and constituted by many others. The task of further analysis is to enquire more deeply in order to understand "the order of things" that we find here. If we laugh at these indigenous forms, then it must be with the laughter of Foucault as he encounters the passage in Borges from a certain Chinese encyclopedia—with wonderment (Foucault 1973: xv). For though as strange and wonderful as the taxonomy of animals in the Chinese encyclopedia,[19] there is an order here (and there in the encyclopedia—and this is Foucault's point). We may have yet to understand it, but that does not detract from its reality, an interpretative resource coursing through the veins of black theological students and the countless "readers" of the Bible in local churches and communities. Moreover, this form of discourse belongs in our formal biblical studies scholarship and pedagogy. It is inappropriate to say as Elizabeth Moore does, supportive though she is of hearing the voices of ordinary African interpreters of the Bible, of the interpretative strategies of ordinary African "readers" of the Bible that we (presumably Western biblical scholars and theologians) should "recognize 'ordinary' believers' ability and authority as creative theologians, without requiring them to prove that their insights are somehow 'biblical'" (Moore). We may throw our bones differently, but that does not mean the interpretations of some are more "biblical" than those of (African) others![20]

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19 For those who are unfamiliar with this passage, here it is: "This passage," writes Foucault, "quotes 'a certain Chinese encyclopaedia' in which it is written that 'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) suckling pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies'" (Foucault 1973: xv).

20 This formulation is more insightful than I had imagined, for, as Mark Brett pointed out to me, Jonathan Z. Smith has argued that "the relationship between canon and hermeneute is perhaps best illustrated by practices of divination: the genius of the diviner lies in matching the relatively fixed 'canon' of divinatory objects to the client's particular situation" (Brett, 2000:64, J. Z. Smith).

THE CLOSED TEXT AND THE HEAVENLY TELEPHONE: THE ROLE OF THE *BRICOLEUR* IN ORAL MEDIATION OF SACRED TEXT IN THE CASE OF GEORGE KHAMBULE AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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Introduction

While the role of the missionaries in the furtherance of colonial conquest and domination has been widely explored by historians and anthropologists, the specific role of the Bible in the process has not, I believe, been given sufficient weight. For instance, it is hardly mentioned by the Comaroffs (1991; 1997) in their monumental series, *Of Revelation and Revolution,* on the "long conversation" between the Batswana and the missionaries. Yet it is above all the Bible that accounts for the massive penetration of African culture by the missions. Whether it is seen as poison, as sacred icon, or digested and represented as oracle (Draper 2002a), it is recognized as a potent numinous agent. It relates in part to the advent of text among an oral people, but it is not as text per se but as sacred text that we must look at it. Jeff Opland (1999c) has explored negative perceptions of the book in Xhosa *izibongo* but does not sufficiently, in my mind, explore this distinction between text and sacred text. It is also interesting to note that the evidence he brings forward comes either from the very early period of the colonial encounter or the relatively late period: Nontsizi Mgqwetho in the 1920s and David Yali-Manisi in the 1970s. But in these cases the Bible is now inextricably interwoven with the poems, so that biblical imagery is clearly evident in Mgqwetho's poems and Yali-Manisi in his diatribe against colonialism baldly states, "We embraced the Bible, welcomed the Word." There is no rejection of the status of the Bible as the "Word of God," in other words, as "sacred text," which remains an unchallenged assumption of the "long conversation" right up until the critique of theologians such as Itumaleng Mosala and Takatso Mofokeng. Even they have had little success in their campaign to dethrone the sacred text from its privileged position.

My interest in this essay is the ambivalent role of a sacred text in a situation of colonial domination. On the one hand, it is utilized consciously or unconsciously as an agent of control by the colonial authorities and their surrogates. The missionaries and the mission-educated African elite maintain an ideological control of the sacred text, determining what constitutes legitimate interpretation and what constitutes "heresy." On the other hand, resistance to colonial domination seems increasingly to have taken the form of resistance, not so much to the Bible, as to the ideological control of the Bible. The early prophets of Zion can be seen as *bricoleurs* exploring counterstrategies of appropriation. It often takes the form of a hunt for a hermeneutical key to unlock the dynamic potential of the controlled text as living Word. Always the assumption is that the Word mediates power and that discovering the key unleashes divine power. The power of the liberated orally mediated Word then provides a counterpoint to colonial control through the textual word.

I need to point out that my inclusion of the mission-educated African elite along with the missionaries as the agents of hegemony is not intended to be derogatory but analytical. The first leaders of the South African Native Congress and its successor, the African National Congress, were mission-educated people. It is the nature of hegemony that it prevents certain questions being asked. Its propositions seem axiomatic, and those who challenge them seem to be dangerous deviants. Many of the influential Congress members were staunch upholders of the church and its doctrine and its interpretation of the Bible, all agents of Western hegemony. It was the outsiders, the experimenters and the dangerous visionaries, who pushed the boundaries of the meaning of the Christian religious experience and the hermeneutical potential of the Bible in an African cultural context. After the political agenda of the Congress movement has, in some limited sense at least, been achieved, it has become increasingly clear that the cultural question has not been adequately addressed. It is not possible to resurrect a pure precolonial form of African Traditional Religion, even if its parameters could really be established. Many black South Africans, who view their cultural heritage with a measure of ambivalence, do not necessarily desire its restoration without reservation. Not if it means a return to village life without Western amenities and cultural artifacts, to a premonetary system based on cattle. Yet it is also not acceptable for Africans in the modern world simply to accept Western hegemony and unqualified cultural globalization. It seems to me that this is the moment to explore again the experiments of the cultural *bricoleurs* of the African colonial context and their own role in the "long conversation" that has been underplayed.

My own interest as a student of the New Testament, which prompted this move to explore the kind of *bricolage* represented by Khambule in the

Zulu context, is also to work cross-culturally and to see how a very similar dilemma played itself out in the Israelite[1] experience of Roman imperialism in the first century C.E. I see the emergence of the rabbis after the collapse of the independent Judean temple state in 70 C.E. as the emergence of a compliant native scribal elite, based on their control of sacred text. This does not insult their integrity or genuine desire to work for the survival of their people and culture, any more than that of the African mission-educated elite. History bears out the success of the rabbis in holding on to the law of their ancestors and building a new identity on that basis. But those who were outlawed and expelled from the synagogues probably made the more creative cultural responses to the national catastrophe of the Jewish people. I view the author of John's Gospel as one of those cultural *bricoleurs* who tried to find a new way forward in the time of cultural collapse and imperial hegemony, one that would preserve the religio-cultural heritage of the Israelite people, while exploring the potential of the new insights brought by their conquerors. His hermeneutical key of the Logos enabled him to resist the idea of a closed, hegemonic text and to clear the way to tracing a continuity of revelatory experience from the Israelite cultural past into the present.

The value of this kind of cross-cultural anthropological approach, for me at least, is that it opens up new hermeneutical potential for the sacred text of the majority of South Africans. It also validates in some ways the cultural explorations of some early African responses to the Christian mission. Neither Judaism nor Christianity has ever been a monolithic or unified movement, and tracing the struggles within the text may be a contribution to breaking down the hegemonies that legitimate our colonial and postcolonial experiences of domination.

Introversionist Responses to Colonial Domination

While I am not working only with this model of religion and social change, the work of Bryan Wilson (1973) in *Magic and the Millennium: A Sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest among Tribal and Third-World Peoples* has proved a helpful starting point. He attempts to differentiate indigenous responses to colonialism and provide some pointers to the relationship between historical context and the particular responses of specific indigenous movements. Of course, the danger

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[1] The use of the term "Jewish" is, I believe incorrect and misleading in first-century Palestine, since it refers primarily to the region, "Judea" and its inhabitants or rulers, except for outsiders, who called inhabitants of all the regions "Judeans" indiscriminately (Draper 2002b).

of this is that the categories can become reified and determine the interpretation of the data. The categories are only heuristic devices and nothing more. There are no pure examples of such "ideal types" (Wilson 1982: 113).

The particular "sectarian" response to colonialism, which is relevant to the present study, is the "introversionist" response. Wilson's description of this type fits George Khambule and the Gospel of John very well, and it is hoped that the juxtaposition of these two examples will throw light on each other.

Profile of an Introversionist Religious Movement[2]

The main outlines of the profile of an introversionist religious movement according to Wilson may be drawn as follows:

1. *It succeeds failed millenarian revolutionary movements* in colonized societies, not directly as in a millenarian movement becoming an introversionist one, but in the broad context of a response of such societies to the new situation (1973: 384, 441).[3]

2. *It reconstructs central elements of nativist traditions into a new synthesis.*[4] Features of the old precolonial society are refigured into a new and stable configuration that nevertheless is experienced as authentically indigenous:

> It might, at times, be regarded as an over-institutionalization, a rigidification, not only of religious practices, beliefs, and procedures, but also of the entire pattern of life of a new community. What is rigidified is not, in fact, the actual pattern of the past, although it may be represented as such (or as a perfected pattern of social order). It is always a reconstruction, but in acquiring special sanctity, such a reconstructed way of life may be perpetuated, and even fossilized, as a total social system. (384)[5]

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2 This section has been adapted from an earlier article (Draper 1997: 263–88). The term "sect" is not intended to carry a derogatory sense in Wilson's usage, but it seems difficult to use it without prejudice, so this essay will substitute the term "religious movement" for "sect."

3 As K. Burridge has expressed it, "Religious activities will change when the assumptions about the nature of power, and hence the rules which govern its use and control, can no longer guarantee the truth of things" (7, cf. 13).

4 "Nativist" is used here in the sense given by R. Linton (415–21), namely, the conscious, organized attempt to revive or perpetuate particular aspects of its culture in the face of an overwhelming threat from a culture other than its own.

5 "What really happens in all nativistic movements is that certain current or remembered elements of culture are selected for emphasis and given symbolic value. The more distinctive such elements are with respect to other cultures with which the society is in contact, the greater their potential value as symbols of the society's unique character. The main considerations involved in this selective process seem to be those of distinctiveness and of

3. *It is essentially corporate and communal rather than individualistic* (385), but it tends to have a low organizational structure, relying rather on existing local structures (448).

4. *It withdraws from the world to create the new community,* has none of the urgency of the revolutionist movement (or "sect," in Wilson's terminology), and is resigned to the situation of the collapse of the old order (387).

5. *It is simultaneously conservative and accommodationist,* paradoxically at one and the same time an attempt to preserve a distinctive nativistic way of life and "always an accommodation to the dominant culture, a compromise between life-patterns drawn from both the aboriginal past and the culture of the invader, but its cultural meaning to the faithful is of a separate native way" (401). In other words, the introversionist religious movement does not try to restore the lost past but to "*preserve the faithful* in a native and separate way of life. Tacitly they endorse the surrender of those cultural traits that have had to be abandoned" (410). Values from the dominant culture are absorbed unconsciously: "The Peyote cult might inculcate the moral ideas of white society, but it did not do so in general adjustment to it, as would a conversionist faith, but rather in separation from it. The internalization of the new values was a guarantee not of conscious accommodation, but rather of the integrity of sustained independence" (448).[6]

6. *It is only a minority of the native population who accept* the new religious way, so that they are likely to be persecuted both by those who cling to the lost order and those who wish to accommodate to the victors and share in the new dominant society (412). Persecution is likely to lead to the evolution of a new formal community (438–39).

7. In modern Western categories, *the response is essentially supernaturalist rather than political and economic* (412). Yet this division is not satisfactory since such societies do not make the distinction but conceive of reality as a single order.[7]

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the practicability of reviving or perpetuating the element under current conditions" (Linton: 416). This is true for revolutionary millenarian movements as well as introversionist ones. See Wallace (278); Talmon (420); Burridge (47–48, 91–92). African Initiated Churches, such as Shembe's AmaNazaretha and Lekganyane's Zion Christian Church, have the potential to become rigidified representations of such idealized cultural representations of the past.

6 In his analysis of the same phenomenon, though with more emphasis on the role of the new prophetic initiator, Burridge argues that the prophet digs into tradition for the initial sources of his or her new authority and "provides new channels for tradition and fills out these new channels with new assumptions, new rules" drawn in part from the cultural idiom of the oppressive colonial order to create a new synthesis (47–48, 91–92). This aspect of introversionist movements is described in this essay in terms of *bricolage.*

7 "There is no impermeable membrane between the 'mundane' and the 'magical', for the primitive is not a dualist, operating with a model of 'two worlds', nor a schizophrenic

8. *Voluntarism will increasingly be stressed, even if at the same time the sect claims to speak for the "native society" as a whole* (385, 412–13). While in theory the new movement is open to all members of the native society, religious affiliation becomes primary, and this generates increasing conflict in that society.

9. *It withdraws into a private realm, but the concern is nevertheless power, associated with rituals, dreams, and visions* that mediate power through inspirationalism (414–17).[8] It is a power associated with direct experience of the divine. It may stress (secret) knowledge, but it is experiential knowledge that is at stake:

> The Peyotist obtains power from the sacramental Peyote.... The Indian's means of achieving knowledge is superior to that of the white man. The latter learns from books merely what other people have to say; the former learns from Peyote by direct experience.... The vision provides a direct experience (visual, auditory, or a combination of both) of God or some intermediary spirit. (Slotkin: 298–99)

10. *Introversionist movements are characterized by almost immediate schisms* (423–25). There are many simultaneous, competing attempts to produce the new synthesis. To some extent the ideas that result in a new introversionist movement may be "in the air" rather than the creations of an individual religious genius, so that several manifestations of the same phenomena may appear independently of each other.[9]

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operating with different principles 'empirical and mystical' in different situations.... The spirits are at work in our real world and equally incontrovertibly, men go to the spirit world and return" (Worsley: xxvii–xxviii). It is for this reason that the use of the word "irrational" to describe such introversionist responses is inappropriate, as Jarvie has rightly argued (1–31; cf. Worsley: lxv–lxix), although Bryan Wilson himself consciously adopts a more Eurocentric usage (1973: 346).

8 Here I agree with K. Burridge that, "All religions are concerned with power.... Religions, let us say, are concerned with the systematic ordering of different kinds of power, particularly those seen as significantly beneficial or dangerous" (5). In Israelite religion, the temple became the central medium of power and hence is of central importance in any reordering of power in a new religious synthesis.

9 Burridge provides an important analysis of the process by which the gradual emergence of a pool of communal wisdom leads first to tentative overt testing of new solutions and finally to the emergence of a sect(s) (106–16). What Max Weber describes as "charisma" can also be ascribed to the way in which the prophetic initiator articulates the inarticulate groundswell of emergent values in the social group. As Peter Worsley notes, "Charisma, therefore, sociologically viewed is a social relationship, not an attribute of individual personality or a mystical quality" (xii–xiv). James Scott similarly ascribes charisma to the power generated when the hidden transcript of the oppressed is first openly expressed in a breach of the public transcript of the ruling elite, although the way may have been prepared by a myriad of small probing explorations by others (1990: 221–23).

11. The new movement tends to reflect and promote intertribalism (423).[10]

Summarizing his findings concerning the Peyote cult of North American tribes, Wilson argues:

> Peyotism appears, then to have been both an agency in which some, much simplified and adjusted, expression of Indian native identity was maintained, and, simultaneously, to have been a cultural innovation. It was easier than all the old ceremonies for which neither the objective environmental conditions nor the social structural base remained. It was still the expression of something distinctively Indian, which its mythology emphasized, and a ritual that accommodated some elements of the religious preoccupations of that past. Understandably, it appeared first as the solvent of the Indian way of life, and subsequently as the preservative for it. (430)

For the Native American tribes, the peyoti button and its rituals replace the medicine bundles as central locii of power for the community. The orientation of dreams and visions to war and buffalo hunting is transformed into mystical experience. The alienation resulting from social collapse under the pressure American colonialism is ameliorated in the ritual process by the experience of fundamental new community (Turner 1969: 94–165; 1974: 231–71).

The Role of the Bricoleur

The period after the collapse of overt traditionalist indigenous resistance to colonialism, which marks the failure of what Wilson terms "revolutionist sects," which might also be called millenarianist rebellion, is a period marked by experimentation with new cultural combinations. Here the model of John and Jean Comaroff (1991) is helpful. In their model of a continuing ("long") cultural conversation between the missionaries and their African dialogue partners, they develop a theory of hegemony, ideology, and gaps. Hegemony represents the taken-for-granted worldview shared by a community, which controls its behavior unseen, whereas ideology represents the conscious attempt to defend that worldview and its power relations when it is threatened by contradictions or by contact with alternative worldviews (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 25). Where ideology fails to legitimate hegemony, gaps

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10 Worsley also remarks that "The main effect of the millenarian cult is to overcome these divisions and to weld previously hostile and separate groups together into a new unity" (228).

appear at the edges that provide space for play ("liminal space," utilizing the terminology of Victor Turner!) and innovation, and these in turn allow for the emergence of resistance and reconstruction. They argue that it is from these gaps "which emanate the poetics of history, the innovative impulses of the bricoleur and the organic intellectual, the novel imagery called upon to bear the content of symbolic struggles" (ibid.: 29).

Ritual performance in manipulating sacred objects, such as biblical texts, in sacred space, allows a species of play or experimentation off stage excluded from the control of empire. The ritual of the new religious movement provides a space for what James Scott (1990) terms the "hidden transcript" of the dominated, as an "art of resistance." Turner describes it in somewhat different, but compatible, terms:

> The essence of liminality is to be found in its release from normal constraints, making possible the deconstruction of the "uninteresting" constructions of common sense, the "meaningfulness of ordinary life," discussed by phenomenological sociologists, into cultural units which may then be reconstructed in novel ways, some of them bizarre to the point of monstrosity (from the actors' own "emic" perspective). Liminality is the domain of the "interesting," or of "uncommon sense. (Turner 1985: 160)

This experimentation is not arbitrary, since the ritual draws its power and coherence from a traditional and accepted symbolic system. Even the most seemingly eccentric *bricolage* in colonial Africa has an inner logic deriving from fundamental associations with the social universe of the primary culture of the indigenous people. Nevertheless, there is an aspect of play in the liminal stage of ritual that allows for the emergence of the kind of creative cultural *bricolage* seen in early Christianity and in many African Initiated Churches today.

Cross-cultural studies of millenarian movements (and their successors in introversionist "sects") show the importance of this work of *bricolage* in reconstructing identity after colonial intrusions. The material for the new construct does not come *ex nihilo* but from elements of the collapsing indigenous worldview and the dominating worldview of the conquerors. Always the quest is for power perceived to lie in these elements, whether fully understood or not. The attempt is made to turn the culture of the conquerors against them and to preserve the indigenous culture from further collapse (cf. Ranger 1992a: 211–62). It represents a fight for survival. Any attempt to understand the thought and praxis of introversionist responses such as that of George Khambule and the Gospel of John needs to take into account this work of *bricolage*, both in terms of the power symbols borrowed from the dominant culture and the precise way those symbols would appear in the indigenous culture.

When this is done, the devices of the heavenly telephone and the Logos take on a more nuanced and profound significance.

In our particular study, the dominant cultures of the Roman imperial order in Palestine after the failed Jewish War of Independence of 68–70 C.E. and the colonial order in Natal after the disaster of the Bambatha Rebellion in 1906 both utilized sacred text in the service of ideology to enforce a new hegemony. The Word of God fixed in text and under the control of the agents of the dominant order closed down debate and resistance. Khambula and John are *bricoleurs* availing themselves of symbols of power in the contending cultures to break open the text and mediate that power in new oral forms not under the control of empire.

One of the questions raised by this model of *bricolage* is the extent to which the players were knowing or unknowing. The model of the Comaroffs emphasizes the constraints of hegemony and the "inchoate" nature of the cultural experimentation undertaken by the indigenous *bricoleurs,* whereas work by James Scott has explored the same kind of phenomena in terms of deliberate contestation. He describes more or less continuous resistance against domination by the subjugated taking place "off stage" in the "hidden transcript" and being consciously inserted "on stage" into the "public transcript" controlled by the ruling elite to the extent that it is safe to do so (1990). Perhaps it is best to leave this question open as we explore our two case studies.

George Khambule (1882–1949)

Sundkler's Account

Information about George Khambule, a Zulu prophet from Nqutu in Zululand, is only available in print through the work of Bengt Sundkler, who describes him twice. In *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (1962 [orig. 1948]) he appears as "X" to John Mtanti as "Y." In *Zulu Zion* (1976) both men appear under their own names[11] and occupy a whole chapter of the work. However, there is an unpublished corpus of over six hundred pages of handwritten Zulu diaries, liturgies, and hymns in the Sundkler Archvies at the University of Uppsala, which I have transcribed and translated, with the help of my graduate students.[12] Sundkler is initially

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11 I use the new Zulu orthography, "Khambule," since this is how the name is written today, although it appears in all the archival material and indeed in his own writing as Kambule.

12 Research at the Sundkler Archives was funded by the National Research Foundation of South Africa through a grant from the Indigenous Knowledge Systems Special Focus Programme, for which I would like to express my gratitude. The IKS grant continues to fund the

interested in Khambule, along with Shembe, as a model for his controversial thesis of the "Black Christ":

> Shembe and X are undoubtedly among the most prominent of Zulu prophets. In their life-stories there are certain traits which are characteristic of most genuine Zulu prophets, minor or major. Both are regarded by their followers as semi-divine beings. The Prophet becomes the Black Christ, and it is because of this that he acquires his tremendous influence over his followers. (Sundkler 1961: 114; cf. 238–94)

In his later work on Zulu and Swathi prophets, Sundkler has, it appears, adopted the language of his Swedish colleague in the psychology of religion, Hjalmar Sundén, *Die Religion und die Rollen* (1966), to speak of Khambule's work as "role play":

> Act Jesus! Play Jesus! In the land of the Philistines, in a land of sorrow and contempt and hatred for the Black man, play Jesus and act that part, "until *Kalvani*," his word for that strange English name Calvary.... All depends on your attitude. You must enter this drama fully, in order to get anything out of it. You must accept the rules of the drama. From the outside, all this may well appear as outrageous claims and pretensions. But, we beg you, enter the circle; take part in the drama; become one of the actors. Play Jesus! (Sundkler 1976: 155)

Sundkler promises to take up this theme later in the book but does not in fact do so. This is surely a problem, since it seems to me to distort his interpretation of Khambule considerably. There is a sense in which, as we have argued, *bricolage* is a form of play or experimentation. Yet Sundén's conception emphasizes the fundamental continuity in such "role play" with the underlying *indigenous* culture of the participants. This is "serious" play, play that engages the fundamental sources of numinous experience available to the player, that seeks to mediate a conscious or unconscious fusion of sources of power in the subjugated and subjugating cultures. It is an act of resistance.

In his earlier work, commenting on an observation of an encounter at the same stream between an *isangoma* and her adherents and a Zionist prophet and his church, he observes:

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project of transcribing and translating, as well as fieldwork interviewing surviving members of the Khambule church. I would also like to acknowledge the fine work of my graduate assistants, Mduduzi Brian Mkhize, Muziwenhlanhla Khawulani Ntuli, and Khumbulane Brian Maseko, for their help with the transcribing and translation of Khambule's work and fieldwork recordings.

> The distance between Elliot the Zionist prophet and Dlakude the witch-doctor, was not great. Anybody could jump over that stream—and many have done so. Elliot was not in a position to understand Christianity in any other way. He had to interpret it in the only terms he knew: the pattern of Zulu religion, the pattern of the *isangoma* system. (Sundkler 1961: 240).

Yet in his later account of Khambule there is no reference to the *isangoma* system or to the *amadlozi* or to the significance of the symbols and rituals of Khambule in Zulu cultural terms. This is a misrepresentation both of Khambule and of Sundén's theory, it seems to me. Sundén stresses the "taken for granted" nature of our cultural perceptions, which determine what we see and experience. Roles are embedded within the religio-cultural system of each member of a community, latent until brought to the fore by a crisis:

> Both one's self and other people are necessarily perceived within the frame of reference provided by the role system of one's society.... The cultural equipment of a human being consists for a large part of roles, which one has taken over from one's environment. To this also belongs one's share in the religious tradition of society and this, for its part, may essentially consist of roles in the psychological sense. (Sundén 1966: 10, my translation)

It is a misnomer to speak, as Sundkler does, of Khambule: "Isolated at Telezini from White civilization and Black culture alike, he established his own world of values" (1971: 159). No one is ever "isolated from their culture" in this way. George Khambule's story needs to be told in terms of the total role system of his society. "Playing Jesus," in the sense that would have in a modern Western context, just does not seem to be a possibility in Nqutu at the beginning of the twentieth century. It leads to misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the religious genius of Khambule and his cultural play as a *bricoleur* experimenting with the numinous sources of power in a colonial context. This is all the more surprising in that Sundkler, in his earlier work, has an excellent section on the parallels between the Zulu prophet and the *isangoma* in which he clearly states, "The basic pattern from which Zulu Zionism is copied is that of diviner and witch-finder activities rather than that of the historic Christian Church" (1961: 242). The only point of contention might be the assumption of a monolithic "historic Christian Church"! The culture of primary socialization can never be completely erased by the adoption of a new culture or "alternation of social universe" (Berger and Luckmann). The basic building blocks of the identity reconstruction will still be drawn from the prior social universe. This earlier perspective of Sundkler's, that

"prophesying is divining, in a supposedly Christian form" (1961: 256), seems to be more fruitful than his language of role play, if we remove the "supposedly," as if all forms of Christianity are not culturally determined. For Khambule does indeed understand himself as having been possessed by Jesus in some way in 1927 (having previously been possessed by Moses):

> *Priest:* One of his seven angels… [came to say to him], "I am coming to tell St. Nazar that God (*uTixo*) Jesus has come upon you." The angel repeated twice swearing and said, "I have come upon St. Nazar. Today you would be going home if you had told all the people why you are here. All the witnesses agreed, those of the Cross and the elders said, "Indeed it is so," and Substatno (Fakazi) said, "Yes it is so."
> *Congregation:* If you conquer I will grant you to sit on the throne of Kingship, like myself. I conquered and I sit together with my Father on the throne. Amen. (*Liturgy* 3:6–7).

The best way of describing this is not "role play" but that of the possession of a medium or shaman by a spirit of power. Khambule has become the earthly incarnation or manifestation of Jesus, speaking with his authority, healing with his power, ruling with his authority.

Khambule as Zulu Cultural Revisionist or Bricoleur

The history of George Khambule's church is far richer than one might gather from Sundkler, who seems determined to portray him as "barely literate" (1976: 124) and something of a chauvinist. Behind the scenes lie three fat wallets of archival material (NTS 7715 51/333 1926–1930; JUS 423 4/335/26; NAB NQU1 2/7/2, which were very hard to trace) containing frenetic correspondence between various magistrates at Nqutu, various Chief Native Commissioners in Pietermaritzburg, the Secretary for Native Affairs, and the Justice Department stretching between 1924 and 1932. The train of events surrounding Khambule's removal led, it seems, to the removal first of the Magistrate B. Goldschmidt (who was moved within six months of the Khambule affair) and then of the highly respected Magistrate F. W. Ahrend (though he never admits it in his rather self-congratulatory autobiography, *From Bench to Bench* [1948]) and the suspension, reinstatement, and suspension again of Chief Isaac Molife, faction fighting in Molife's jurisdiction, and endless hearings in the tribal court for contempt of the chief's authority. The Khambule affair played into the deep rift in the Nqutu area between the descendants of the Sotho mercenary Chief Hlubi and his followers. Hlubi was awarded control of the area for his support of the British in the Zulu War of 1879, and the indigenous Zulu people. This is worthy of a study in its own right.

George Khambule was the son of an *induna* in the Nqutu area who, according to an informant (Mnguni-Ndebele, interview, 10 August 2001; though there is no confirmation of the overseas travel!), had traveled overseas and lived in Pietermaritzburg for a while before settling in Nqutu. The Khambule family were prominent *amakholwa* members (Christian converts) and prominent landowners in Natal. Indeed, when there was a short-lived attempt to constitute them formally as a tribe under the tribal law system in 1875, the person appointed chief of the *amakholwa* was Jobe Khambule (Wright and Hamilton: 44). An important player in Pietermaritzburg political affairs at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth was Enos Khambule (whose exact relationship to George Khambule I have not been able to determine, though his father was, according to George's grandson Norman Mkhishwa Khambule a catechist and prominent Methodist in Pietermaritzburg). George's father probably left Pietermaritzburg because he entered into a polygamous marriage and found it necessary to move to the sanctuary of tribal Zululand. George received extensive lands from his father as his share of the *ifa*, which he developed considerably with a stone house, mealie fields, and wattle plantations. It is likely that this favored status was partially responsible for a family quarrel and his removal, as the hearings indicate that his brother Mangaliso (by a different mother) orchestrated the campaign against him ("my brother Mangoliso is at the bottom of it" [7]), while his other brother Jeremiah supported him and continued his church at Telezini after his removal, whereas his cousin Frank, the *induna* under Chief Isaac Molife, remained somewhat neutral in Khambule's presence, only complaining about the quarrels George's church occasioned without providing concrete charges (*Enquiry* 27/4/26 held in response to the CNC's Minute 12/1924, in 51/333):

> He talks too much during his absence but as soon as he arrives he never speaks with him and hides the books and he never says what they say. He is a snake really because you will hear him saying everything during his absence but as soon as he comes, he meets him and simply speaks nicely to him. (*Diary* 1:57b)

George Khambule went to the mines, where he became a mine captain.

Most important and significant, he applied in 1918 for the status of an Exempted Native in terms of the Natal Franchise Law of 1865, as amended (for an account of this legislation, see Welsh: 51–66, 235–49).[13]

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13 Mrs. Mnguni-Ndebele and others interviewed thought that most of the Khambule family were *zemptid*, and, while I have not come across direct evidence for this, it is likely

This was duly granted in 1919. The status of Exempted Native removed the person from the jurisdiction of tribal law under the chieftain system. It was granted only after stringent examination by the magistrate to determine the competence of the applicant in terms of reading and writing English and Zulu, monogamy, absence of criminal record, property, and "character": "whether the petitioner is of good character and whether he is capable of exercising and understanding the ordinary duties of civilised life" (Welsh: 249). The exemption of Africans in the tribal areas from tribal law posed a particular problem, as was foreseen already in 1903 by the magistrate at Ndwedwe (247), but it was only with George Khambule that the full implications emerged for the first time. Clearly Khambule belonged to the emerging elite of educated Christian Africans seeking to accommodate to Western culture at the time he received his call to be a prophet. His family were Methodists, but perhaps loosely attached. His brother Mangaliso states, "I am a Wesleyan—I am not a Christian but I attend the Wesleyan Service. I was married by [Anglican] Archdeacon Johnson" (*Enquiry* 1926: 4). George Khambule is very conscious of his special status and uses it to good effect, as Chief Isaac Molife complains, "When I summons George Khambule to appear before me he refuses to come, saying that he is an exempted native and has European Status. I want him to be separated from me if he has European Status or is a white man as he says, then I want him to live with the European—. I am black and it is better for him to live with Europeans" (*Enquiry* 1926: 2).

All of this puts Khambule in a quite different position to prophets such as Shembe, who remained more firmly in the oral world of Zulu culture, who claimed that he never was taught to read and write but learned to read the Bible "by a miracle." For Khambule, the hegemonic force of the Bible as text under the control of the missionaries would have been felt strongly. So too would the marginality of his own social position as an Exempted Native. Welsh describes the bitterness and alienation of these Africans who "are intended to remain, like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth, having neither the privileges of a Kafir nor the rights of an Englishman" (Rev. William Adams in Welsh: 238–39). It was out of this class that the Natal African Congress and many leaders of breakaway independent churches emerged (247).

Khambule had a religious experience on 18 October 1918, while in Johannesburg when he fell ill, went to a hospital, and had a dream in

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that many were. Members of the Khambule family were large landowners, and exempted status was necessary to own land.

which he died and was about to be thrown into hell. Looking down onto the earth, he saw his dead girlfriend in hell and his own stinking corpse. His dead sister, Agnes or Agrineth (Zulu pronunciation of the name) cried out to God on his behalf, and he entered into heaven in the company of an angel (later identified by the name Itengirrah). He was then sent back to earth to "save its inhabitants," as this is told later in liturgical form:

> In 1918 on the 18th of the 10th month, it was dark in Khambule. Today St. Itengirrah is present. The gates were opened. One of us entered through the twelve gates, because he was worthy. Itengirrah defeated death. (*Diary* 2:85; *Liturgy* 3:76)

It is not clear exactly what was the relationship between Khambule and John Mtanti, his brother-in-law (according to Richard Cutts, Sundkler Field Notes, 16 November 1959) and an Anglican schoolteacher turned prophet. Mtanti had a vision of heaven in 1919. He saw heaven in great detail and the divine throne in which "the One seated on the throne was like a stone" (Rev 4:3). Mtanti sent a letter to Khambule in Johannesburg, urging him to come home and evangelize. He returned to Telezini in Nqutu and worked closely with Mtanti at first. They worked initially within the Methodist Church of the Khambule family but soon found the constraints too irksome. The racism in the structures and practices of the Methodist Church in South Africa had already led to the emergence of several breakaway African Initiated Churches, for instance, in the cases of Nehemiah Tile (1884), Mangena Mokone (1892), and James Mata Dwane (1895). Similar sentiments led to the establishment of Khambule's own church, whose foundation he dates to 1923 (Constitution in Sundkler 1976: 325, photocopy in the Sundkler Archives, but I have not managed to trace it in the Natal Government Archives; the detail is confirmed by his successor as leader of the church, Archbishop Mordochai Sikakane, in his unsuccessful application for registration of 12 June 1961, Department of Cooperation and Development File P.120/4/1146).

Indicative is Khambule's rejection of the eucharist and baptism in his Constitution, both controlled by white superintendents and forbidden to be celebrated by black ministers and a bone of contention in the breakaway of Mokone (see Madise: 268). Khambule's rejection of white control of the Methodist Church, as a motivation for his breakaway, is confirmed by Bishop Mhlungu's account:

> Again in the Methodist Conference in Enville, Khambule said that the sacrament was a white man's thing, and that people were eating a white people's faeces and drinking their urine. For this reason there is no sacrament in his church. Instead there is a Passover about every ten

> years.... They were not immersed in water.... There is no confirmation, just as there is no sacrament. This is the white people's custom. (Mhlungu: 22–24)

Khambule built an impressive stone and thatch church on his own property and ran a school to teach children to read and write and interpret the Bible (*Enquiry* 27/4/26). He held frequent night meetings and three-day vigils on the mountain ("Service is held on the mountain, where they last three days and three nights without food. Here the followers of Christ are spiritual" [Constitution in Sundkler 1971: 324]) and gained a sizable band of followers, especially among the women of the neighborhood. His church attracted hostility from some of his neighbors, especially from husbands of the women members, as we shall see. By the time of his removal to Dannhauser he reckoned his adherents to be 1,046 (Sundkler 1971: 325), and his successor in 1961 reckoned them to be 3,047 (though, probably more realistically, only 675 stated in his certificate of registration by the Ministers Evangelist Churches Association of South Africa in 1968 [DCD File P.120/4/1146], though this was after a period of rapid decline following the death of Khambule himself).

Many of the main points of Khambule's church arrangements are familiar ones found in other prophetic movements: no alcohol, no pork, no "native herbs," exorcisms, and healings. What is unusual is the density of scriptural reference to justify each point of the Constitution (forty-nine chapter and verse citations in a document of a few pages). The Constitution begins with the resounding affirmation that "This church of Christ is based, raised on the foundation of the Bible," and here the Bible is clearly understood as text. Also unusual is the insistence that the prophet and his church do not make any financial demands: "Does not get reward or bear any purse for silver or gold. But the only reward she longs for is the 'Heavenly Reward.'" This is confirmed in the magisterial *Review* of Khambule's case. Khambule himself states, "No money comes to the church. It is maintained on gifts and food—I get no salary—I am given free will gifts of food—The uniforms are bought by the adherents of the church. I maintain myself by selling cattle and working," and church member Macaleni Mhlungu states, "I do not support the church in a monetary way—George Khambule sells his cattle and ploughs his lands and is thus able to keep the church going" (27/4/26, page 8). In a colonial setting where the colonial government and the colonial church were trying to tie the indigenous people into the monetary wage system, this is an important aspect of Khambule's protest. He himself had been a wage earner on the mines, but here rejects the system explicitly.

The next striking thing about Khambule's church is that the prophet rejects sexual activity for the pastor and draws strict purity rules around menstruation and childbirth:

> A pastor must not sleep with a woman. And a menstruating woman must not bring food to a pastor. If she has given birth to a child, she is polluted for a time and her husband must not sleep with her, in the case of the birth of a boy for seven days, if it is a girl, for a month. She must be purified by the prayers of the pastor. And as this will tax the strength of the pastor, he must not eat pork or drink beer nor taste medicines.

Instead of physical gratification, Khambule institutes a "Heavenly Marriage, the Marriage of the Lamb" (*umshado weUndlu*), which is the way of entering the church for male and female alike, based on Rev 19. The church members enter the *isigodlo* of Jesus as king (Draper 2002c). In Zulu culture, only the Zulu king has an *isigodlo,* so that the relevance of this move, relative to the destruction of the Zulu kingdom by the British in the Zulu War of 1879 and the Bambatha Rebellion of 1906 is obvious. George Khambule is the *umgcinisango* or gatekeeper of the heavenly Jerusalem come to earth, another technical term of Zulu monarchy, since the *umgcinisango* is the one who controls access to the royal *umuzi* or homestead. His followers left their homes and joined Khambule in the new Jerusalem at Telezini, the *isigodlo* of Jesus. Khambule intended this literally, and the "brides of Christ" wore wedding robes and a specially manufactured ring. Sexual relations were forbidden for church members, since they were married to Jesus. Khambule himself ceased to sleep with his wife, Ma Sikakane, who became "like a sister" and remained a member of the church until her death. He had two very close young women associates as his "General's Clack of the Lord and Prosecuter" and "General of the Lord" (Fakazi Mhlungu and Joanna Ndlovu). They seem to have acted in some way as mediums for the presence of the angels in the community (Draper 2002c). Mhlungu became an unofficial wife (though not de jure), although sexual activity was forbidden in the community, and the birth of a child born of his "spiritual" marriage to Fakazi Mhlungu caused a crisis for the community (Mhlungu: 46–49). The child was described by the community as "conceived by the Holy Spirit." She was named "Ntombimhlope" or "pure/white girl" and also Emmanuel ("God with us"). Emmanuel was later to take over the assets of the movement and sell its land on the death of Archbishop Usikhonyana Mardechai Sikhakhane (1897–1970), before the rest of Khambule's family could get there, effectively ending the church and causing a still unresolved feud.

Abstention from pork, alcohol, and sex is, of course, natural in Zulu culture for a prophet, as it stands in cultural continuity with the practice of the *isangoma* on "active duty" (Berglund 1989: 304–44). However, these rules also led to great conflict within the community. The women converts were continually away from home in prayer at his church, would not eat the food of the *umuzi,* and would not sleep with their husbands,

whom they regarded as "unclean." At the trial of Khambule, Mbambo Mncube complains of the absence of his five children and wives: "They refuse to return to my kraal and say 'I am a mere *photo* and am unclean and impure.' They will not eat the food I give them. They are at George Khambule's kraal today—they are not at my kraal.... You have taken my family to form your *isigodlo* and you marry them to your church. I know that my son and daughter form you *isigodlo* as they never come to my kraal" (*Enquiry:* 1). On cross-examination by Khambule, he does, however, acknowledge that the "wife" concerned is not his wife but "my bride elect." None of the accusations that Khambule was conducting himself improperly with young girls and women are substantiated in the *Enquiry,* as Chief Isaac admits under cross-examination by Khambule:

> I do not personally know they sleep at your kraal—I have only been informed that they do so. I do not know if you go to the kraals and call the people to you, but, I know they go to your kraal—I do not know your teachings and doctrine, but complaints have been many that the women call their husbands "unclean and impure" and refuse to eat the food given to them. You did come to see the Magistrate of Nqutu at my request. You told me that you were preaching the doctrine of the Bible. I did not question you about your religious teachings, only your doings. I understand that the women and children go to you to become Christians. I have never attended your church so do not know your preachings. (*Enquiry:* 2)

Khambule's brother Jeremiah also attests his innocence, "It is alleged that the women and girls sleep at George Khambule's kraal, but this is not so. I can swear no women and girls of these complained about ... sleep at George Khambule's kraal. The women and girls return to their respective kraals after service" (*Enquiry:* 8). Mrs. Mnguni-Ndebele, one of the young girls of the *isigodlo,* spoke of the people "leaving their families" to join the *isigodlo* and of their work in farming Khambule's land to support themselves. She also quotes Khambule's response to the chief's complaint: "Come and take your children. I never come to your homes to take children but they come of their own accord" (Interview 10/8/2001). She herself ran away from the *isigodlo* because she did not want to enter the marriage of the Lamb (as did many other children of the movement, e.g., Khambule's own son Godfrey and daughter Mbusisiwe) but to get married in the normal way, but her love and admiration for the prophet shone through even in her old age.

Nevertheless, the complaint of Chief Isaac Molife was sufficient to lead the magistrate to conclude that Khambule was "a disturbing element on the minds of the uneducated natives" and to give credence to the stories of abductions. He rejects the story of a conspiracy against Khambule

as "nonsense." He believes that all this will lead to violence and recommends the removal of Khambule for carrying on a religion in a Native Reserve without permission. He also recommends that no compensation be paid. However, trouble and, for that matter, violence at a later stage was to follow the expulsion anyway. In addition, the Chief Native Commissioner for Natal quickly found out that they had acted *ultra vires* in the matter. Khambule's Exempted Native status meant that he could not simply be expelled and that the powers of the CNC in the case could not be used for religious matters. He is issued with a rather stinging letter from the Secretary for Native affairs on 7 August 1926:

> It seems clear that George Khambule is not residing on sufferance in Reserve No. 18, Nqutu District, as stated by the Magistrate in the annexure to your Minute of the 11th February last. According to your Minute of the 16th March he was born there and from the evidence accompanying your communication under reply it would seem that he obtained a kraal site in the Reserve several years ago and that his rights of residence are as well established as those of any other Native in the Reserve.

Moreover, the powers of the CNC under the Zululand Trust Deed were not to be used "for dealing with political or other offences" and "Even if legal powers were available for the removal of this man, the Department does not consider that the exercise of such powers would be justified merely by reason of the unorthodoxy of Khambule's religious views or teachings" (NTS 7715, 51/333).

Worse was to follow, as Khambule's right to compensation was confirmed and the state paid out 250 Pounds to him, which the CNC and the local magistrate were expected to recover from the chief. Chief Isaac collected money but refused to hand any over. Why exactly is not clear, but it may have had something to do with an incident spoken of by all the people of Telezini. The chief persuaded the magistrate to demolish the fine stone church building Khambule had erected, but when the demolisher swung his hammer against the altar in the church the hammer bounced back on his head and killed him outright. The chief was understandably terrified and ordered that the demolition cease. The church remains in that half-up, half-down state today. Perhaps the chief was afraid to collect money after this or to have any further part in the expulsion. This precipitated a lengthy tussle of wills to which I referred earlier, but which, interesting as it is, goes beyond the scope of this essay. It opened up the divide between the Sotho people who had been settled there by the British as a reward for serving with them in the Anglo-Zulu War and the indigenous Zulu people who were now placed under the so-called "AmaHlubi," the Sotho followers of Chief Hlubi. Faction fighting surfaced regularly in the following period, and always George Khambule

is mentioned as the "cause" of the problem, or alternatively Chief Molife's handling of the "Khambule affair," depending on the adherence of the speaker (see the correspondence notes to several hearings held by Magistrate F. W. Ahrens NQ1 2/7/2). Macaleni Mhlungu continues to assert in 1930 that "We know your difference with Khambule—and also money— . . . Khambule is the cause of all this trouble. . . . Isaac is to blame for Khambule's affair." Molife used the controversy to gain the removal of the Magistrate Ahrens, who had appealed over the head of the CNC to the Secretary for Native Affairs, and then Molife proceeded to remove all the Christian, mission-educated *indunas* and replace them with traditionalists, according to Ahrens's successor as magistrate, Lee. It is ironic also that the removal of George Khambule meant that the complainants lost their wives and children altogether, since these followed Khambule to his new holy place (complaint lodged by Mlambo Mncube 25/8/26 in NTS 7715 51/333).

It is also ironic that this failed act of imperial control confirmed the status of Khambule as a heavenly intermediary. The troubles of the magistrates in the courts were seen as victories brought about through angelic intervention. The trial of Khambule on 27 April 1926 was celebrated liturgically by the community for the next fifty years as a cosmic victory of the "people of the reeds" (Zulus) over the Philistines (Whites and their Amahlubi allies):

> The Prayer of the Church of the Holy Ones of April 1926
> for Victory over the Philistines at Nqutu Babylon.
> Through St. Itengirrah.
>
> *Priest:*
> A) It happened that on April 27, in the year 1926, when St. Nazar [Khambule] was appearing before the ruler of the Philistines [the magistrate], it was 7 am. Soon after that St. Itengirrah [Khambule's ruling angel] came, wearing clothes for the trial with his retinue, coming to accompany St. Nazar appearing before the Philistines.
> *Congregation:* It was the seventh hour. D.C.
> *Priest:*
> B) At 8 am, St. Nazar and Substatno [Fakazi Mhlungu] joined together with those of the Ark and St. Itengirrah. And the Gatekeeper (*Umgcinisango*) [Khambule] was dressed in the clothes that he was dressed in the day he fought Satan. At that time, he gave to every one according to their works, which means he had a scale [of justice].
> *Congregation:* It was said, "He gave everyone their due." D.C.
> *Priest:*
> C) 9 am For the third time it was said that the Bearer of the Ark is the witness to these things. It is right that she goes out to see what has happened. At that time it was still 9 am. She saw the heaven opened. The sun was silent like a folded scroll. Three clouds were quiet like a folded

scroll. And the moon was quiet. It was the fulfilment of what was written, that even the sun will be silent. Why? This is God.
Congregation: What was said was fulfilled. D.C.
Priest:
D) 10 am The word came again and said, "What do you make of this ringing bell? Who is ringing it because even in heaven it keeps ringing, since it will ring till tomorrow here?" Now the Philistines [the magistrate and Chief Molife and their retinue] are entering one by one. The first Philistine put his foot inside, all the angels turned their back, and when all the Philistines entered, they lost their minds. They quarrelled with each other. This will happen forever.
Congregation: The Philistines quarrelled with each other. D.C.
Priest:
E) 11 am All this happened before St. Nazar could say anything. At 11 am there was wind/spirit. There was no more peace. It was asked from St. Itengirrah and from the Bearer of the Ark, "What do you say? There is no more peace." Those of the reed (Zulus) were given two hours and were looking to the East, some to the North, some to the South, and some to the West. They kept saying, "There will be peace only in your Word, God." They were clothed in blue clothes with black stoles [the uniform of the *isigodlo*].
Congregation: Those of the reed said, "But let there be peace, Lord."
Priest:
F) 12 pm Then at 12 pm the cherubim entered, whom no one could stop. They were with their leader St. Gabriel. They sang and said, "Be opened you eternal gates, so that the King of Glory may enter." They said, "Give them power, God." At that moment the form of St. Nazar was like the sun. His voice was like the sound of rushing waters. Then the ruler of Babylon went mad and he surrendered.
Congregation: It became the sound of rushing waters.
Priest:
G) The second time it was said when St. Nazar was in the hospital. There came an angel and said, "You see because your sister came to tell you about these clothes, that they are not needed." Because of his anger, St. Nazar became mad and said something he did not understand himself. He did not know who that angel was. He kept on wondering about the identity of that angel, what his name might be. On 27th at 9 am, we heard that it was St. Itengirrah. He was shining like the sun, therefore he could not possibly have known him because he assumed the form of God (*wayetate isimo sobuTixo*).
Congregation: He threw away those clothes. (*Liturgy* 3:86–91; *Diary* 2:7–12)

Stones, Heaven and Angels

Central to Khambule's prophetic understanding and practice were stones and angels. Stones do not have a major role to play in Zulu ritual

and culture but do have important connections. In the first place, stones from the mountain, which have been struck by lightning, *isitende sezulu,* are believed to have a particular power through their association with the *inyoni yezulu,* the lightning bird, being perceived as its eggs (Berglund 1976: 38–42). They would be "hot" and associated with what is black or red. They might be used to bury a man, with one at the head, middle, and foot of the body to ward off *umthakathi* (witchcraft) or at four points in the shape of a cross at an *umuzi* or household for the same purposes or to ward off lightning (interviews with Bishop N. F. Mbele and N. Ntshangase; cf. Berglund 1976: 52: "Black, being associated with the dark thunder-clouds, is adopted to drive off the 'darkness of the thing that the sky is planning to do' "). A stone from the river would have a quite different connotation, being "cool" and smooth. Medicines for healing and prophecy are associated with shaded pools, often with white clay. As far as I can determine, Khambule used stones of both kinds. In his house at Spookmill, abandoned ritual stones included white quartz and other kinds of river stones, but the stones used as "weapons" or *izikhali,* for healing and prophecy, were only black/brown volcanic rocks from eTelezini. Mrs. Mnguni-Ndebele knew only of the river stones used for healing, taken from the Ntelezi River by the prophet after an extensive search, though she did not deny that another kind of stone might have been used by the prophet in his sacred inner sanctuary for the heavenly telephone. No one was allowed into the sanctuary except the prophet (and his medium, Fakazi Mhlungu, according to her). Ma Magubane was still using one of these black/brown stones in her healing and divining at Toleni when I visited her (interview, 5 April). The initiated members of the *isigodlo,* who were deemed worthy, were each given their own stone after searching and prayer, which was used in the *isibedlela* or "hospital." It was brown and shiny rather than white (as one might expect in terms of healing properties) and was not necessarily round and was also described as a "holy weapon" (*isikhali incwele*). This suggests that the primary cultural association is that of defense against *umthakathi* or evil attacks by witches, since such *izikhali* are well-established defenses against witches. They often consist of crossed sticks placed at the entrance to the *umuzi* but may also consist of stones (as in the photograph of the equipment of an *isangoma* taken in Durban in 1936 by Lynn Acutt in the Killie Campbell Collection, D7/156, page 70).

These stones from the Ntelezi River have a healing power even by association, since the Telezi is an aloe-like plant whose bulb is used for healing purposes. It is likely from what I have observed at the house at Spookmill that it is the brown volcanic stones that were regarded as stones of power and that the others were "accompanying ones" (as Axel-Ivar Berglund has suggested occurs among diviners' bones; I have

preserved examples of these stones from Spookmill and keep them among the other data on Khambule in my records).

According to Sundkler, it was John Mtanti who first had the vision of God as a stone (*wafana netshe*), based on Rev 4:3, "And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald." George Khambule, however, developed this in a radically new direction. In his Constitution, he describes the stone of Dan 2:44–46 as the church's "foundation stone," the stone that shatters the idol of empire: "It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever." This stone is also the place of the "new covenant" that God has made, which will draw all the nations in. The impact of and resistance to the colonial experience for the Zulu people is present in this sublimated form. A report from Bishop N. F. Mbele indicates that the initial vision of the prophet in Johannesburg included a vision of a stone struck by lightning on a mountaintop, which the prophet was told to go and find. When he returned to his home, he found the stone exactly as in his dream. Thus the prophecy itself may well be associated with the "hot" mountain stone rather than the "cool" river stone of healing. However, the use of the dark brown volcanic stones taken from the river makes this ambivalent. Perhaps this ambivalence contributes to their power: that is, they are black and rough yet come from the river when such stones should be smooth and white.

In the colonial environment, where the Bible as undisputed "sacred text" or Word of God was controlled by the colonialists and used to establish a hegemony, the "stone" and "stones" became the hermeneutical key to unlock the text and set it free: "That is the Bible [of those] who denied the Bible which was written by angel's tongues and nobody can read it except St. Nazar who was given it" (Sundkler 1976: 131). The stones are seen in every part of the text of the Bible and interpreted accordingly:

> Excitedly searching the Scriptures, they were to discover, to their amazement, that the Book of Life was full of stones; from the days of Abraham and Jacob of old to those of Jesus and his Adversary Satan, in the desert, until the shining pages of that last book in the Bible: a mysterious stretch of stones. To them the bread of Life was stones. (Ibid.)

The God of Heaven reveals himself through stones. But the same hermeneutical key for unlocking the sacred text also provides an extension and continuity of revelation into the work of the prophet himself. A key breakthrough for the prophet came when he discovered the Morning Star of God, seemingly on 4 June 1925, the stone promised in Rev 2:28: "He who conquers and who keeps my works unto the end, I will give him power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as

when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received power from my Father; and I will give him the morning star." This stone is associated with the white stone in Rev 2:17, which has "a new name written" on it "which no one knows except him who receives it."

George Khambule's new name is "Nazar," and the stone also unlocks the biblical text, since it is now the means of prophecy. It is no accident that the diaries of his prophecies begin at this point in 1925. He writes in his diary:

> 4th June 1925
> The word which comes from Jehovah. Nazar D.O.J.R.S. The whole Bible was written to you. So is it, because you say you died and rose again. No, it is not so! It is because all these Scriptures were written to you. Many prophets died and rose again with me. No, they rose but all their power is in you. Why? Because of these scriptures which were written to you in heaven. "It is not because of your faith," says St. Gabriel who stands before God.
>
> The word of Jehovah *uTixo.* In this Scripture all the nations shall be saved through you. It was written, "Will and kingship, Lord Jesus Holy!" Part of the house was written, S.I.J.N.H.D.A.I.E.E. All the power of the prophets was written to you. These are their names, beginning from St. Samuel up to the forefathers. OA! They ascended with a fiery chariot E.E. They all have been written upon you. That is why Jehovah said, "All the nations shall bow under you, the black and the white." It is so. Miracles will follow those who believe. "Rewards are received now," say St. Gabriel and St. Michael. "They shall come down, the great ones of heaven," says Jehovah. They all came here. This was written to you, not because of faith. No! It is these scriptures that are in you. (*Diary* 1:3a–4b)

What this means is that the closed, silent, textual Bible is now unlocked and spoken in prophecy again, "What was hidden shall now be exposed in the open" (*Diary* 1:7b). Sundkler is right to argue that "the message of the stones provided a secret code whereby the prophet could open the Bible and interpret it to the group" (1976: 144). New prophecies are added to the old and have the same authority.

However, Sundkler makes heavy weather of what is the central "hermeneutical move," namely, the appropriation of the symbol of the "heavenly telephone," interpreting it in terms of "cargo cult." Certainly the analogy with new religious movements in response to colonial domination provides the correct location, but "cargo" is misleading, in the sense that that particular language relates to a waiting for some promise of bounty. It belongs with millenarianism proper. Khambule's is not a millenarian movement but a postmillenarian movement. The heavenly telephone or "wire" seems to me to be clearly a reference to the "morning star," the stone of prophecy on which Khambule read the letters that we

used to divine the prophecies. It is closer to the telegraph wire, which sends out individual letters that are deciphered into a message, than to the modern telephone, where one hears the voice of the speaker. At the time when Khambule left Johannesburg to return to Nqutu, 1919, the telephone was still battling to establish itself (only beginning its expansion in 1896 in the U.S.A.), whereas the telegraph had been in use for nearly a hundred years (discovered in 1833). Sundkler surmises that the letters were interpreted as the initial letters of each word of prophecy. It could be, since in some instances this is clear (e.g., AO, "Alpha and Omega"). However, it may be misleading to see it in such a mechanistic light. The point is that the letters engraved on the rock were like the letters coming from afar in a telegraph, together making up a coherent message to the person sitting at the telegraph station. Likewise, the person at the station could send messages back. The prophet could ask questions of heaven. The messages and questions are usually phrased in terms taken from the Bible. We will not be able to decode his prophecy like Morse Code.

Examples of this form of two-way communication can be seen in the passage already quoted: "So it is, because you say you died and rose again. No, it is not so" or "Are you priest and God? This is the answer, No, says Jehovah Immanuel. God with us. Who is the Judge? Simakade [the Eternal], says Jehovah. Thus the Scripture. It says about you that you are what you are. Those who do not believe this Scripture should simply die" (ibid., 138). The "wire" is a hermeneutical device based on Zulu techniques of divining, except that in this case the stone and its crenellations replaces the bones and shells and interprets the text of the Bible to refer to the circumstances of the prophet and his community. In this way, the "silent" text becomes "spoken" prophetic word again.

It seems, however, that Khambule did actually purchase a field telegraph to give more substance to his conceptualization of divining the word. This is suggested by several passages in Khambule's diary:

> This is the work of that angel who was seen by *Umshushisi* (George Khambule), who had put the wheel of the machine over the head of *Mshushisi.* This is his work. Now it is he who has been building all the places that exist. (*Diary* 1:18b)

It sounds as if the machine was a field telegraph with earphones. Again, we hear of the machine "over Khambule" as a means of direct revelation concerning the meaning of a scriptural text:

> That is why they say that Evalanis [Fakazi Mhlungu] is a nuisance because she does not produce everything that she is told. What she is doing is wrong. She is really a nuisance in this way. If it were not so we would today know all about the seven churches of Asia; says Jehovah

> about these churches. *uMahluli* [Khambule] and *uMshushisi* [Joanna Ndlovu] are ruled by the Great One (*isilwane*) which placed the machine over Nazar. So it is. Amen. I thank Jehovah. (*Diary* 1:19a–19b).

On 2 January 1926, Khambule writes cryptically but clearly with anxiety about the working of the machine:

> The faith of *uMahluli* [Khambule] on the day he met *iNkosi* and then there were written in him in truth their faith and wrath of God which will conclude everything in this place, about the matter of the machine, so that it will never be talked about again. It is necessary because everything which has been done does not amount to anything if this matter of the machine does not happen. (*Diary* 1:21a–21b).

When Joanna Ndlovu, Khambule's primary female medium and partner, who was possessed by the angel of his dead sister Agrinneth, dies, Khambule seemingly buries the machine with her. At least that is the implication, since she died on 21 October 1925 after becoming crippled in both legs, seemingly from polio.

> Saturday 2/1/26 7:30pm
> With regard to the matter of the machine, which belonged to a white man, St. Khambule had received [instructions] from Nazar. Today it is handed over to Joanah Ndlovu to be hers as she is St. Agrinneth's child. It is like this. There is no dispute today about it. It has gone out of the hands of *uMahluli* today. It is so. (*Diary* 1:47b)

After this, nothing more is heard of the machine, though there are references to the "wire" and the "telephone" continuing in the liturgies and diaries. Sundkler's attempt to find out from members of the church resulted in denials and confusion. I suspect that this use of an actual field telegraph was a short-lived practice, associated with Ndlovu and buried with her. After this it seems that Khambule reverted to the stones as his means of divining the Word of Jehovah.

The stone linked heaven and earth and guaranteed the continuing relationship of the community of saints to God. But one needs to note that names were written on the stone! Each one received a new name. The name each received was the name of his or her own angel who attended and empowered each. The stones of power are associated with the angels of power who have replaced the *amadlozi*, the spirits of the ancestors, in the cult of the *isangoma* (Draper 2002d). Perhaps one might use the language of possession. George Khambule is possessed by the angel Saint Nazar, by the angel Saint Itengirrah, by Jesus *uTixo* himself, indeed. He becomes him and yet is not quite the same as him. The angels mediate

their power to the ones they possess through the stones. The close relation of this to the ancestor cult can be seen, for instance, in the name of the angel given to Khambule's beloved Joanna Ndlovu, Agreneth Hlazile. Agreneth was George Khambule's dead sister who had appeared to him in his call vision in Johannesburg. Khambule rejected the cult of the ancestors and the *isangoma,* but it surfaces in a new form, since it is a fundamental cultural concept for Zulu religious life. Even the second name, Hlazile, suggest the Zulu cultural practice of vomiting to purify the body of *umthakathi.* One of the significant aspects of this Zulu cultural appropriation of the heavenly and angelic world of the Christian scriptures is that there is a very fuzzy line between the world of the spirits and the world of the prophet. Who is speaking: the prophet or the angel? The prophet can call himself the angel, Saint Nazar. He can even call himself, in some sense, Jesus, since he is possessed by Jesus. Yet this is not confused with notions of ontology. He is not ontologically the angel Nazar or Jesus, yet to know him is to know both. He who has seen me has seen Jesus. He who has seen me has seen Saint Nazar. He who has seen me has seen *uTixo,* for that matter.

With the church of *iBandla labaNcwele* we see many of the characteristics of the introversionist response to colonial domination. Above all, we see the turning inward toward the numinous sources of the dominated culture and their reinterpretation in terms of certain key symbols of the dominating culture. In this case, the concept of ongoing communication with the unseen spirit world in Zulu culture, through the shades and the medium, is reinterpreted in terms of a heavenly telegraph, which unlocks a sacred text. A new exclusive community with strong boundaries is formed, and its members receive direct access to the divine. Although George Khambule has the primary link to God in his secluded sanctuary by means of his "morning star" telegraph/telephone, each of the members of the *isigodlo* can share and receive their own sacred stone, their share of that power. They all participate in the worship and healing that is central to the life of the community. The underlying cultural practice is that of Zulu divination by the *isangoma* under the control of or possession by the *amadlozi,* but the adoption of the symbol and medium suggested by Bible (stones and angels) and Western technology has extended the range and flexibility of the prophet's contact with the numinous. It also subverts the colonial monopoly of the Bible, turning it from closed text to living word in prophecy.

John's Gospel and the Word as the Ladder between Heaven and Earth

We should not overexaggerate the similarities between Khambule and the author of John's Gospel, since the text of the Hebrew Scriptures

represents the "great tradition" of his culture, and he is clearly a competent practitioner in the exegesis of the sacred text of his people. Khambule is engaged in the "alternation of social universe," deliberately and consciously adopting the Christian religion and associating himself with the culture and technology of the colonial power (adopting the status of "Exempted Native," somewhat as Paul appeals to his status as a citizen of Rome). Yet both represent the marginalized and alienated elite of a subjugated indigenous people in a colonial situation after the destruction of the old hegemonic order. In both cases the surviving representatives of the old order have cut a deal with the imperial authorities. In both cases a sacred text underpins the new colonial order and demands submission. Both respond to this situation by emphasizing the continuity of revelation, of living Word revealed by the sacred text but continuing to be revealed to the community of believers. In both cases there is an introversionist response to the collapse of military revolutionist movements attempting to overthrow imperial rule, which seeks to find a new way of being for the colonized people but which is rejected by both the colonizers and the colonized. Both understand themselves as representatives of a heavenly order that, against all appearances, is in control of events: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36); "All things at Nqutu are lies. I am in charge at Nqutu" (diary entry 28 August 1926; Sundkler 1976: 128).

John and Logocentric Metaphysics

What has motivated my study of John's Gospel over several years now is an article by Werner Kelber (1987), presented in honor of Walter Ong and dialoguing with Jacques Derrida (1976), that examines the Gospel from the point of view of orality and textuality and hegemony (although he does not use that word). Kelber points to the rabbinic focus on text as "a relentless concentration on written words and their interrelations" (Kelber: 120) from which "there was no metaphysical escape from the text, no exit toward sacred place or sacred person." He does not note, as we have done, the relation between this insistence on text and the role of the rabbis as Roman-sponsored ethnarchs monitoring and controlling the cultural expression of their people. The words of Jesus through Christian prophets remain orally proclaimed and mediate or effect, as oral pronouncements, the presence of "the living, spiritual Lord to a degree that eclipsed the incarnate Jesus" (126). Kelber notes, correctly, that something like four-fifths of John 1–17 relates to sayings of Jesus (111), that it exhibits a "pneumatic, oral hermeneutic" in which words are primarily "manifestations of power." John's Jesus probably reflects the character of the author, literate but

without formal schooling (see John 7:15, 46)—marginal elite, one might say.

I would concur with much of what Kelber argues in this important essay, and my study of George Khambule is, in some sense, an attempt to reflect on whether what he says fits the kind of community that might lie behind such a text. Kelber rightly observes that the issue of seeing God, of direct religious experience of heaven (the "open heaven") is an issue for John, but he believes that the effect of the textualization of the Logos is to put "direct visions under restraint" and to discourage "ascent mysticism" in a community that is "a profoundly oral, prophetic, charismatic community" (114–15):

> In the case of the fourth gospel, a substantial measure of oral ethos has become absorbed into the written narrative. Yet the overall function of this gospel is not to produce an unedited version of oral verbalization, but to recontextualize orality, and to devise a corrective against it. (116)

I would want to nuance this observation as follows. The starting point is, to be sure, the absence of God: "no one has ever seen God" (1:18; 6:46), but the affirmation of the text is, in the end, that the absent has been made known through the Logos. "He who sees me sees the One who sent me" (12:45); "he who has seen me has seen the Father" (14:9); "the glory which thou has given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one" (17:22). Certainly, Jesus goes to the Father and where he goes they cannot come now, but "you shall follow afterwards" (13:36). They cannot worship the Father seeing his face directly, but Jesus goes to prepare the *hekhalot* within the heavenly temple for them (14:2). Jesus is absent from the *kosmos,* yet the Paraclete is present and makes Jesus present, and Jesus is, after all, the Logos of God, the knowable, communicable presence of God who was with the Father from the beginning, before creation. It is a question of emphasis. What is it that John's community is promised in the Gospel? Presence or absence of the Word? The possibility of experiencing the presence of God in his Word or the impossibility of direct religious experience? It seems to me that the primary possibility opened up by John is not absence but presence, not silence but Word, not a closed heaven but an open heaven: "where I am, there shall my servant be also" (12:26). It is, of course, paradoxical and hedged around with qualifications, for obvious reasons, but the possibility of experiencing the divine presence is affirmed in the Word. In what follows, I will sketch the outlines of my understanding, which has been substantiated already in more depth in other papers (Draper 1992; 1997; 2000).

John and the Presence of God

I take my starting point for the interpretation of John not from the Prologue but from the incident in the temple, which John transposes from the last week of Jesus' life to the beginning of his public ministry (2:13–22). Here Jesus pronounces judgment on the temple building and operation in Jerusalem, condemning the financial exploitation involved in the trade in sacrificial beasts and temple tax. In place of this *hieros* or sacred site/place, Jesus points to the *naos* of his body as the true temple. So sacred building/space is replaced by sacred presence in a person. This then fits the understanding of the incarnation of the Word as a *skene,* a tenting presence: "And the *logos* became flesh and tabernacled/tented among us" (1:14). The pointed contrast hinges on the claims of the temple building in Jerusalem to be the place where the Name or Glory of God are to be found, where God's presence dwells (2 Kgs 8). This royal temple tradition is opposed by another and older tradition that God cannot dwell in a house made with hands and has always accompanied his people as the "tented" presence of the wilderness wanderings (2 Sam 7). We know of the continuing influence of this tradition from the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g., 4Q174) and other Christian sources (e.g., Acts 8:42–50; Heb 7–10).

I take this highlighting of the temple and Jesus' pronouncement of judgment on the Jerusalem building and its replacement by the true temple of his body to reflect the situation after the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. It is hard for us to imagine the impact this loss of the place of the presence and glory of God would have had on the Palestinian Israelites in general and the Judeans in particular. John's answer to the national catastrophe is that the temple was not only corrupt but should never have been built in the first place, since it cannot mediate the presence of God. God's presence was never confined to a building in one place. Instead, it was a tented presence and remains so until the "seed of David" shall build the true temple: not Solomon but Jesus, and not in Jerusalem but in the heavens: "In my Father's house [rendering the concept of the *hekhal*] are many rooms [rendering the concept of the *dibirim*]; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And where I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:1–4).

What enables John to make this bold step and identify the "tent of the presence" with the human person of Jesus is his hermeneutical key of the *logos,* which he draws from the dominant Greco-Roman culture, recognizing it as the fundamental concept in the high religion of the conquerors. Of course, it has indigenous counterparts, which make it acceptable in the Israelite cultural sphere—at least to some. It consciously draws on the tradition of Wisdom in the Hebrew Scriptures. Wisdom is

involved in creation (Prov 8), comes down from heaven and seeks a place to stay, and eventually sets up her dwelling in Israel (Sir 24:8). However, the tradition is complex and may also be influenced in its later manifestations by Hellenistic traditions of the *logos.* The key thing for our purposes is that Wisdom is a woman and is always translated in Greek by *sophia.* When John chooses to use the word *logos* it is a conscious and momentous decision. It immediately draws into the picture the idea of the expressed mind of God, of divine ontology, of ideal types and copies and so on. John makes a move, which is scandalous in terms of Greek philosophy, when he declares that the divine *logos* has become a human being. But the underlying Israelite cultural symbol is that of the "tent of the presence," so that the *logos* is present in the human Jesus as a tent, in the same way as it was in the desert wanderings. The true and permanent presence of God can only be established in the heavens, where the true temple is to be found.

This identification of Jesus with the divine *logos* serves as a hermeneutical key to counter the emphasis on text and only text, legitimating control and to some extent also empire, which was represented by the newly dominant scribal elite after the destruction of the temple.

Continuous Revelation through the Logos

This hermeneutical key, which understands Jesus as the tent of the presence, the *naos,* in which the logos of God is to be found, enables John to reinterpret the sacred texts of his own culture. It is agreed that "no one has ever seen God," yet clearly the *logos* or expressed mind of God has always been with God, always the expression of God, always the active principle of God. God cannot be seen directly in creation: it is Jesus, the *logos* of God, the Word spoken in the darkness and chaos of nonbeing, who makes God known. And this pattern is repeated through the whole history of God's dealing with his people.

What did Abraham see when the fire came down on his sacrifice? The answer is now clear: Abraham saw Jesus ("Abraham rejoiced that he might see my day; he saw it and rejoiced" [8:56]). What did Jacob see in the nighttime at Bethel? He saw angels ascending and descending on Jesus! (1:51). What did Moses see in the burning bush or when God walked past the hole in the rock? Moses saw Jesus ("For if you believed Moses you would believe in me, because he himself wrote about me" [6:46]). Whom did Isaiah see high and lifted up on a throne and surrounded by angels in that famous vision in the temple? It was Jesus ("Isaiah wrote these things because he saw his glory and spoke concerning him" [12:41]). Jesus is the one who has always made God known and who continues to make God known, who "utters the words of God"

(3:34) because he is the *logos* or Word of God, the mind, reason, and expression of God from the beginning. As Peter says, "You have the words of life" (6:68).

The *logos* is not only a device for opening the Scripture to new interpretation but also the device for continuing revelation. While it is true that the sayings of Jesus abound in John's Gospel, they are not, on the whole, the sayings of the primitive Jesus tradition. These form the nucleus of the wealth of the words of Jesus in the text, but only the nucleus. The Gospel abounds with Jesus speaking directly to the community in long discourses. This is well known. The author of the Gospel can continue to hear the voice of the living Jesus and report it to his community. Note the ambiguity of the affirmation that Jesus "utters the words of God, for it is not by measure that he gives the Spirit" (3:34). The Spirit is given to the community, and the uttering of the words of God is, presumably, still a phenomenon eagerly expected by the community, since "If you abide in me . . . my words abide in you" (15:7; cf. 17:8). The death of the human Jesus does not end his presence, because, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" (14:18–20). This presence is not to be understood as a promise of a second coming of Jesus or the death of the believer but takes place with the coming of the "other Paraclete." I have no time to go into the complexity of this but point only to my existing article (1992).

Conclusion

This rather hastily sketched comparison certainly needs to be further developed. I hope it will evoke discussion around the issue of the complex interplay of cultural factors in introversionist responses to colonial domination. I have argued that George Khambule and the author of John's Gospel make their breakthrough by identifying what appears to them a key element in the culture of the imperialists, which can unlock the sacred text that maintains the imperial hegemony and open its full potential for resistance and reconstruction. To the authorities it may appear bizarre or blasphemous. It almost always results in persecution and prosecution, both on the part of the compliant indigenous elite and also the imperial authorities. Every individual attempt at this kind of *bricolage* will be accompanied by many other attempts to do the same thing, with various degrees of success. It is a search for a new synthesis to preserve the indigenous culture and way of life by turning the culture of the conquerors against them (not necessarily knowingly). Text gives way to prophecy, literacy to a new form of orality. Of course, both in the case

of John and Khambule, this process resulted in new texts: the Gospel on the one hand, and three diaries of prophecies, written liturgies, and hymns on the other! The process begins again once these kinds of texts become appropriated to legitimate new hegemonies.

MAKING THE BOOK, PERFORMING THE WORDS OF *IZIHLABELELO ZAMANAZARETHA*

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BODY, WORD, AND VOICE AS BELIEF IN *IBANDLA LAMANAZARETHA*

Asikho esinye isiekelo[1]	There is no other foundation
Kuwena Afrika	For you Africa:
Ujehova ukuphela	It is Jehovah[2] alone,
Uyisibani sakho	He is your light (Hymn 120/1)

> The discovery of the book is, at once, a moment of originality and authority. It is, as well, a process of displacement that, paradoxically, makes the presence of the book wondrous to the extent to which it is repeated, translated, misread, displaced.... The discovery of the book installs the sign of appropriate representation: *the word of God, truth, art creates the conditions for a beginning, a practice of history and narrative*.... For despite the accident of discovery, the repetition of the emergence of the book, represents important moments in the historical transformation and discursive transfiguration of the colonial text and context. (Bhabha: 102 and 105, emphasis added)

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1 All Zulu texts are cited directly from J. G. Shembe. 1940. *IziHlabelelo zamaNazaretha*. Durban: W. H. Shepherd.

2 Sundkler (1961) explains that the word "God" was replaced with "Jehovah," the God of the Old Testament, early in this century in South Africa by black South Africans who felt a need to have a God of their own making. The white notion of God appeared not to meet their needs. They turned then to the god of the Old Testament, Jehovah, who protected those wandering in the wilderness. In addition, they switched days of worship from Sunday to Saturday, the Sabbath (as interpreted by the Jews).

> The sacred text is a voice, it teaches.... it is the advent of a "meaning" ... on the part of a God who expects the reader (in reality, the listener) to have a "desire to hear and understand" ... on which access to truth depends.... [T]he modern age is formed by discovering little by little that this Spoken Word is no longer heard. (de Certeau: 137)

> The songs, they mean something, they talk you see. (Nazarite member, April 1991)

In South Africa in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the idea of the book and the culture of writing occupied a complex and contested place in colonial society. From the perspective of the European colonist, the disembodied object of the imported book told new truths, brought to South Africa alternative group histories, authorized new selves, and enabled new beginnings. For some South Africans, the capacity to read and write opened pathways to upward social mobility in (European) South African society; for many others, the book and its associated technologies of paper-making and writing were more ambivalent. It was writing—passbooks, birth and death certificates, title deeds, and marriage certificates—that increasingly came to make or unmake the person in South Africa. Regardless of where an individual or group was located in the emergent political economy, writing unequivocally encompassed bureaucratic power and ensured European cultural domination over local peoples in the region.

Tensions fostered by the introduction of writing and literacy have for the most part been examined in secular literatures, discourses, and performances in South Africa (see, e.g., Opland 1999a and this volume; James 1999). Essays in this volume begin to turn that problem around by examining the impact of the books used by the missions. These include the Bible and other popular mission literature translated into the vernacular. Isabel Hofmeyr (2001; and this volume) examines the impact of one book, Paul Bunyan's *A Pilgrim's Progress* in multiple versions and translations, as a global and local manifestation in South Africa. Gerald West (this volume) studies how the Tlhaping "read" the Bible. Deborah James (this volume) argues that the biblical narrative has provided a crucial discourse in enabling communities to articulate a relationship to land and its reclamation. Jonathan Draper's essay urges that we examine the Bible/sacred text in the colonial context, the controlled text as living word. My own work (Muller 1999; 1997) has stressed the centrality of the act of "writing" one's name in the "Book of Life" through ritual enactment in South Africa's *ibandla lamaNazaretha* (the Church of the Nazarites).

In this essay I examine the interface between orality and literacy in *ibandla lamaNazaretha* by asking how their coexistence has shaped the

nature of Nazarite belief and thereby transfigured the largely literary bases of mission Christianity. While books occupy a central place in Nazarite ritual, the nature of belief is situated somewhere between the purely oral and the emphatically literate. My argument centers on the idea that in predominantly oral communities, the "word" of God/gods is a word that is sounded out; it is integrally entwined with the human voice. In Zulu, for example, the word "izwi" references both the "word" and the "voice." The sacred word is always performed and fully embodied, and its enactment is a multisensory articulation. In more literate communities of faith, the "word" of God is a word that is written but might still be expected to "speak" to its reader/listener (de Certeau). By way of contrast, in contemporary secular societies the written word is fully textualized, completely disembodied, and in this sense has lost all its capacity to be heard. Here "reading" is a single sensory, exclusively visual experience (de Certeau; Scarry).

In this frame I am suggesting that in *ibandla lamaNazaretha* writing and "the book" operate as much more than the simple reification of poetic texts into written and printed form to be read/consumed silently by Nazarite members. Invoking Gates's image of the "talking book" (1988) and de Certeau's idea of the "voice" embedded in the sacred text, I suggest that the Bible and Nazarite hymnal have been "read" and reconstituted by Nazarites as both object and performance in which word and sound are integral to their power. They are deemed effective insofar as they have been framed by, and articulated through, two central Nazarite performance practices: preaching sermons (Muller forthcoming) and sacred song and dance. In other words, neither the Zulu Bible[3] nor the Nazarite hymnal is an end in itself: each is the means by which Nazarite members have sounded out religious practice and miraculous personal experiences.

There are five parts to this essay. The first considers the relationship between voice and belief in the life of church founder Isaiah Shembe. In the second I examine Isaiah Shembe's tentative play with mission culture and literacy and the ways in which his followers "read" the Bible. The third part shifts emphasis to the performed word in the "sermons"

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3 While various sections of the Bible were translated into Zulu by missionaries in KwaZulu Natal, from 1846 onwards, the first full translation of the Old and New Testaments was published in 1883 (when Isaiah was in his early teens). The earliest translations had been done by American missionary Newton Adams from the mid 1830s. The complete edition was published by the American Bible Society (Bradlow et al.: 42). The version of the Bible currently in use is *Ibhayibheli Elingcwele* (the Holy Bible), which is an updated edition, first published in 1959 by the Bible Society of South Africa.

members preach to each other, selectively drawing on the Bible and hymn texts to authorize their narratives and thereby displace the authority of the biblical texts with local narratives. The fourth section focuses on the quintessential medium and mode of Nazarite belief, the hymn repertory as written text and performed word. In the conclusion, I situate the Shembe material in larger discourses about the culture of the (secular) book and reading and performing as text.

Voices in the Body of Isaiah Shembe, Founder of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*

I have written elsewhere on the historical moment of Isaiah Shembe's emergence in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, and the development of his religious community at Ekuphakameni (Muller 1999: chs. 1–3; Vilikazi, Mthethwa, and Mpanza). In this section I shall focus on two aspects of Isaiah Shembe's early life and spiritual calling. First is the guiding "Voice" inside his body, which formed the core of belief; second are the "voices" of the ancestors that inhabited his dream world and gave him a new song repertory.

While little is known of his early life, even to those who were closest to Isaiah Shembe, stories about the "Voice" that guided his spiritual mission are central to the memory of the founder's prophetic character (ibid.), and they provide a lens for viewing the nature of belief among preliterate individuals. Isaiah Shembe's religious vocation was quite literally a calling, a voice that beckoned and instructed from within. Voices heard and images seen in trancelike states informed the young man about polygamy, spiritual cleansing, and marriage. The spectral intervened with the living by occasionally visiting the interior domains of the prophet's mind and body. In contrast to the disconnected dream spaces of the Freudian individual psyche, the Shembe dream space was peopled with sacred beings that integrated past and present. The memory of these experiences has powerfully shaped the religious rules and beliefs of generations of Shembe followers. Early Shembe ethnographer Esther Roberts cites one such narrative about Shembe's "Voice" (see in Muller 1999: 202–3).

> In his vision he found himself flying towards a group of people who were facing the east. Although Shembe was flying, and they remained stationary, he could not overtake them. Suddenly a man appeared and advanced towards him. When they met, a "Voice" told Shembe to look earthward. The people in the east pointed downwards and lightning issued from their fingers, and illuminated the earth. He looked down and saw himself prostrate in prayer. A "Voice" asked what his body looked like and he replied that it was revolting [covered in filfth]. Thereupon the "Voice" said, "Do you remember what the 'Voice' told you

> when you prayed? Did not the "Voice" warn you against [an] unclean life? That is why you cannot overtake us. You are still unclean." Shembe said that he would not return to his vile body but the "Voice" did not answer him.

The narrative as recorded by Roberts continues, but this portion suffices to demonstrate both the material presence of the spiritual "Voice" inside the prophet and the human body as a central medium of Nazarite belief.

In addition to the speaking voice, there are at least two kinds of accounts in which the singing voice is revealed through the medium of the body. The first is the vision Isaiah had on what is now known as the holy mountain of *Nhlangakaze* (the big/great reed). Sometime in the early years of the twentieth century, Isaiah Shembe had a dream in which he was called to preach to Zulu and Xhosa-speaking traditionalists in KwaZulu Natal. Nazarite member Cinikile Mazibuko explained to me that in the dream Isaiah sensed the presence of God through the scent of flowers.

> Then he heard voices singing, you know, the friends. Then he just heard some people were just singing so softly, and they were singing Zulu songs. But songs that have got no notes, you see. Different hymns, you know. Different styles. He was listening, you see. And he just feel there was something smelling very nice. Then there came, then he saw old men dressed in skins. It was after … he saw those old men coming dressed in skins [that] he heard a voice saying, "Those are the people to go and preach the word of God to." (Muller 1999: 88–89)

A complex, and multisensory spiritual experience, this dream narrative provides the quintessential scene of a belief system outside of colonial literacy. Nothing is written down; not even the songs have notes. The experience is rather one that integrates the senses of smell, hearing, and vision in a full-bodied sensory spirituality.

The second experience is the ancestral voice of song composition explained by Isaiah's son Galilee to Bengt Sundkler.

> [Isaiah] would hear a woman's voice, often a girl's voice, singing new and unexpected words. He could not see her, but as he woke up from a dream or walked along the path in Zululand, meditating, he heard that small voice, that clear voice, which gave him a new hymn. He had to write down the new words, while humming and singing the tune which was born with the words. (Sundkler 1976: 186)

I have explained this process at length elsewhere (1999: ch. 4). Suffice it to say here that in addition to the female compositional voice Isaiah's dreamlike experiences included powerful aural images expressed

through the body. The strongest impression created a rhythm, which was stressed with drumbeats and dancing feet. It was the embodied sense of rhythm, linked to words, that formed the core of a new song repertory.

Mission Culture and Literacy

Mission Christianity offered a mixed and contradictory package to black South Africans for several reasons (see Muller 1999: ch. 2; Etherington). First, the only place to acquire literacy until the apartheid government created the now infamous "Bantu education" in the 1950s was the mission station. This is best demonstrated in the Zulu word *umfundisi,* which historically has referenced both a minister of religion and a teacher (the word *itisha* is now more common). Second, while missionaries have been largely stereotyped as colonizing agents in South Africa, the definition of colonialism and the colonist must be variously applied. Colonial administrators were often wary of mission activity, considering missionaries too close to African people (Etherington). Mission personnel thus occupied an intermediary position in colonial society. This is particularly significant for the analysis of black women who fled to mission stations (and Shembe's community in some cases) to escape the confines of traditional life in the homestead economy (see Muller 1999: chs. 2–3). Third, while the majority of missionaries were certainly of European descent, there was also a small contingency of African American missionaries who traveled to South Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Chirenje; Lincoln and Mamiya). Shembe is a case in point. It is claimed that Isaiah Shembe came into contact with, and was baptized by, the African Baptists and Wesleyans before he began his healing and prophetic work in KwaZulu Natal in about 1910 (Vilakazi, Mthethwa, and Mpanza). The precise nature of his contact requires some evaluation, however, because the African Baptists were actually Africans from America sent to South Africa by the African Baptist Missionary Society founded in Boston by two African Americans, Collin Teague and Lott Carey, in 1815. These two men desired to return to the African continent in an attempt to avoid racial injustices committed against Africans in the United States (Lincoln and Mamiya). Similarly, Isaiah's connection to the "Wesleyans" could easily have been to the hymns composed by Wesley sung among African Methodist Episcopal missions in the region. They too were an independent movement of African Americans in the United States doing mission work in South Africa.

Isaiah Shembe did not participate in mission education in his youth and claimed that he was never taught to read by the missionaries but learned to read by divine intervention. Nevertheless, the prophet fully comprehended the contentious powers attached to the book. In addition

to the Zulu translation of the Bible, there are three kinds of texts that have been produced for the Nazarites: their own hymnal consisting of 242 hymns and three prayer liturgies; a book called *Umncwabo* (literally, "funeral rites"; see Muller 1999: ch. 3), a composite of narratives, hymns, letters, and orders of service; and the written collection of narratives of the witnesses to the miraculous powers of Shembe in the lives of Nazarite members.

The Bible: Old, New, and Nazarite Testaments

In developing his ministry, the mission Bible was the source of Isaiah's knowledge and power. He was reported to have been able to cite biblical references by chapter and verse, even outwitting European missionary knowledge (Roberts). In addition, as spiritual leader Shembe was evaluated by the way in which he was able not only to imitate but also to outdo the miracles of healing and provision reported in biblical narrative. He engaged with the same kind of battles with the state and other groups as the biblical Israelites and Jews had done, and he was similarly able to overcome oppression, racism, and injustice through his obedience to the Word of God.[4]

The mission Bible itself was a complex text in at least two ways, because of the cultural crevices created in language translation and for the ways in which it was "read" far from the European Christian metropole. Unlike the Qur'an, for example, whose readers are required to know Arabic, the Bible Society of America has been busy translating the Bible into global vernaculars for over a century. While initially converts had to know English to know the Bible, once it was translated this was not the case. Frequently it was through mission labor that the languages were objectified into written texts, dictionaries, and formalized grammars. The Bible translated into the vernacular constituted itself as an objective record of the language, a kind of archive, both a familiarizing (one's own language) and estranging strategy (objectified). However, as language translation creates equivalence and not sameness, so too the

4 One of the most outstanding examples of this is a moment in the early 1930s when Isaiah attempted to purchase farm land from a Frenchman. He paid half the cost of the farm, and then the owner withdrew the sale, saying he had been forbidden to sell the land by white authorities. Isaiah then called on the help of his female virgin followers and on God, as well as his knowledge of the Old Testament (and of the story of Jephthah in particular). The ultimate result was that he won over the racism of the whites and was able to purchase the land. One of the central female rituals is celebrated on this land in July each year (see Muller 1999: ch. 6).

biblical texts themselves were opened up to local interpretations through supplements and substitution. Isaiah Shembe used a number of localizing mechanisms to create a belief system with greater coherence for his followers. For example, in the hymn texts he drew on biblical narratives and poetic models but replaced foreign names with local people and places, thereby Africanizing the topography of whiteness/unfamiliarity by transposing it into a more localized landscape.

Jean Comaroff (1985: 2) suggests that the mission Bible provided a "haven for the critical imagination" in South Africa: it authorized both the continuity of precolonial beliefs and practices for many black South African communities and a "biblically validated resistance" to pressures to modernize and westernize. In *ibandla lamaNazaretha* this is plausible for the Old Testament, but it does not speak to the Bible as a whole. With its narratives of kings, polygamous marriages, tribal life, and intertribal battles the Old Testament may, despite mission attempts to persuade otherwise, have validated precolonial African practices. It is possible that Shembe's motivation to retain signs of Africanness after conversion to Christianity was reinforced through his contact with the African Baptists, who were more conscious of the value of African heritage. Certainly, Nazarite members told me that they were more "Christian" than whites were because they were more faithful to the desires of God as contained in the Bible. They observed the Sabbath on a Saturday, removed their shoes on holy ground, abstained from pork and leavened bread, and never lit a fire on the Sabbath. The New Testament, however, offered a different cultural package. This biblical portion provides a sense of the miraculous, the magical: a discourse that paralleled experiences of the modern/European world and its technologies.

In *ibandla lamaNazaretha* the signs of miracles and wonders enacted by the figure of Jesus have been displaced and repeated by Shembe himself. In about 1930 Isaiah Shembe recognized the importance of a Nazarite archive by calling his young friend, Mr. Petrus Dhlomo (d. 1993), to act as church secretary and to make a written record of these narratives. Unschooled, Dhlomo was instructed to learn to read and write in Zulu by reading the Zulu daily newspaper and the Zulu Bible. A more recent understanding of the place of the Bible in the lives of Nazarite members was given to me by Mthembeni Mpanza, one of the learned members of *ibandla lamaNazaretha* (December 1991). In his view the Old Testament was for the Jews, the New Testament was for the Whites. A third "testament" has effectively been created from the corpus of miracle narratives that circulates among members about the miraculous powers of Isaiah Shembe and his successors, Galilee, Amos, and now Vimbeni.

Voicing the Word in Sermons

These narratives of Shembe's miraculous intervention in the everyday struggles of Nazarite members constitute the core materials for the sermons members preach to each other in services and recount to each other in less formal situations. There are literally hundreds of stories that have been meticulously typewritten on long rolls of paper (resembling images of scrolls of biblical times included in versions of the King James Bible), many of which are now housed at the University of Zululand. As the following narrative demonstrates, here mission Christianity has been appropriated and transplanted onto African soil. And it speaks back to the (British) center with a Zulu/Nazarite voice and experience.

There is a story told in *ibandla lamaNazaretha* about a white girl from England who had a dream in which Shembe appeared. In this dream, Shembe had told the young girl that she would be healed from her inability to menstruate.

> Her parents then consulted world experts, sages, and seers, and they all agreed that they didn't know if the man in the girl's dreams was like Elijah, Moses, or Jesus, but they knew he was somewhere in Africa.... And so they traveled to South Africa. On their arrival in Cape Town, they inquired about this prophet and they were told that there were many prophets in Africa. They were shown pictures of African prophets, and when she saw his picture, the child identified the Prophet [Shembe].... So they traveled to Durban and soon they were on their way to where Shembe was known to live.

They arrived at Ekuphakameni in the month of July, when the virgin girls have their dance festivals, and Shembe instructed the young white girl to join the virgin dance.

> She danced for a while. Shembe said, "*Hauw*! Have you ever seen a white person dance? Bring her back here." And so the Lord Shembe said to the parents, "Take her away, she is healed." And so they took the girl to Durban and booked a place in one of the hotels. They wanted to see the truth of what God's prophet had said without even praying for, or laying hands on, the girl.

After three months, the girl started to menstruate, and the family returned to Ekuphakameni to thank Shembe.

> They asked how much they could pay Shembe. The man of God said, "God's gift is not to be bought by man." He suggested that they should go back to their land and preach, and tell the people that the savior had arrived and that he was at Ekuphakameni. So they went back, and when

> they returned to their country, they bought and sent to Ekuphakameni a flag, a square clock, and a bell. The bell is used to summon the people for the beginning of the church service.... They wrote a letter to accompany the thing they had bought. It read, "Remember us always when the bell rings, the clock will tell the time for the beginning of the service. May the Lord remember us when he calls the people into church. With the flag I am saying that Africa has triumphed.... The nations of the world have been waiting for the Lord. Now they have heard that he is at Ekuphakameni." (Muller 1999: 159–60).

This story was told by Mkhokheli Ntuli, a woman from the township of Lamontville in the city of Durban, to church secretary Mr. Petrus Dhlomo. It is one of many like it that shifts the balance of spiritual power from the colonist to the colonized: Ekuphakameni is now the center.

The capacity for a text to "speak" through language without human agency must surely have appeared magical or just strange to those accustomed to the spoken word emerging from the body. These hymn texts and the Dhlomo collection of narratives displace the mission texts with those generated from within the Nazarite community, one in which its own members are constituted as "writers" and not just passive, detached or displaced "readers (de Certeau: 169–71). Distance from the center of mission Christianity (like London and Boston) would certainly have created cause for greater plurality of readings/interpretations of the text. It was not, however, just in reading but also in the manner in which mission texts were transfigured that Nazarite "readings" of the Bible transgressed. I am suggesting, then, that the style in which the biblical narrative was "read" gave individual members greater agency in the writing of their collective history, a history of the miraculous and spiritually empowered in more "African" terms.

The Hymn Translated: Voice and Body in Performance

By reasserting the central importance of the voice and the body in Nazarite belief, the hymn repertory, which accompanies *umgido,* the sacred dance festival, is undoubtedly the quintessential sign of Nazarite belief. In the 1960s, religious studies scholar Pippin Oosthuizen published a controversial text titled *Theology of a South African Messiah,* which examined Shembe's hymn texts as the source of Nazarite theology. Several others have commented on these texts since then (Vilakazi, Mthethwa, and Mpanza; Tshabalala; Brown 1995). None of these scholars has stressed the relationship between the composition of this repertory of sacred dance and song, Nazarite belief, and the colonial encounter between missions and African people. Mthethwa died before he had completed his research on the repertory. Henry Louis Gates's work on African American

slave narratives, however, provides a helpful trope, the "talking book," for thinking about the interface between literacy, orality, European colonization, and African responses to these forces.

Gates argues that in the United States (1770–1815), for African slaves writing "became the visible sign, the commodity of exchange, the text and technology of reason" (Gates 1988: 132). The struggle for African American slave narrative writers, however, was how to make the European book speak with an African voice. The book as object lacked the capacity to talk back to its African readers/hearers. Gates argues that this dilemma was exemplified in the idea of the "talking book" in Anglo-African slave narratives. I am suggesting here that a similar problem presented itself to Isaiah and Galilee Shembe in the early twentieth-century largely illiterate Nazarite community. The solution was to create a book of sacred song texts, which looked "European" on the one hand but sounded "African" on the other. Here I am transforming Gates's idea of the talking book to Shembe's notion of the "singing/dancing book."

In this final section of the paper I examine the voice/body duality as it manifests itself in the performances of Nazarite members. I begin by expanding on the earlier discussion of the composition of the hymn repertory, moving into its transcription and publication in book form. There is fleeting discussion of the transformation of mission hymns into *izihlabelelo* and mission teachings to Nazarite "sermons" so that they coalesced with the everyday experiences of Isaiah Shembe and his followers. Part of this discussion elucidates the meanings of Nazarite hymns for contemporary members. The last part considers the voice-body duality of song performance, reflecting on how Nazarite hymns are performed, specifically as part of sacred dance enactment and a critical dimension of belief in *ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

Composing *IziHlabelelo zamaNazaretha*

This sacred performance practice in *ibandla lamaNazaretha* has come to be known as *izihlabelelo kwakwaShembe,* the hymns from the place of Shembe. It is a style of performance that, significantly, was not written down for its members; neither did Isaiah and Galilee Shembe transcribe the melodies. Isaiah composed most of the hymn repertory between 1920 and 1935, the year he died.[5] Three women had dreams in which the

5 This was consistent with mission hymnals in indigenous languages in KwaZulu Natal. Even though the missions used the tonic solfa system in teaching choral music to black South Africa, to my knowledge most of the hymnals contain only written texts. The one contemporary exception in South Africa is the Catholic Book of Prayers and Hymns—

deceased Isaiah "gave" them new hymns. Galilee composed the remainder between 1936 and 1976, the year he died. The first Nazarite spiritual song, or hymn, came to Isaiah in 1910, when he arrived in KwaZulu Natal (and the same year as the inauguration of the Union of South Africa). He received the second hymn in 1913, on the holy mountain of *Nhlangakaze* (also the year of the legislation of the Natives Land Act that sought to proletarianize the black population by forcing them off the land). It was not until 1920, however, that he began to compose Nazarite hymns prolifically. (Galilee Shembe received his hymns in dreams after the death of his father in 1935. Interestingly, the images he dreamed were visual ones, of texts written on a chalkboard.)

The Zulu word *isihlabelelo* (pl. *izihlabelelo*) may be translated in several ways. The noun *isihlabelelo* might refer to "hymn," though the more conventional translation of *isihlabelelo* has two meanings: the first refers to the psalms of David found in the Old Testament, and the second to a repertory of songs that mothers compose for their children. These songs are sung at significant moments in the life of a child, such as puberty and marriage. The verb *hlabelela* refers to the singing of birds or of people in chorus or recitation (Doke et al.). The Zulu words for hymn (chant or song) are *iculo* and *ihubo* (which also refers to a ceremonial, tribal, or regimental song or church hymn). While I use "hymn" as the translation of *isihlabelelo,* the reference to ihubo as an alternative term for hymn is provocative in the Nazarite context.

Elsewhere I have suggested that Isaiah Shembe effectively created a religious empire in opposition to that of the Euro-American mission in KwaZulu Natal (Muller 1999: ch. 2). This moment of enunciation instigated a new beginning, a new marking of historical time in the region. It is no coincidence that Shembe was called on a mountain called the "big reed"—Nguni myth has it that the world was created from a bed of reeds (Berglund). The making of his movement disavows both colonial and Nguni traditional histories. The new repertory of song was constituted as the chants of a large religious clan (united by belief more than by blood). These songs signify the collective self and mythical origin. In this sense, *izihlabelelo* might be thought of as *amahubo* (pl. for *ihubo*).

Incwadi Yemikhuleko Namaculo (Mngoma, 1991)—which has tunes written in solfegge. The lack of melodic notation contrasts with the common utilization of tunebooks among mission communities in Hawaii, for example (Stillman). Bongani Mthethwa began transcribing the hymns from the late 1970s on. He had been instructed to do this by Galilee's successor, Amos Shembe. Amos introduced the organ into religious worship (played by Mthethwa) in the late 1980s.

Transcribing and Printing the Hymns

Initially these hymns were written down either by Isaiah or an assistant. In time, his early followers copied the written texts into their own books, which included hymns, miracle stories, prayers and sermons, and letters from Isaiah. To mark the significance of the Nazarite hymns, however, Isaiah's son, Galilee, collated them into the quintessential sign of colonial authority and "appropriate representation," the [hymn] book. W. H. Shepherd published the first Nazarite hymnal in Durban in 1940. That volume included 220 hymns; the more recent publication contains 242 hymns. (The publication date is still listed as 1940 in these newer versions.) On the one hand, along with the Zulu translation of the Bible, *Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha* encompasses the central strategy for the making of a new set of practices and cultural truths. On the other, unlike the simple translation of the Bible into indigenous languages, a practice Bhabha argues still retains the essential Englishness of the book as cultural form, Isaiah Shembe's hymnal decenters the mode of colonial civil authority and form.

For the cultural outsider who may not understand Zulu, the Nazarite hymnal strongly resembles the format of standard Protestant hymn and prayer books: each hymn is divided into stanzas of standard length and number of lines. Superficially, the structure of the text might be reduced to mere mimicry of European form. The words (and the performance practice), however, articulate a far more complex process of cultural and religious negotiation. What may seem to be mere imitation to the uninitiated, in fact, constitutes a sophisticated mechanism of both identification with and denial of mission Christianity. The texts of Isaiah Shembe's hymns weave together elements of mission Christianity with selected aspects of Nguni epistemology and the harsh social and political experiences of Isaiah and his followers. Once again, this process contrasts markedly with the practice of reading as outlined by de Certeau, who suggests that reading generally evokes in the reader a sense of placelessness, a lack of fixed locality. While the style of the Shembe hymns resonate with that of the biblical psalms and other Protestant hymns, the words of the texts are strongly rooted in Nazarite experiences, either through place names or types of struggle and suffering.

These hymns thus assume a place in the religious and cultural history of the KwaZulu Natal region with which the mission hymn could not compete. As Mthethwa (n.d.) writes, the Christian hymn was introduced to Africa either in Latin or in mission translations.[6] The mission texts

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6 Prior to receiving these songs in visions, the followers of Isaiah Shembe had drawn on the hymn repertory of the Wesleyan mission for ritual purposes. Certainly there are references

were not just rarely understood by local people but frequently acquired meanings and interpretations never intended by mission translators. This was particularly true in translations from English into tonal languages, where a single word has several meanings, depending upon the tonal inflections of each syllable. Furthermore, there are numerous examples in the vernacular hymn of crude rhyme schemes that result in awkward texts of extremely poor quality.[7] In contrast, Isaiah Shembe wrote his own texts in a highly idiomatic combination of Zulu and Xhosa, and they draw on the compositional and aesthetic resource of Nguni praise poetry. Discussed extensively elsewhere,[8] praise poetry signaled an appropriate vehicle of religious expression because it enabled what Vail and White call an aesthetic of "poetic license," the freedom to both praise and critique one's superiors. In Shembe's case, superiors included local chiefs, missionaries, colonial administrators, and other political leaders.

Several examples of these hymn texts follow. The first excerpt localizes the New Testament texts about Bethlehem by paralleling Bethlehem's importance in the life of Jesus and the Jews with Ohlange's significance in the life of Nguni peoples in KwaZulu Natal (see, e.g., Opland 1992; 1998b; Cope; Gunner and Gwala).[9]

Kwafika izazi	There came the wise ones
Ziphuma empumalanga	Coming from the east,
Zathi uphi lawo	They said, "Where is the one
Oyi Nkosi yaba Juda?	Who is the King of the Jews?"

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to the Wesleyan sources of two or three hymns in the Nazarite hymnal. Similarly, Blacking discusses these two elements as central to Venda Zionist religious practice. See Kiernan for discussion of Zulu Zionist hymn performance practice.

7 There are numerous articles in the *Journal of African Music* from the 1950s through the 1970s that flesh out these problems and debates.

8 Sundkler (1961) comments on the crude rhyme schemes created in the vernacular by missionaries. Such rhyming is completely foreign, for example, in Zulu language performance practice. There are numerous examples of such crude cultural translation. A recent hymn in Zulu reads: *Baba ulilanga lethu / Uyakhanya phezu kwethu* (loosely translated as "Father, you are our sun; Shine on us from above"; *Sing Together,* 1986: D2).

9 Ohlange is the same place where John Dube, founder of the African National Congress, built the Ohlange Institute (modeled on parallel schools such as the Tuskegee Institute and Hampton College in the United Stated) in the Inanda Valley. The Inanda Valley is perhaps one of the most historically significant areas in the region. It was the site of the Ohlange Institute, which trained many of South Africa's most important political and community leaders, and is also the site where Nelson Mandela cast his vote in the first democratic elections in 1994. In this valley Isaiah Shembe established his religious community and Mahatma Gandhi established his village with its printing press and center for women's production of cultural goods (see Muller 1994). State President Nelson Mandela made each of these points at the funeral of Amos Shembe (Isaiah's other son, who led the community from 1977 through 1995) in October 1995.

Chorus	*Chorus*
Kunjaloke namhlanje	It is like that today
Emagqumeni as'Ohlange	On the hills of Ohlange.
Bafika bathi yebo	They came and said, "Yes,
Kulotshiwe kanjalo	It is written like that,
Nawe Kuphakama	'Even you, Kuphakama,
Magquma as'Ohlange;	Hills of Ohlange;
Chorus	Chorus
Awusiye omnciyane	You are not the smallest
Kunababusi bakwa Juda	Of the rulers of Juda;
Kuyakuvela kuwe	From you shall emerge
Aba Profithi,	The Prophets,
Abaya kusindisa	Who will redeem
Umuzi was'Ohlange.	The village of Ohlange.
Chorus	Chorus
(*Hlabelelo* 34/1, 4, 5)	(Hymn 34/1, 4, 5)

The second example suggests a connection both with the Psalms and Wesleyan hymnody. Bongani Mthethwa (n.d.) writes that Isaiah used to use Ps 136 as the basis of Sabbath service worship until he wrote his own texts in about 1920. The first two lines *Bongani uJehova ngoba elungile* derive from a Zulu Methodist hymnal. Lines 3–5 of the text are also used extensively in the prayers and liturgy at the beginning of the book.

Bongani uJehova	Give thanks to Jehovah
Ngoba elungile	Because he is righteous
Umusa wakhe	His mercy
Uhlezi phakade	Endures forever
Ngokuba elungile.	Because he is righteous.
Wabakhuphula ngengalo enamandla	He lifted them up with a powerful arm
Entabeni yas'eNhlangakazi	At the mountain of Nhlangakaze
Umusa wakhe	His mercy
Uhlezi phakade	Endures forever
Ngokuba elungile.	Because he is righteous.
(Hlabelelo 37/1, 2)	(Hymn 37/1, 2)

The third example is a completely localized text, exhorting African peoples to be alert to the impact of colonial practices on their own communities. Resonating with Jean Comaroff's suggestions about the power

of the biblical narrative to authorize resistance, so too the Shembe hymnal provokes his followers into a particular kind of political consciousness. In hymn 46 Isaiah Shembe calls out to his followers:

Phakama Africa	Rise, Africa
Funa uMsindisi	Seek the Saviour
Kuse isikhathi esihle	While there is still time
Ziyakushiyi zizwe.	The nations are surpassing you.
Phakama Africa	Rise, Africa
Funa uMsindisi	Seek the Saviour
Namhla siyizigqwashu	Today we are the doormats
Zokwesula izinyawo zezizwe.	For the nations to wipe off their feet.
Phakama Africa	Rise, Africa
Funa uMsindisi	Seek the Saviour
Namhla amadodakazi akho	Today your daughters
Ayizigqili zezizwe.	Are the slaves of nations.
(Isihlablelo 46/1, 4, 5)	(Hymn 46/1, 4, 5)

Followers Give Meaning to the Words of the Prophet

Nazarite members interweave the words and rhythms of Shembe's hymns into the fabric of their everyday experience and the constitution of their religious belief. While doing research in the early 1990s, I asked several women which of Shembe's hymns were their favorites and which had particular meaning for them. Few women singled out any of the hymns as favorites, stressing that all the songs were important. Nevertheless, there were one or two women who had particular stories that they associated with the hymns of the founder of their religious community. Cinikile Mazibuko from Soweto told me:

> It's not to say that we favour them or we like them. These *hlabelela,* they talk. Like the first *hlabelela,* number one. It tells, you, see, *Nkosi sikelel'uBaba.* That means, "God please help *Baba.*" Save our *Baba* [Father]. . . . Save him because he was going in, sleeping in the *veld,* like this. When he had nobody to help him, [he was] just going up and down. He had no place to sleep. So he was sleeping in the forest, sometimes. In the *veld,* in the rain. [At] the same time, he was sent by God to preach. . . .
>
> So, that's why I say these *hlabelela,* they talk. Even today, still the same founder who is still here, today people who were laughing at him, chasing him away. . . . They though maybe by chasing—as he was called by God, to see—to come to this mountain—the people of this place. They even used to say, they called the *indunas* (chiefs), to say, "the person who is staying here, that person is stealing our goats, is stealing our cattle." Then they all came here to find him, and kill him. . . . He used

> to hide there [in a cave on the mountain] from people who wanted to kill him because they say he wanted to [steal], to take their sheep and goats away like that. Then he used to hide in the mountains.
>
> So this *hlabelela* number one is talking about that life, that even he used to hide from people who wanted to kill him. (Cinikile Mazibuko, personal communication, January 1992).

Singing the words of the founder, sounding them out, and making them coalesce with your own experience generates hope in the Nazarite faithful. This member draws on the experiences of the church founder, reputed to overcome the evil of others and, indeed, to empower his followers in difficult situations. She continued by relating another story. This concerned a hymn her own mother would often sing.

> My mother says, 227, *Kepha wena ufihliwe.* My mother used to say this, "Oh, God, Oh Baba Shembe, I love you so much, but you are hidden to me. I don't, even if I want to follow you, there are some things that comes, eh, makes me not to follow you." You see.
>
> It even says, "I wonder, where will I get that river? Where will I just wash myself? That I can be nice, and clean, and follow you. Sometimes I even ask, where will I get those *imiNazarethas* [white prayer surplices]? Where will I put on those *imiNazarethas* and look so nice? When you remember me." That was when my mother was, when her children were dying, she told us she used to sing this song. (Ibid.)

In this excerpt the words of the founder were interwoven into memories of blood kin, serving to create continuities in belief and practice through song performance.

Belief as Voice, Word, and Body

The performance practice associated with Nazarite hymns is the foremost space in which Isaiah Shembe and his followers appropriated and transformed the mission hymn. Elsewhere I have argued that, in fact, Isaiah Shembe archived "Africanness" in the composition of this repertory because all things African were denigrated by the colonial state and many missionary communities (see Muller 2002). Signs of "Africanness" included a reversal to call-and-response, cyclical form, rhythm as the driving musical parameter, and a lack of clear cadence. The harmonic structure underpins a fluctuation between chords I and II (often with a sharpened fourth) much like traditional bow music, and members may begin and end the piece at any moment. I am suggesting that the linearity and squareness of the structure of the printed hymn are reinvented for more meaningful performance and that this is where the real treasure of Nazarite spiritual song lies. Isaiah Shembe conceived of religious worship

in terms of the congregational structure of the Protestant church for the Sabbath and sacred dance for the day after the Sabbath. Sacred dance was introduced into *ibandla lamaNazaretha* as early as the 1920s, a radical position for an indigenous religious group, because even then the mission position was to forbid all forms of dance in religious contexts. More than any other gesture, dance accompanied with the songs of Shembe reconstituted belief as the substance of the envoiced and embodied word of the Nazarite prophet. The musical style for religious dance (*umgido* or *ukusina*) may be associated with either the *amahubo* or syncretic style. What identifies this genre is its capacity to make a member "stand up and dance." As Dumisani Cele, one of Mthethwa's informants, commented, *iculo elingasukumi lifile* ("a song that does not 'stand up' is dead"). Meter is what separates out hymns that can and cannot be danced to. Mthethwa (ibid.) writes that there are two kinds of meter: the "earth-bound" and the "air-borne." Duple meter is heavy and earth-bound and triple meter, light and air-borne. In contrast to the common use of triple meter in Western dances, such as the waltz and mazurka, it is the duple rhythm that enables sacred dance in *ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

Furthermore, in the "stylized walking" of *umgido* performance, a song leader may start anywhere in the written text, and members respond with text that may echo the leader or come from other place in the structure of the printed hymn text. Here rhythmic interaction between individuals singing different phrases of text is privileged over linguistic and semantic form and continuity—this is particularly the case in dance performance and less so with *inkhonzo* performance, now more strongly directed by a spiritual leader and the organist. Printed hymn texts are continually elaborated on and extended with additional vocables that serve a rhythmic rather than semantic purpose. By not starting at the "beginning" of the printed text, there is no sense of a start and a finish, but more an endless cycle of repetition. All beginning and ending of a performance is articulated by the song leader according to when she or he thinks the group is in harmony. *Umgido* is truly a performance practice articulated as a structure of and by feeling (see Muller 1999: ch. 4 for greater explanation of women's performance of *umgido*).

Conclusion

I conclude by reiterating Homi Bhabha's statement: "the word of God, truth, art creates the conditions for a beginning, a practice of history and narrative" (Bhabha: 105). He argues that the book becomes wondrous in the way in which it is displaced, but also translated, repeated, and imitated. My sense is that while Bhabha points to the transfiguration of the colonial text and context through the emergence of the book, the

properties of the cultural object of the book remain fixed (they are thought of as repeated, imitated, or translated). The book in this frame is only permitted to represent the language of its original authors, and the truth of its text is limited to the words of those original authors. Brown's reading of the Shembe hymnal uses this more conventional understanding of the Nazarite hymnal (1995). Elaine Scarry's otherwise profound writing on the work of the imagination and perception, of "dreaming by the book," is similarly limited because it presumes that reading is exclusively textual, individualized, and silent. Even poetry lacks a sounding dimension.

The Nazarite perspective provides a powerful contrast with the secular practices of reading (and hearing) in the West in which texts are variable but the book as cultural object remains intact, natural, and unchallenged. I suggest we might consider the emergence of the book and its truths in colonial contexts, not just as secular objects but also as kinds of practice, performances, that connect to human belief systems. This is what Gates refers to as the "talking book" (1988: 131–32) and I have extended in the Nazarite case to describe as the singing/dancing book, a book embodied. The idea resonates with the more flexible idea of the book increasingly introduced with innovative computer technology. The idea diverges quite considerably from the way in which Brown (1999) and Oosthuizen read the Shembe hymnal and Bhabha viewed the English book in Indian colonial contexts. It is rather a more fluid, processual, and participatory understanding of the textualization of experience and, indeed, belief than the Western metropole has traditionally allowed for the book.

Such a perspective requires that scholars actively include the views of users and consumers of these texts in the substance of their critical analysis. Neither Brown nor Oosthuizen involved the Nazarite members in the interpretation of the hymn texts. Bhabha begins to consider reception and multiple interpretations and truths by reflecting on the ways in which colonized communities decenter the book. Nevertheless, as I understand Bhabha's text, he does not decenter the idea of the book in practice, particularly in terms of the presumed silence of its text. The book is the object, its written representation the final, fixed, completely disembodied (and dehumanized?) word.

Literary critics fail to historicize the book as cultural object, providing little sense of the slippages when the book is "read" or operates in particular societies, not just as a disembodied object but as an integral dimension of human life and belief. Clearly, the Shembe case provides a completely different vision of the place of the book in a colonial context where orality and literacy were less stable categories. I have argued that in this context the double meaning of the Zulu word *izwi*—voice and

word—is instructive for understanding how a largely nonliterate community incorporated "the book," a written vernacular, and literacy itself into existing epistemology. Furthermore, in the mission context in which literacy was synonymous with belief, Isaiah Shembe and his followers accommodated the signs of old and new belief systems in a single space. They used the book to signal European values by publishing a hymnal but retained a sense of their own beliefs by keeping the voice and the body central to Nazarite spirituality. Hearing the "voice of God" was possible in either the written or performed words.

I am suggesting that literary critics have not adequately deconstructed the concept of the book and its texts in practice. What we learn about the orality-literacy interface in *ibandla lamaNazaretha* is that the book is only the starting point for the textualization of truth and meaning. The formal structure of the Nazarite hymnbook may well contain the "words of the Nazarite prophet/God Shembe," but most Nazarite members remain unable to read. It is, therefore, only in performance that Nazarite style is made manifest and meanings are generated. It is not until these words are sung in the style *kwakwaShembe* and used to accompany sacred dance that true worship, in the Nazarite sense, can happen. The discovery of the book is only the beginning of a far more fluid textualization of religious belief and performance practice, such as one finds today in *ibandla lamaNazaretha.*

THE LAND AND THE WORD: MISSIONS, AFRICAN CHRISTIANS, AND THE CLAIMING OF LAND IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Introduction: Christianity and Land

In accounts of colonialism in South Africa, such as that by the Comaroffs (1991; 1997), the significance of the Bible and its narratives and imagery, like that of the mission enterprise in general, is claimed to have been more important as a "conversation" than for its effecting of "conversion." That is, its impact upon secular aspects of consciousness and practice was more significant, at least initially, than its influence upon belief. Among these secular issues, the one that has received most attention in the literature is that of political liberation: assertions of freedom and resistance in South Africa have been expressed in biblical terms, within both mainstream and independent African Christianity (Elphick). Equally, postapartheid discourses of reconciliation and nation-building have drawn extensively on Christian frameworks (R. A. Wilson). Little attention, though, has been given to the significance of biblical oratory and Christian practice in relation to land: both securing access to and reclaiming it. Likewise, discussions of the need for and the desired effects of land

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reform have been couched in terms of economic and sometimes political considerations but have rarely given attention to the religious ideologies of the original landholders and/or intended beneficiaries and their effects.

In many places and at diverse times, the Bible has proved to be a rich source of imagery, particularly for those who have undergone unsettling experiences. We do not need to look far to find evocations of the Old Testament in defense of beleaguered and oppressed people far from home, as in the world the American slaves "made" (Genovese), or in support of national identities newly created in the course of postwar reconstruction, as in the Netherlands after their liberation from Spanish control (Schama: 93–125).

But what has been its role, and what are the feelings of its adherents, in relation to land? In South and southern Africa, many accounts show African Christianity and land to be inextricably linked. Depending on social and historical context and on theoretical approach, these vary in the extent to which they weight the variables of ritual, political, and material well-being. Perhaps the most familiar are those cases involving people from mission communities: the incipient African middle class, known as *kholwa* in Natal and *bakriste* (or *majakane*) in the Northern Province. In these cases, one of which is documented in this essay, belief in and adherence to scriptural tenets seems to have inspired or dovetailed with more secular economic strategies. Communities of converts staked their claim by making substantial land purchases in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and engaging in successful peasant farming (Murray 1992; La Hausse 2000: 24, 159–62). As an economic scheme this enjoyed varying degrees of success but ensured a level of respectability and influence for at least some of those pursuing it and their descendents: a consequence that had not only to do with the material security assured by such purchase but also with its imparting of a sense of a distinct and marked-off community.

Less familiar are some recently published accounts describing how land was acquired or purchased by the leaders of independent churches for their followers: by Solomon Lion in the former Transvaal (Murray 1999) and Isaiah Shembe in the former Natal (Muller 1999: 64–65). Murray's account stresses the secular aspects of Christian belief: he sees Lion's "theology" merely as the means whereby he achieved extraordinary levels of patriarchal control over these followers, whose labors in fact provided the wherewithal to purchase the land in the first place. In its emphasis upon Solomon Lion's "efforts to establish and sustain an independent community" and his scepticism about this leader's motives, this account underplays the significance of the Bible in the perceptions of his followers. Giving a more sympathetic picture of religious motivation is Muller's recent account of the Shembe church and its leader: she shows how land purchase played its part in enabling the establishment, in con-

ditions of increasing state control, of a series of "rituals of resistance."[1] On a less ethereal note, Muller does suggest that Shembe's land pockets might also have provided material "spaces of sanctuary" for the refugee women and children who constituted his primary following (1999: 65). If one searches beneath the apparent contrasts between these two accounts (and their authors' differing interpretations), one can discern a common thread. In both, the significance of the Bible—particularly the Old Testament—was in its capacity to help people understand their "tribulations, victories, captivities, peregrinations and prophecies" and hence to enable people "to answer … troubling questions about their own identity" (Schama: 68).

In this essay I explore the significance of the Bible in the memories and aspirations of a group of people descended from early mission converts in the former Transvaal (now Northern Province), who bought their farm in the early years of the twentieth century, were removed from it in 1974 in one of apartheid's infamous "black spot" resettlements, and spent the next twenty years attempting to reclaim it. Eventually, in 1994, their efforts were rewarded with success: although their recovery of the farm preceded the advent of the "new South Africa" by several months, it became one of the "pilot projects" of the new government's land reform program. After introducing the outlines of the case, the essay explores Bible-linked accounts of how Doornkop was originally settled and cultivated, how it became home, was lost, and reclaimed. It demonstrates how a community that experienced its own existence as inseparably linked to its land asserted that existence in terms of biblical narrative.

Doornkop—A Model for Land Reform

In December 1994, a group of people celebrated their return to the farm Doornkop, the "land of their forefathers." Of those who had been evicted from their lands in apartheid's infamous "black spot" forced resettlements of the 1960s and 1970s (Desmond; Surplus People's Project) this was one of the first groups to return. Reports in the NGO publication *Land Update* show how, in marking the occasion, they made equal and simultaneous use of biblical imagery and the symbols and practices of African nationalism. Their exclusion from the farm was spoken of in terms evoking the Israelites' "exile" from the land of Canaan, and they knelt on the soil to give thanks to God for bringing them back to the "promised land." But their singing of *Nkosi Sikele iAfrika,* chanting of

[1] Muller claims that these rituals, although incorporating biblical language and imagery in typical bricolage mode, were as much concerned with precolonial African issues such as fertility as they were with more orthodox Christian concerns.

"Viva Mandela!" and hoisting of the new South African flag seemed to link the reclaiming of this farm as much to the broader reclaiming of the new South Africa as to the Israelites' return to their homeland (*Land Update* 35:15, 19–20; 34:10). It also seemed symbolically to link the interests served by restoring this farm to its former owners with those of the nation as a whole.

But later, according to staff of the NGO who had been working with the farm's owners,

> after the highly emotional moment of reclaiming, with the flags, the press, the nationalist rhetoric … suddenly the officials and everybody else departed, and the people were just left there. They felt insecure. They did not go back to claim their original plots, they agreed rather that they needed a plan. "The government will come next week," they said. In the meantime, they built a squatter settlement, and called it "Crossroads." (Greg Jacobs and Melinda Swift of TRAC, discussion with the author, 6 March 1997, Johannesburg)

According to this account, passive resignation was similarly evident in the period that followed the celebration. The "government" did not come next week. Indeed, although it dispatched a bewildering array of planners, consultants, and functionaries at varying levels of inclusivity to inspect the farm and make plans for it, there is a very real sense in which it has still not "come." In part this is due to, but in part it has also contributed to, the commencement—and rapid widening—of rifts between those wanting to go it alone and those wanting to build links to broader regional and national structures, and hence preferring to wait for the government's arrival. Thus has been undermined the image of a fraternally coexisting community that once lived and farmed on the land and that might do so again.

The themes of nationalist liberation and return from biblical exile, combined in Doornkop's dramatic celebration of reclaiming, point to some complex and sometimes contradictory impulses underpinning South Africa's land reform program. Their use in a publication, *Land Update,* that echoes and endorses folk sentiments in a conscious attempt to shape a broader political unity among rural people adds further layers to the complexity. To stress the similarity to the promised land of the Bible is a reminder of the longstanding Lutheran faith of its original owners: a feature that marks them off as having a superior socioeconomic status to, and interests distinct from those of, many other claimants of land. Farms such as Doornkop were purchased at around the turn of the century by offshoots from mission communities wishing to establish themselves as freeholders outside the African reserve areas. The restitution of such lands, although a key focus of the government's

land reform program inasmuch as it aims to redress the injustices of apartheid, has been recognized as incompatible with broader processes of redistribution designed to benefit the very poor who never owned land in the first place (Bernstein; James 2000a; Murray 1996). This divergence of interest was masked by the deployment of national symbols at the Doornkop homecoming ceremony described above. To sing the national anthem, raise the flag, and hail the President was to highlight participants' endorsement of, and their reliance on, broader nation-wide projects of development and symbolically to merge the interests served by restoring this farm to their former owners and their descendents with those of the nation as a whole.

In considering the historical background to, and contemporary expressions of, the paradoxical themes embodied in this opening vignette, a contrast becomes apparent. On the one hand, freeholders' special relationship to the land over the past century has given them a strong distrust of, and disinclination to engage with, broader national and political structures. At times and in particular contexts, this becomes so marked as to appear as a tenacious and backward-looking traditionalism. On the other hand, there is a rhetoric deriving from the years of struggle against apartheid that depicts the land as a communal resource that has been and that must continue to be communally defended and whose restitution will be in the best interests of all. Accompanying this, and looking to the future, people's desire to live in conditions of modernity and development is represented as being attainable only through affiliation with the African National Congress (ANC) and the broader national project in the new South Africa.

In short, the cause of freeholders, such as those whose ancestors bought the farm Doornkop, has been portrayed and manipulated by various people—including at times themselves—as a symbol of broader political struggles. Counteracting this is the independence and free-spiritedness that, for a century, has been associated with freeholders' desire to "go it alone." (It is ironic, given their reluctance to align themselves with any outside structures because of the threat these alignments might pose to freeholder unity, that such divisions have already occurred: many of them having been engendered by the very process of reclaiming land whose outcome was celebrated at the event described above.) The key to understanding the uneasy coexistence of these countervailing discourses within a single group must be sought, firstly, in the historical role of the mission and the resulting role that Christian ideas have come to play in enabling people to lay access to and reclaim land. Inextricably linked to this, it must also be sought in the way people on such farms have come to see their relationship to the apartheid state.

Freeholder Separatism and Independence—The BMS and Rebone Ramaube

The political rhetoric of restitution described in the first pages of this essay sees the restoring of land rights to an undifferentiated African populace as a key aspect of freedom in the new South Africa. But this obscures a complex, and particular, relationship that ties people to land: it is this which, in turn, has lent force to the efforts such as those of Doornkop's former owners to regain their farm. It is also this which has mediated people's relationship to the state, causing them to experience this relationship as members of specific kinds of communities rather than as individual citizens. To those born at Doornkop, and descended from one of the original purchasers (*bareki*) who bought the farm "on the surface and below the ground" (*ka fase le ka godimo*) and who enjoined their children, in a manner evoking biblical genealogies of begetting, to "stay here, and your child, and your child's child," ownership of this farm symbolizes not only the communality of living and working on the farm but, closely related, a sense of distinctness from those round about who had never been party to such relationships.

As the narrative is retold now, the very reasons underpinning, and processes involved in, the purchase of freehold farms were concerned with independence and separateness. When the *bareki* seceded from Botšhabelo and involved themselves in the long and complex process of buying their own farm, they were attempting to remove themselves from the structures of governance imposed by both mission Christianity and the settler state (see Delius: 158, 168). They were also reasserting—in parallel with the converts' original motivation in moving away during the 1860s from the Pedi polity and the domain of Chief Sekhukhune—their independence from the political structures of African traditionalism. Buying Doornkop appears, in retrospect, to have provided a real basis both for political autonomy and for a separate identity.

Present-day accounts of the Lutheran converts' flight from the menace of Sekhukhune's warriors resonate strongly with the official version that the Berlin Mission Society (BMS) mission at Botšhabelo published in 1965 to commemorate its centenary, in a pamphlet entitled "What God Does." And both are powerfully reminiscent of the Israelites' flight from Egypt in their stressing of divine deliverance. The mission account invokes this episode explicitly:

> In the bible it is said that God did a miracle when he saved the Israelites from Egypt, led them through the wilderness and gave them food and water in a mysterious way. (Berlin Mission Society)

It also lays more stress on God's miraculous powers—

> The river was overflowing and the king's warriors were after them. With God's miracle, the waters receded to allow them to cross the river on the night of 23rd of November 1864.... After they crossed to the other side, more water flowed into the river and the king's soldiers could not cross. (Ibid.)

—than Rebone Ramaube's reiteration of Doornkop folklore, which has the incident mediated through the agency of God's messenger, the German missionary:

> When they arrived at the Tubatse river, they crossed at a place where it was shallow. Sekhukhune's warriors were behind them carrying spears. When these warriors were supposed to follow them across the river, great waves emerged, a flood came from the east and it started to fill the river. The warriors couldn't cross the river to follow our parents and their saviour Merensky. (Rebone Mmasegobe Ramaube, 17 July 1997, Doornkop)

The fleeing Christians, under Merensky's guidance, then established themselves at the evocatively named Botšhabelo (place of refuge), which the mission account describes as "a beautiful garden of the true Jesus Christ" for the gift of which they "thanked God" (Berlin Mission Society). But it was over the question of whether this farm was "given" by God or purchased through the converts' diligent labor that the accounts diverge utterly. The BMS archive in Berlin documents how a swath of land—including both Botšhabelo *and* Doornkop—was initially bought by the Lutheran congregation with the legal and financial help of Merensky, who served as trustee for the converts (Andrea Schulze, personal communication). Like many African land purchases at the time, freeholders, taking advantage of a political dispensation allowed during Paul Kruger's presidency of the ZAR and seizing a brief moment of opportunity before the passing of the 1913 act that was to legislate against Africans owning land outside the reserve areas, were here using a white "front" to buy their farm. Such a strategy seemed bound to end in dispute. The local account as told by Rebone Ramaube contrasts with the BMS one: first, in differentiating between the two purchases, and second, in its insistence that Merensky deceived his followers by fraudulently putting his name, rather than theirs, on the title deed of the farm, now known by the name Botšhabelo, which had in reality been bought with the proceeds of their own labor. So deceitful is he seen to have been that he delighted in having the congregation sing a hymn that mocked them for their illiteracy and their incapacity to discern how they were being tricked.

> They managed to buy the land, using collection money from the church service, with Merensky. He put his signature on the deed, showing it did

> not belong to the people but to him. Because God is there, He said to Merensky, "tell these people what you have done." When we used to sing "the darkness which is here in the earth is reigning everywhere," in song 121, we did not know what was meant by this song. He meant by this that the people were illiterate and could not even see that he had written his name on the title deed. Some people did detect what Merensky was saying, we started to find out what was wrong with him. We went to a farmer nearby, over there, and explained that Merensky is no more as we used to know him. The farmer asked how we knew this. We said, "we can hear it in the songs in the church and in his preaching, we aren't happy with it." The man asked, "is there anything you have agreed with him?" "Yes, he has bought a land with us. We are not sure how he has bought it. We will be divided (through these bad words)." We went and discovered that Merensky had put his signature on the title deed.

In response, the story goes, some of Merensky's parishioners then raised the money to buy an alternative property nearby: the present-day Doornkop. Their dispute with the mission was one in which strivings for territorial and political independence were merged with aspirations to receive the truths of the gospel without missionary mediation; a number of those who were to be purchasers of Doornkop had followed an early convert, Martinus Sebushane, in breaking away from the Berlin Mission Society and establishing the independent Bapedi Lutheran Church. This was subsequently categorized by Sundkler, in retrospect, as the first of the Ethiopian Churches that emphasized "Africa for the Africans" (Poewe and van der Heyden; Sundkler 1961). Agents of what was now the Union Government were puzzled by the community's reluctance, while attempting to conclude the extremely lengthy process of independent purchase, to engage with the state structures set up for Native Administration. Officials of the Department of Native Affairs were perplexed by these people's "attitude [which] has always been most independent … and insolent" and by their preference for dealing independently with maverick "law agents and others" (letter from Sub Native Commissioner, Middelburg, to Secretary for Native Affairs, 15/5/1906). They explained the "persistency" of these African purchasers by reference to their presumed "sentimental attachment to the neighbourhood" (letter from Department of Native Affairs to Minister of Native Affairs, 7/12/1915): an interpretation that subsequent events have certainly shown to be prophetic.

The local account illuminates the view Doornkop's claimants have of themselves, of their relationship to their land, and of the role played by biblical narrative. An extreme view, like that expounded by Rebone Ramaube, would have it that not only Doornkop but also Botšhabelo —

indeed, all the land in the Middelburg district—rightly belongs to those who were Merensky's converts and whose labors enabled him to make the initial land purchase. Such a view, clung to by Rebone and other members of a present-day Doornkop faction dubbed *majela thoko* (those who eat alone) or *dingangele* (those who contest or dispute), nourishes the belief of this faction's members that freehold lands, once reclaimed, should retain their independent status and should remain separate from any broader political or national structures. Rebone's account describes the community's hard-won acquisition, after undergoing tribulations and owing much to divine deliverance, of a place where some autonomy could be found. It seems to invoke the authority of God and the power produced through biblical analogy, not as a motif to illustrate obedient membership of a missionary's flock in his heavenly garden but in support of sovereignty over their own swath of the Transvaal and of their right to run it as they pleased (and please).

In this and other similar cases, missions, by originally facilitating the independent settlement of African cultivators beyond the bounds of chiefly power and somewhat remote from settler control and the state, had laid the basis for the creation of particular kinds of communities. Former mission inhabitants, positioned somewhere between citizen and subject, had an indirect relationship to the broader political world that was mediated through membership of such communities.

"We Are Scattered All Over"

A powerful adjunct to the story of the farm's original purchase—aided by God but ultimately obstructed by his agent Merensky—lies in the story of its people's dispossession when they were forcibly relocated in the "black spot" removal of 1974. As Godfrey Mathobela recounted:

> In the morning we woke up to find soldiers and police, they were knocking on doors and saying we must go and board the bus.... It was known, on that morning, that if enemies came people would *hlaba mogoši* (a distress call, invoking the chiefship). "*Sebatakgomo*" was being heard from GaMotau to Soplai section where we were staying. The old men and women were gathering at the church to pray. The village is known for its devotion to Christianity: whenever people had a problem, they thought of praying. (Godfrey Mathobela, 14 July 1997, Doornkop)

His description places evidence of the community's devout and supplicant Christianity side by side with its deploying of the traditionalist chiefly invocations that had been used during the reserve-based Pedi

revolt of the 1950s: a reminder of the inextricability of mission-oriented and traditionalist ideologies throughout the period under review.[2] Echoing his words, but linking dispossession to its eventual outcome of divine redemption, is Rebone's account:

> even when we were removed, we prayed, but they said, "even if you pray, we will take you." God has now brought us back again, we are at our place.... I used to tell people that one day we will come back here, but most of them said I was mad. However, I knew that through the power of prayer, God would one day bring us here. (Rebone Mmasegobe Ramaube, 17 July 1997, Doornkop)

The reclaiming of Doornkop appears, retrospectively, to have vindicated the faith of those dispossessed: Rebone states, "my trust in God was ultimately confirmed by our coming back." Conversely, the difficulties people faced while in exile are interpreted as an index of their loss of faith that the farm's reclaiming would eventually be accomplished:

> Even the Bible confirms these things. I kept on referring them to the Bible, Isaiah 1: those who abandon their God will be punished. Yes, at Monsterlus we were suffering and that was God's punishment for the fact that most people were beginning to lose hope in Him. Even in the book of Jeremiah, Chapter 5, it is said that the present laws are no longer being made by old people, but by children, and that we get food through difficulties. This was true because at Monsterlus we were not ploughing or growing our own food. We depended on buying everything. We were like the Israelites when they were in Egypt. (Ibid.)

Although the forced removal was not the only reason why Doornkop's sons and daughters found themselves, like those of Israel, "scattered in the wilderness," it is the one that lends itself to the most vivid remembering of the farm's original community and to the most poignant mourning of that community's loss. In the process, the sense of what distinguishes members from outsiders has become sharpened. The narrative about life "in the wilderness" stresses not only the community's loss of faith but also its sense of threat experienced at the hands of those who were not mission people. As Rebone puts it "some people treated us like slaves, we were strangers, even their language was different, and we were lost." The stories, like that of the original departure from Sekhukhuneland, stress themes of tribulation and testing while in exile that are strongly reminiscent of those in the Bible.

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2 For more detail on how this mission community viewed its chief, see James 2000b.

A less cataclysmic factor in Doornkop's residents' dispersal was urban migration. Many had been working in the towns of the Transvaal and the cities of the Reef for years by the time the removal occurred, often taking up residence in townships such as Soweto while leaving their children to be brought up on the farm by grandparents. But what distinguished the removal from these more gradual and less irrevocable forms of dispersal was how it forcibly displaced the location in which families' rural domestic circumstances had been situated, leaving no choice about the religious character of their vicinity—about whether their neighbors were *bakriste* (Christians) or *baheitene* (heathens)—and hence subjecting them to the antagonism of the latter. The removal, as refracted through some accounts, took the children of God, so sorely tested in fleeing from the domain of Pedi chiefly authority and yet so miraculously reprieved, and dumped them once again in the midst of those who practiced pagan rituals, key among which was *koma* (initiation). In accounts of the decision to return to the farm after its reclaiming, like that told by Bapedi Lutheran Church member Godfrey Mathobela, what looms large is the need to escape, once again, from the heathen practices of the reserve areas whence their forefathers had originally fled:

> We wanted to come back to Doornkop because life in Mamone [in the homeland] was not good for us. We were disturbed by *koma* (initiation) by being forced to attend this. People in Mamone would come and force one to become initiated, house-to-house. It was not easy to resist. But I was safe—when they came and sang the songs to fetch *mašoboro* (uninitiated boys), I would lock myself in the house and pray and pray, and then the threat would miraculously pass.
>
> But then they came again. On that day, when the mob came, a young girl of 14 rushed to tell me, and was crying, pleading that I should take cover. I couldn't now run away, I just prayed and prayed, and then felt brave.... I left Mamone at 4 am and went to my wife's place ... arrived at 5 am and explained everything to my wife, whom I sent to check whether they had broken into my house. They had not done so. I had been alone there, my parents had left to take some other children away for fear that they would be abducted by the same mob. After my wife returned from Mamone, she was scared to have me stay at her place, having heard that the mob was looking for me high and low.
>
> I went off, planning to go to Witbank, but on the way, *lengwalo* (scriptures, lit. "the word") came to my mind: *thapelo yeo e se nago moleki ga se yona* ("a prayer that is not tested is not a real one"). The meaning of this verse is, if you're a real Christian, you must stand test and not run away, through prayer you can defeat your foes. Running away would have meant that I didn't trust God or believe that my prayers would be answered. So instead of fleeing to Witbank I went to nearby Glen Cowie [a Catholic mission], where I stayed at the place of my brother-in-law. I

> spent a few days there. The next Sunday I went to church, to report the problems to the priest and to ask for absolution and salvation. The priest prayed with me to save me, this strengthened me, and the next day, I had sent word to my wife, who then sent word to tell me that the situation had improved, and that I could return.

Although this story emphasizes the importance of individual strength abetted by the power of prayer, and hence carries the message that it is better to stay and face one's adversaries, in its final outcome it mirrors the tale of the original escape from the Pedi reserve. It is echoed by other accounts that tell of life in the "dumping grounds" and reserve areas. The evils these enumerate include traditional marriage, witchcraft, *sangomas* (traditionalist healers), and other ungodly and even unhealthy practices in the places to which Doornkop sons and daughters had been relocated; they celebrate how the power of prayer and spiritual healing have been facilitated by retreat from these areas and by the farm's reclaiming (Julia Mphela, 15 July, Doornkop). The sense of relief expressed about having escaped and returned to a godly place parallels a more secular emotion: of delight that the political autonomy originally established through the purchase of this farm, and the promise of freedom from the diverse tyrannies of chiefs, colonial officials, and mission alike, might now have its realization. But such a promise has been undermined by the dawning realization that the community at its heart has long disappeared.

The Community and the Church Bell

In oral accounts given by Doornkop residents, the farm symbolizes the continuity, stability, and fellowship that is said to have united its former inhabitants. Its loss signified the loss of a social bond and the scattering of its people: its reclaiming, as described earlier, seemed to promise a reinstatement of this bond.

A key idiom of the former community's togetherness is the church bell. When Elizabeth Maroga described her memory of her early childhood spent on the farm, she told of how everyone knew each other, how almost all were related, and how at the heart of this close-knit existence was the church, the bell's tones of which were so well known that when it rang to call residents together they would know in advance the nature of the news they were to be given.

The bell, tangentially, was invoked in another aspect of community solidarity: its name distinguished one among a sequence of youth groupings (*dithaka;* sing. *sethaka*) that, although paralleling closely in form the initiation regiments of communities in the heartland of the Pedi homeland, were in fact established by the event of confirmation in the Lutheran

church. They were named in accordance with memorable events happening at around the time of members' confirmation. One year, when the church bell was cracked, the *sethaka* was accordingly named *sethaka* of the broken church bell (*sa mausa tshipi*). Others were named for more secular events: *sethaka* of chicken-stealing (*sa mautswa dikgokgo*) commemorated one member's youthful mischief, while *sethaka sa matata a ma tala* bore witness to a girl's having fallen pregnant while "not yet ripened" (ibid.). While confirmation meant that a young person was a "proper Christian," it simultaneously—like its pagan equivalent *koma*—confirmed an adolescent's readiness for marriage (Rebone Mmasegobe Ramaube, 17 July 1997, Doornkop). Membership of the confirmation groupings also integrated youths into a long-term set of community relationships, by giving them an identity as a member of a specific peer group. These were particularly significant and enduring for women, who, years after their confirmation, would help other members when one of their children, in turn, was confirmed or married. They made clothing, contributed money and food, and dressed in special and distinctive uniforms to commemorate these events as members of a solidary grouping. Corroborating the importance of these *dithaka,* Doornkop women expressed regret that the forced removal had dispersed their members and made it impossible for them to continue functioning.

Particularly memorable to Elizabeth Maroga were occasions such as Christmas, when children would assemble around the tree standing in the church to recite verses each had been given by the church minister (*moruti*), and Easter, when people prayed all night long and in the early hours of the morning proceeded to the graveyard to place candles on the graves. She recalls a sense of plenty, which for her and others who lived there is captured in the memory of the peaches (*diperekisi*) they used to cultivate and sell at nearby towns. But it was the memory of communal solidarity more than the thought of going back to the cultivation of peaches that inspired her to want to return after the farm had been reclaimed. "When I think of Doornkop, I feel I could fly and go there," she said. "We want to go back because we long for the relationship that we used to have. Now we are split up and spread all over" (Elizabeth Maroga, 2 December 1997, Soweto).

Community was defined, then, by worshiping together, being confirmed together, and farming together on the farm; memories about these experiences, sharpened by loss, set the parameters for a remembered community. But it was in some senses a divided community: these memories contain complex references to emergent socioeconomic differentiations on the farm that sharpened over time. It divided people who still had their primary domicile on the farm at the time of the 1974 removal from those who, years before, had procured houses in townships

in which the economically active part of the family was living when the removal happened.[3] Almost all Doornkop families had by this time come to rely on money earned in paid employment, but wage-earners in the former group were mostly blue-collar labor migrants residing in temporary compounded accommodation while in town: the latter, in contrast, had become permanently town-dwelling and well-educated members of an African middle class. For members of this group, the experience of childhood on the farm—like that of Elizabeth Maroga, now a nurse at Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto—was part of a life course whose later phases led inexorably to a relatively comfortable existence in town.

The distinction between the two groupings was further entrenched with the moment of the forced removal, when poorer people had little choice but to accept their transportation to the remote and inhospitable homeland "dumping grounds"—Bothashoek, Praktiseer, Monsterlus—and to set up house in the tin shelters that were then provided,[4] while better-off ones, in contrast, had heard about the move in advance and made alternative plans about resituating their elderly relatives and the family's rural assets in areas closer by. Correspondingly, after the farm's reclaiming in 1994, many of those who returned immediately had done so more out of necessity than choice, while several of those who were inclined rather to see the farm as a place for eventual retirement were town-based people who had the material resources necessary for making such a choice.

Local accounts of the community's earlier life acknowledge these differences of wealth, but, as Elizabeth stressed, "no-one ever had to go without" (Elizabeth Maroga, 2 December 1997, Soweto). Her statement reveals the existence on the farm of patterns of paternalism, binding richer to more typically "working-class" people. These appear to have resembled similar patterns among mission-based proto–middle class communities elsewhere, such as those of the *kholwa* in Natal (Marks and Rathbone; La Hausse 1999). The contemporary expression of this clientelism is the increasing reliance of poorer, less-literate people upon members of the urban-based elite to represent them in the series of committees charged with leading the land-back struggle. At the same time, however, people express some resentment about this dependent status, asserting that richer people do not any longer really care for poorer ones

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3 These were in Witwatersrand townships such as Soweto or Daveyton and nearby towns such as Witbank or Middelburg.

4 This was the classic scenario of forced resettlement described in much of the advocacy literature in South Africa (Desmond; Surplus People's Project).

as they used to do. As Eva Mankge said: "People don't help each other much now. There are many funerals, but little helping" (Eva Mankge, discussion with the author, 16 July 1997, Doornkop).

Did reclaiming the land, then, promise a salvaged sense of community? Godfrey's account above suggests that through combining a tested and strengthened Christian faith with prudent flight he has been set free to live again among his own kind. Giving a similar impression was Eva Mokaungoe, who said that "the law of Doornkop says that we should all be together, we cannot be scattered around" (Eva Moukangoe, discussion with the author, 21 May 1997, Doornkop). This seems to suggest that a return to the farm fulfilled the promise of freedom sought by the original buyers. But there is a sense in which the paganism and errant ways of the world beyond the farm, once encountered, were impossible to leave behind. Those returning are thought by some to have been unable to shake off these bad practices (Eva Mankge, discussion with the author, 20 May, 1997, Doornkop). In this sense, the loss of a truly moral community united by its common faith and practice, blamed upon the "scattering" of Doornkop's children, is irredeemable. In Magdalena Seholola's statement—"When we die we are brought back so we can be together"—is an implication that there is community only in death.

Land, Community, the NGOs, and the State

These accounts are permeated by a particular idea of community that has buttressed the efforts to reclaim the farm yet has made its recovery ultimately chimeric. Underpinning this idea are a complex interaction of factors. African Christians have used biblical narratives, appropriating mission accounts and turning them to their own ends in their pursuit of independent ownership of land and of the right to manage their own affairs. These have been particularly poignant when enunciating and bemoaning the loss of the "promised land" and its people's "scatter in the wilderness" and when lamenting the fruitlessness of current attempts to regain what was lost. The narratives have given impetus to, and become interwoven with, a discourse on community enunciated in the course of interactions between land claimants and the legal and land NGOs that have worked to help the process of land restitution. While this discourse on community appears to arise out of *bareki* unwillingness to rely on broader national/political structures, it conceals a contradictory motif: that of the *bareki* as citizens with legitimate demands on the state. This incongruous coexistence of self-reliance and dependence points to a sharp factional divide that has split the sons and daughters of Doornkop.

Title-holders have been uneasy about placing their own fate in the hands of others. In part, this ambivalence is to be explained by a reluctance

to countenance the possibility that the idealized, remembered community mentioned above might have disintegrated into separate components with divergent identities. Ironically, it is partly the very process of fighting to reclaim the land—necessarily invoking outside help—that has engendered these divisions: while toughness and independence remain strong within one faction, others prefer to rely on the government to provide the bases for a modern, civilized lifestyle. These differences now seem to endanger any prospects that the land, once reclaimed, might once again become the dwelling place of those who took their cues from the ringing of the church bell.

Before the 1990s, during the apartheid years, a succession of committees had engaged in brief alliances with actors on the political stage. Representations had been made to, and discussions held with, high-profile figures such as Helen Suzman of the PFP, the then (all-white) parliamentary opposition. Not established, however, was the more obvious political allegiance with the ANC, even after its unbanning, despite many title-holders having for years been clandestine supporters of this organization. This reluctance, according to committee members, resulted from the need to avoid dividing the community through admitting conflicting political allegiance.

The reluctance to seek alliances with the broader political world was explained to me by two committee office-bearers. Both were members of minority political parties with land agendas more radical than that of the ANC. They felt that to evoke political party loyalties would be a divisive tactic since it would foreground these ephemeral loyalties and undermine what for them—in this context at least—was more important: the title-holder unity symbolized by the land. Community independence, endorsed by biblical narrative and predating party political loyalties, seemed the only means of transcending such loyalties.

For a while at least this strategy of avoiding division was successful. Assisted by NGOs rather than political parties, successive committees, in the decade after the 1974 removal, had worked single-mindedly to secure the farm's recovery. It was only after they had succeeded, some twenty years later, that divisions became manifest. The conflict, sharpening in the mid- to late-1990s, was mainly between a "modernizing" group that advocated and a "diehard" group that opposed the development of the farm with government help. Whereas members of the former desired to live in grid-planned townships like those of the bantustans to which many had been removed, and indicated their intention to wait for "the government" to implement these plans, the diehards preferred to live as their forefathers had done. Whereas modernizers, partly in recognition of the universalist and antiexclusivist rhetoric of the new South Africa, were willing to admit some outsiders as residents of the

reclaimed farm, the latter believed that Doornkop the farm should retain its religious—and hence ethnic—exclusiveness as stated in the original constitution.[5] In an evocative echo of the mistrust that their forefathers had felt for all government officials and their preference for dealing with "law agents and others," the diehards eventually ceased all dialogue with the NGOs, whose assistance they had earlier accepted, choosing instead to spend large sums of money engaging the services of a maverick Afrikaner lawyer. When their dealings with his firm collapsed amidst accusations of financial mismanagement, embezzlement, and general malpractice, the modernizers scoffed at their opponents, calling their bravado mere naivete.

It was not simply disagreements arising since the farm's reclaiming that fed the factional divide, however. It will be remembered that the *bareki* constituency had, since even before the removal, been geographically scattered and unequal in terms of status, wealth, and influence. The factional split—between those willing to invite "government" to take control in the hope that it would provide all the amenities of a "location" and those reluctant to have the farm transformed into a "location" for fear that it would be "under government"—aligned with a division between the better-off freeholders who had established themselves more securely in town and the poorer ones who had failed to do so. Many of the latter, who had had little choice but to move back to Doornkop, wanted the government to come and deliver services—hardly surprisingly, given their history of being buffeted about and subjected to decisions from elsewhere. For them, the land is more a place of material than of symbolic significance: hence the delivery of services is of paramount importance. In contrast, many of those who had managed to move to town while retaining a rural base at Doornkop espoused the fiercely independent stance. They had the luxury, while seeing the farm as a symbol of former independence and unity, of envisaging eventual retirement on the farm and meanwhile thinking of it from afar with a sense of nostalgia. Since they did not plan to move back immediately, matters such as electricity and running water were of lesser significance.

The rhetoric of independence, rooted in perceptions of the past, has thus been rekindled and nurtured within at least part of a modern land-claiming group. But in emphasizing such continuities one must be wary of the danger of essentializing. The diehards found themselves driven to this position only after lengthy and frustrating negotiations over the

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5 The dispute over ethnic exclusivity mainly concerned whether or not to admit the farm's former Ndebele tenants and their descendants; see James 2000a; 2000b.

reclaiming of their land. Conversely, the exaggerated sense of helpless dependency evoked by NGO accusations of "resignation" against those in the opposing, modernizer group—as described in the opening vignette of this essay—should be understood in the light of developmental discourses that favor community empowerment. What the NGOs (here agreeing with the diehards) were representing as a useless incapacity to stand alone, some Doornkop residents experienced as legitimate claims they make, as citizens, on the government.

The reliance on state initiatives must also explained by reference to apartheid South Africa's peculiar form of state welfarism. Although, prior to 1994, there had been marked inequalities in the state's provision of housing, health, education, and similar services, its impact on many Africans was to create and perpetuate a sense that only from the government could such services be obtained. But Doornkop claimants also recognized that such forms of welfarism could not necessarily be relied upon in the future and that self-reliance—ironically, the kind the NGOs have always advocated—might still become necessary. "In the old days, if a dam was broken, we would fix it ourselves," said David Debeile. "Now people wait for the government to come and bring water.... We need to start collecting money so we can build our own schools, since the government has no money" (David Debeile, 7 December 1997, Soweto). This statement represents a resigned acknowledgement that the dependence of the citizen upon the state may of necessity have to give way to the reasserted autonomy of the independent landholder.

What is of particular interest in the context of the present essay is how biblical narratives fed into the NGOs' image of the Doornkop constituency. Fired by the imperative to reverse the injustices of apartheid, they had built up an image, in this as in other similar cases, of a solidary, harmonious and egalitarian community cruelly removed from its domicile (Small and Winkler). Such an image combined biblically endorsed accounts of the past, such as Elizabeth Maroga's evocative descriptions of the church bell, with aspects of internationalist development discourse. It dovetailed with, and was partly constitutive of, the communalist rhetoric on land mentioned at the outset of this essay. The compatibility—and interweaving—of these ideas of community seems to substantiate claims that aspects of NGO practice make it appropriate to describe them as the "new missionaries" (Cooper and Packard).

But the presumption of a shared, participatory engagement in political matters was belied by freeholders' increasing reliance, in the years before the farm's recovery, on an urban-based educated elite to represent their interests. Forced primarily to deal with the members of this elite in its attempts to facilitate the reclaiming and development of the farm, NGO officials longed instead to develop closer and more immediate

relationships with "actual" community members (Greg Jacobs and Melinda Swift of TRAC, discussion with the author, 6 March 1997, Johannesburg; see also James 2000b). Nonetheless, the elusive community that their discussions with claimants had evoked was not an entirely illusory one. The very strength of feeling that had informed the years of discussions and negotiations before the farm was finally, with the state's blessing, reoccupied in 1994 was proof of its reality. But there was a great divide between the ideology of community that had driven the land-back struggle and its realization once people returned. As two NGO employees informed me: "We thought the women would pull the community together. They tried to motivate for this, but later they returned to individualism" (ibid.).

They had held out hope that the strength of Christian religion, as embodied by Doornkop's women with their Bible groups and prayer meetings, would play a role in cementing social bonds and in healing the factional division between diehards and modernizers. But they were disappointed.

Conclusion

What is the significance of the complex interplay between freeholder independence and citizens' legitimate reliance on the state? How does Christian practice inform it, and how does biblical authority legitimate either or both of its interwoven facets? If we return to a consideration of how biblical discourse endorses a sense of entitlement to, and independence derived from, land ownership, we can see that, while the lands procured by Solomon Lion, Isaiah Shembe, and Doornkop's buyers were undoubtedly of importance primarily for how they facilitated some economic self-sufficiency, equally significant seems to have been their provision of a sense of distinctiveness that their occupants, using the Bible as metaphor, could both sanction and circumscribe.

To say that biblical metaphor has been used to sanction a connection between land and people is not to make a primordial claim about land providing a source of "identity." Such claims are widely asserted, as for example at the Doornkop homecoming ceremony by Joe Seremane, then Chief Land Claims Commissioner and himself a victim of removals from a Christian freehold farming community:

> People regard earth as some kind of womb. It is where life comes from, so land is synonymous with life. It has broader implications—that each and everyone has land as a birthright. If you tamper with that, you tamper with where you come from, the womb, someone is tampering with your own mother.... Earth remains the source of your life. Of life itself. (Winberg and Weinburg: 39)

But such assertions are in themselves political statements, and we should not make simplistic assumptions about the automatic and unproblematic relationship between land and identity without attending to the relationships of power and influence that underpin these.

The original acquisition of land by freeholders such as those who bought Doornkop must be understood in the context of an array of segregationist laws that the colonial government was elaborating in the first few decades of the century and that were later to merge with, and feed into, the harsher laws of the apartheid regime. Within this context, the state was assembling systems of African landholding that laid the basis for a technique of governance. This linked Africans' occupation of reserve areas, held strictly under terms of "customary" tenure, to their status as subjects of chiefs under indirect rule (Mamdani; Ashforth). Even missions such as those run by the BMS, although providing their converts with the basis of an existence separate from chiefly rule, were inclined to endorse the power of patriarchal leaders within these communities and also to underwrite converts' obligations—in labor and taxation—to the holders of political power within the settler state (Delius; Hexham and Poewe; Schultze). Although mission accounts stressed these converts' indebtedness to God for delivering them from pagan persecution and bringing them together in God's "garden," thus emphasizing the necessity of humble Christian obedience, mission practice emphasized the necessity of bowing to the power of the government. Title-holder narratives, in contrast, accentuate the overriding importance of God's law, denying by implication its subordination to state law. These narratives thus retrospectively sanction the emancipatory experience of unfettered land access and speak of the promise of political sovereignty.

This sovereignty, however briefly achieved and chimerical, did not however represent a thoroughgoing opposition to the customary tenure of the homelands and its accompanying systems of governance. Most important, it did not embody principles of private and individual ownership. Archival evidence does show that among the possibilities considered by Doornkop's buyers was the option of dividing the farm into a small number of individual titles, which would then encompass the rights of other, unnamed owners. These debates over forms of ownership were dictated by the need to negotiate the complex terrain of segregationist legislation. But the option for which the buyers eventually settled was a form of communal ownership: an alternative that did not lead its members irrevocably into the separate and second-class citizenship of the reserve/homelands, with its accompanying status as subjects of reinvented tribal chiefs. Neither did it—at least initially—leave them as disconnected individuals whose emerging socioeconomic differences might fragment them, within a political dispensation resolutely weighted

against them because of their race and ethnic background. The image of "community" that resulted was one in which images of guidance and custodianship underpinned the dependent relationships between the poor and those who were becoming middle class. It symbolically merged all these and negated the differences between them by glossing them as "children of Israel": despite being "scattered in the wilderness," all were united by virtue of being children of one particular piece of "the soil."

If, as Landau claims, "the realm of the word" was the domain in which mission converts encountered the interchange between the expanding imperial powers and African kingdoms attempting to consolidate themselves (1995), then their independent use of "the word" represented a way to make Christianity their own and to negotiate separate spaces for themselves within the context of this interchange. The church provided a means through which independence could be sought through land purchase, and the Bible offered a repertoire of images for describing and legitimating this autonomy, while nonetheless endorsing the fundamentally communal and interdependent nature of its protagonists. Christianity was, in this sense, a fundamentally political phenomenon, contrary to weaker claims that its significance in relation to resistance has been merely that of "counter hegemony" (Comaroff 1985) or that its converts—through a long "conversation"—were more persuaded by its secular facets than by its religious dimension. Religion and its secular dimensions were fused, making Lutheranism, for Doornkop's Pedi owners, a truly "civil religion," as it had been for white farmers living in the neighborhood and beyond (Moodie).

At the same time, however, Christianity did not lay the basis, among all those seeking land, for a broader political unity: the absence of such a unifying discourse has been much lamented by activists working in land reform (Levin; Levin and Weiner). Although the scripture of land ownership—and its corollary, the scripture of land loss—endorsed strongly felt emotions that tied communal groups of people to specific farms and gave them a "sentimental attachment to [particular] neighbourhoods," it has not, by definition, lent itself to a more generalized politicization of the link between land and people.

PART 2

DIMENSIONS OF ORALITY AND RESISTANCE IN MODERN SOUTH AFRICA

FROZEN ASSETS? ORALITY AND THE PUBLIC SPACE IN KZN: *IZIBONGO* AND *ISICATHAMIYA*

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Introduction

My argument is that in the production of culture within Zulu society the poetry of the public space was always far more a polyphony than a series of monologues. And that is still the case. It simply depends on what constitutes the polyphony and where specific elements within it are. The specific question I want to ask is, What relevance, if any, have the elaborately dense and rich praise poems of royalty, the *izibongo* of the Zulu kings, at the present time? Can we, at this juncture of the present, see both the poetry and the poets as part of a different polyphony of the public space, in the production of culture in the early millennial post-apartheid state, and more specifically in this province of KwaZulu-Natal? Or is it more accurate to regard both as kinds of valuable frozen assets that have lost the capacity to engage meaningfully with any kind of active "knowledgeable community?"

In a historical context, the praises of the Zulu kings constituted the main poetry of such a space; they were certainly distinct from each other, and recognizable, and in this sense they have a unitary nature although they may be internally dialogic, suggesting the tensions and the stresses and strains that built up around a particular ruler. Yet they never existed in isolation: they had multiple settings and as performances coexisted perhaps primarily with the songs of war, *amahubo wempi* and the war dance songs, *izigiyo,* which men used as their personal signatures of song to dance to when they were being praised by their comrades in arms. Nor were the royal praises, the *izibongo zamakhosi,* isolated from the *izibongo* of ordinary men; these were part of the life of the regiments, and the activities of the regiments interacted intimately with the day-to-day life of royalty. The *izibongo* of ordinary men, besides emerging from the arena of war, were also central to the life of the homestead; in a composite way they constituted the complex of poetic names by which a person would be known to the members of his immediate family, and after death they

would form the knot of names that would be used to honor his shade when the deceased men of the family were addressed.They would also be performed at marriage ceremonies, and in this way the discourses of war and conflict and the domestic were intertwined and impact on each other. The gendered nature of both the art and act of praising meant that women had some role in it, although a minor one. For instance, the *izibongo* of the powerful kingmaker and aunt of Shaka kaSenzangakhona, Mnkabay, had a place in some royal praisings, as did the *izibongo* of Nandi, mother of Shaka. Clearly, then, the praises of the kings, although set most conspicuously in the public domain and used as public means of defining and reinforcing the prestige and power of the royal line, have to be seen at one level as part of a broader art form and a social process that operated both in the great public spaces and in the private domain.

The Evidence from the Stuart Collection

The dense and widespread nature of the activity of praising—*ukubonga*—during the period of the Zulu kingdom and after its demise and incorporation into the province of Natal, is strikingly clear from even the most cursory glance at the five volumes that have emerged to date from the manuscripts of the interviews that James Stuart conducted with Zulu oral poets and historians in the early years of the twentieth century (Webb and Wright). Three brief examples gleaned from volume 5 of *The James Stuart Archive,* published in 2001, give a sense of the multiple levels of involvement in the making of culture, which the activity of praising constituted. The first extract gestures at the primary capacity of the praise poet, the *imbongi,* to capture and set in public memory the names of key individuals seen as leaders in a particular group. The speaker is one of James Stuart's informants, Sipika kaVundisa Zuma; the year is 1918:

> We Nxamalalas assisted the British in the Zulu war and then were given land in Zululand close to Ndondonwane and Nabane drifts. Nabane is a pool, and is where the ferry boat is.
>
> Baba ka Ndondo of the Nxamalala tribe is a fine *imbongi.* He *bonga's* [praises] all our chiefs. He *bonga's* Mtsholoza, Tshisa, Matomela, Nakwa (ancient chief) and many others. He is of the Indhluyengwe regiment, short of slight build. (Webb and Wright 5:359)

Sipika kaVundisa, besides foregrounding the link between praise poet and naming, by mentioning specific locality, points briefly to the importance of place names as part of the wider memory bank used by individuals to map themselves into place and time. The second example is from one of the most interesting and knowledgeable of Stuart's informants in this latest volume, a man called Ngidi kaMcikaziswa of the Langa

people. Ngidi, who was at that time living at "Bellair Station" in what is now a suburb of Durban, was speaking to Stuart in 1904. In the section from which this quote is taken, he is recalling in great detail an expedition against Mzilikazi during the reign of King Dingane kaSenzangakhona, in 1838. It was clearly a time of great duress, and the reference to the saying of praises gives a sense of their being a means of fixing the identity of the traveling group at a difficult moment, in winter, far from home:

> *Firewood ceased to be carried out at the place of Myambo.* Further on we were obliged to use grass. Each man had a fire of his *own. Until dawn we would make fires, using this straw. The frost was white on the ground. Firesticks were carried; they were carried by the izinduna [army officers]. The izinduna would prepare smoking horns of dagga. They would smoke, and declaim the praises of the king there in the wilderness (endhle).* (Webb and Wright 5:87)[1]

The third quote I wish to draw brief attention to is from Stuart's interview with the *imbongi* Sende kaHlunguhlungu of the Zondi people. He was interviewed by Stuart in April 1918, and the reference to the context of praising again gives an insight into the flexibility of their usage and the way in which they could be inserted as part of a marker of an event not tied in any direct way to colonial conquest; the event was the sinking of the troopship *Mendi* in the English Channel on February 1917, during "World War" I; among the dead were six hundred members of the South African Native Labour Contingent. Sende had come to Stuart with another *imbongi,* Sikhumba, also of the Zondi people, and Stuart noted the following:

> Sende is the principal *imbongi* of these two, and evidently the *imbongi* of the tribe, for he *bonga'd* today when there was a large dance by members of the tribe on the Drill Ground [Pietermaritzburg] in aid of widows and orphans in connection with the Mendi disaster, about 1000 Europeans, 1200 Natives present, not including dancers. (Webb and Wright 5:281)

The insertion of praise poetry—in this case of the line of Zondi leaders—into a memorial for what was in effect a national disaster crossing the bounds of clan or "Zuluness," and ultimately of race as well, shows its flexibility of application. Such an event, with its layers of memorializing and naming, foreshadows the later and much-publicized use of praise poetry in the 1980s by the trade union movement when *izimbongi* who were also trade union members began to use *izibongo* in the public sphere

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1 The editors have used Roman type for passages recorded in English in Stuart's notes and italic type for passages recorded in Zulu. I have followed their usage in quotations.

to further the democratic aims of their movement (See Gunner 1989: 99–107; Sitas: 139–61). I will refer to this in more detail shortly. But Sende's presence as an *imbongi,* and his knowledge of praise poetry that Stuart notes in his usual passionately detailed way, is also interesting to us for another reason. The idea of polyphony, which I referred to earlier, is present not only through the mention of the "dancers" at the drill ground—suggesting the wider context of genres within which praise poetry existed; polyphony is also present in the range of praise poetry of which Sende is a master. He is not only the major *imbongi* of the Zondis but also expert in some of the royal, Zulu praises. In this instance we are told of his reciting the *izibongo* of King Cetshwayo kaMpande and of his knowledge of the praises of the famous Chunu figure, Phakade. His skill with regard to the praises of the latter two personages, Cetshwayo and Phakade, was such that their descendants—grandsons and heirs in both cases—paid him for reciting their famous forebears' praises. Stuart notes:

> Sende says Dinuzulu, when on a visit to Pietermaritzburg, once heard him (Sende) *bongaing* Cetshwayo and, after inquiring who he was, gave him 5s[hillings]. Silwana ka Pakade too, hearing Sende *bonga* Pakade, told him to follow him to the place he was sleeping at in Pietermaritzburg and gave him 10s after hearing him *bonga* Pakade again. (Webb and Wright 5:281–82)

Of course, the value of the praises to Dinuzulu and to Silwana, colonial subjects rather than a colonial official, insiders rather than a somewhat transgressive but compromised outsider (James Stuart), would have been very different. To them, the *izibongo* of their renowned forebears would have signaled the presence of their own history within an altogether different configuration from the colonial one—a different social and historical mapping and another kind of textuality. Both men fell foul of colonial authority. Dinuzulu was deposed of what was left of his royal position by the British in 1908, two years after the Bambatha Rebellion, and died in exile in the then Transvaal in 1913; Silwana, chief of the Chunu "in the Umvoti, Umsinga and Weenen divisions from the early 1980's was deposed by the Natal government in 1909," presumably because of his involvement in the Bambatha Rebellion, or *Impi Yamathela*—the Tax War, as it was called in Zulu (Webb and Wright 5:282). For each of these men, the *izibongo* performed by the *imbongi,* Sende, in the alien space of the city, the seat of colonial government, would surely have been recognized as part of a rhetoric of resistance, a writing in of other kinds of authority, and not merely a moment of nostalgia. It is likely that Stuart never fully grasped the capacity for resistance and the gesturing to alternative configurations of power that were presented by both the language and the performance of *ukubonga*—praising.

Sende's lateral knowledge of the praise poems of the key figures of the Zulu royal line, of his own Zuma chiefs and of the Chunu chiefly line, gives some indication of the criss-crosses of knowings available to the most skilled poets and of the multiple levels of discourse on which they could draw.

The *izimbongi* not only shared resources of language in terms of shared praise names—what Albert Lord would have called formulae, in his work on Yugoslav epic poetry and the *guslars.* They also shared a range of poetic techniques, part of the grammar of the poetry (Cope; Gunner 1984). In addition, they shared ideas about such topics as power, time, and community, and these too crossed between *izibongo* and chiefly lines and moved across regions. The poetry provided a broad, laterally based platform for debate on a range of issues sometimes closely linked to the fortunes of a particular house: one of the Buthelezi chiefly line is teased, for instance, about his many wives; another, Chief Mathole, is obliquely noted to be both a drunkard and jealous of his wives (Gunner and Gwala: 124–25). In other cases, though, the debates were linked to questions of governance, and often the micro and the macro were closely intertwined. What the *izimbongi* could be said to share was an appetite for the present, in the context of the past. The ability to sketch in a political moment with all the gravitas of the poetic idiom available to the genre is beautifully shown in these elliptical but clear lines from the *izibongo* of Dinuzulu, the troubled son and heir of King Cetshwayo and great-grandfather of the present monarch; the lines refer to the carving up of the Zulu kingdom after the defeat of the Zulu in 1879 and to the troubled situation Dinuzulu was heir to in 1883:

> Huge unsolved mystery in the land of Zululand
> You found it in charge of those who were skinning it for each other
> Apportioning it to the South and then to the North
> Until you held your mouth in wonder, the country changed so. (Cope)

The Izimbongi, Modernity and the Electronic Media

If there is a sense, from perusing the remarkable record left by James Stuart, of the dense presence of praise poetry practiced by skilled practitioners in both the former Zulu kingdom and what was known as *Esilungwini*—the land of the whites, Natal—one could ask, did praising as a key cultural practice move after the 1920s into a slow decline? Was it slowly choked by the forces of modernity, by the cruel form of urbanization imposed by racialized migrant labor, and then artificially revived by the ideologues of separate development with their penchant for "tradition" and, in the case of Radio Zulu, programs such as *Amagugu akwaZulu*—"Treasures of the Land of the Zulu"? This would be far too

simplistic a scenario, in my view. It is far more likely that *ukubonga* continued, still powerful but in a reduced way out of the main spotlight. As Ari Sitas put it, in musing on the fate of "the oral":

> It led a peculiar existence in the nooks and crannies of an advanced industrial economy in South Africa. It has, in short, a complex career in the lives of people for whom paper was as good for rolling cigarettes as it was for words. (Sitas: 139)

Sitas's view in his fine essay on "Traditions of Poetry in Natal" tends to focus on the trade-union *izimbongi* of the 1980s and does not pay parallel attention to the continuities in the tradition of public praising represented by the royal and chiefly *izimbongi.* It is clear, from following, however incompletely, the career of the present royal *imbongi* and of the poets of other chiefly lineages, that both the social impulse to praise, and the space to do so, has continued. Also, as the use of *izibongo* at the memorial service of Chief Albert Luthuli in 1968 demonstrated, the poetry with its ability to capture both present and past, and its appetite for events, is very well suited to commenting upon and memorializing the individual and the historical moment (Gunner and Gwala: 80–87). Moreover, far from shunning the novel or the technologies of modernity, poets or would-be poets often embraced them enthusiastically. A number of poets mentioned to me in the mid-1970s that they had first heard the *izibongo* of the Zulu kings on vinyl records. Research into the archives of Gallo or in the advertisements in the news print of the 1930s and 1940s may show that the records of the royal *izibongo* had a market alongside the early sales of Solomon Linda, father of the popular form of song now known as *isicathamiya,* or *imbube,* with Joseph Shabalala and Ladysmith Black Mambazo as its most famed exponents. All these snippets of evidence suggest that the activity of praising, and *ukubonga* as a cultural form, cannot easily be tied into a static notion of tradition, rather, that it is resisted. Its unique ability to "affirm a person's history and link them to a larger social organisation," as with Yoruba *oriki,* allows the form to be constantly relevant, both to the present and to the past (Barber 1991: 12).

Dialogue, Contestations, and Polyphony—Some Recent Examples

Much attention was paid during the turbulent decade of the 1980s in South Africa to the sudden coalescence of politics and tradition in the form of the praise poets of the trade unions, first FOSATU and later the national COSATU. The 1986 Worker, Resistance and Culture publication, *Black Mamba Rising,* printed both in Zulu and in English, contained the poetry of Alfred Temba Qabula, Mi Hlatshwayo, and Nise Malange—the latter being the only woman trade-union *imbongi* to have a place on any

large platform. Alfred Qabula in particular showed how praising could in a very public way become part of a proletarian political consciousness, through his famous praises to the trade union FOSATU (Qabula, Hltshwayo, and Malange: 9–14), which opened with its powerful vocative praise:

> Wena hlathi elihambayo laseAfrika! You moving forest of Africa!

The trade-union *izimbongi* of the mid and late 1980s, however, cannot be seen as a unitary phenomenon, isolated and set apart from the wider field of praising. The way in which one of the largest of the African Independent Churches, Ibandla lamaNazaretha, attracted praise poets around its founder Isaiah Shembe and his successors, from the 1920s onwards, shows that the practice of praising was always ready to jump into a new cultural space. In the 1980s the Nazarite church had a number of established *izimbongi,* among them, Azariah Mthiyane, Willie Ngema, and "Magandaganda" Mbuyazi. The tenor of their *izibongo* was both a chronicling of the church's history and a marking of the present, but always with a focus on their revered leaders. This marking of the present was perhaps particularly sharp in the *izibongo* composed by Mbuyazi, who although he had joined the church as a young boy around 1919 only began to practice as an *imbongi* in the late1970s. One moment in the *izibongo* he composed for Amos Shembe, leader of the church during the 1980s, focuses on his conversion of an Mpondo leader on the southern Natal borderlands:

Bathi uma sebemi ngaphandle kwendlu yakhe	And when they were standing outside his house
Kwathandazwa omkhulu owakhona	The leader prayed
Wath' asokhelwa isibani	He asked for a lamp to be lit
Sifakwa ngaphansi kwetafula	And to be placed beneath the table
Sokhelwa sibhekwe ngaphezu kwetafula	Then it was taken and put on the table
Sibakhanyisela bonke abantu abasendlini…	Illuminating everyone in the house…

(Mbuyazi)

Mbuyazi's careful, almost pedantic style was simply one kind of performance that was going on in another space in KwaZulu-Natal, while the trade-union *izimbongi* were burning a brief name for themselves in provincial and national history. Another kind of performance running concurrently was that of the main Zulu royal *imbongi* Ntulizenkosi Dlamini, who had become the chief *imbongi* for the young king, Zwelithini, shortly after his installation in 1971. Dlamini's praising never caught the limelight in terms of the media or those watching the culture of struggle in the last years of the apartheid state, but he himself was

always intensely conscious of the media and the cut and thrust of national and international politics and brought these into the *izibongo* he composed for his young patron with a kind of poetic greediness and in his compositions made them impinge on the life of Zwelithini. The dialogue, or polyphony, that existed between the differently situated *izimbongi* can be seen in the way the trade-union *izimbongi* borrowed from the royal *imbongi*—taking the praise name of *Indlondlo* (Viper with the feathered head)—and applying it not to the king but to COSATU. The way in which different *izimbongi* wrestled with political positions and became part of different camps can also be clearly seen if one looks at what each was saying at almost the same historical moment. Thus in July 1991 at the first national congress of the ANC after its unbanning, held in Durban, the *imbongi* Madlinyoka Ntanzi uses the viper image for Nelson Mandela's *izibongo* and weaves his national narration around him:

> The horned viper that beat its wings
> It came out and went to America
> They said it will never enter America
> Bush will expel it
> It entered and Bush shivered, he said:
> "I am welcoming you Mandela,
> Enter man." (Kromberg 1993:199)

Meanwhile Dlamini, the royal *imbongi* was not only keeping a gimlet eye on national affairs but was weaving his own poetic narratives with his patron, Zwelithini, at the center. His 1993 audio-cassette "*INYOSI izibongo zesilo nondunankulu* yaso Vol. 3" ("IMBONGI—The Praises of the Lion [King] and of his Chief Minister") jumps straight into the political fray and makes poetry out of the tense stand-off between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party that was a mark of the times:

> Handsome Ndaba who attacks with love to increase those of Mthaniya
> Others attack through the AK-47
> He attacks the Ngwanes (of the Swazi) with love
> And the weapons of Ngwavuma were blunted
> Each and every year you've attacked with love beyond the Mzimkhulu
> We have seen from Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma that they are curtain raising
> For the handsome man who comes after them. . . .
> The beautiful thing done by Mshengu Shabalala through music
> He donated a leopard with black spots
> Other leopards have black and white spots.
> Bravo Mshengu enjoy your journey overseas

You gave Brigadier Gqozo a nice whiff of the royal house
And then there was the calamity at Bisho and people were finished.[2]

Dlamini always weaves in humor even at points of his sharpest commentary and keeps his listeners aware of the multiple levels of knowledge on which he draws; he can be oblique, and he assumes that pieces of cultural knowledge, like the fact that if folk tales are told in the day the speakers and listeners will grow horns, are known to his listeners:

Two mountains so close, but they don't shake hands
The fairy tale that they told at midday in Pretoria, covering their heads,
Afraid they'd grow horns.

There is, I would argue, still what one could call a community of praise poets, still aware of each other and in some ways in dialogue with each other—and, at least in the case of Ntulizenkosi Dlamini, praising more than a single lineage; he is known as one of the main *izimbongi* of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi as well as of King Zwelithini, and as the two men have grown apart politically over the past few years this has perhaps been problematic for Dlamini. There is also, perhaps, an awareness of being part of a different kind of polyphony, one signaled to by Dlamini when he mentioned Mshengu Shabalala of the *isicathamiya* group Ladysmith Black Mambazo in his royal praises. If there is still a place for *izimbongi* and *izibongo* as operational elements rather than frozen assets in the complex mix of South African and KZN contemporary culture, perhaps they have to be seen as part of a different continuum of speech and performance genres. *Isicathamiya,* the hybrid urban form that draws on older cultural genres such as the wedding dances of *idwendwe* but mixes them with Trans-Atlantic appropriations from acapella barber-shop music and the close voice harmonies of Welsh male choirs, with its relative freedom from patronage and its freer access to media space and to public arenas, may in some ways be a more powerful mode for the circulation of ideas, now, than praise poetry. Or possibly, with a far less stable hierarchy of cultural forms, there is room now for a free borrowing across forms. It is *isicathamiya* rather than *izibongo* that is now more frequently performed in public spaces such as concert halls and hostels. It is *isicathamiya* that allows its singers to perform songs that comment on the problems of contemporary life and hold up points for debate, much as the *izibongo* did in the early decades of the twentieth century and before. Does a song such as the following, "KwaMashu," sung by a Pietermaritzburg

2 My thanks to Wiseman Masango for his transcription and help with the translation.

isicathamoya group called The Naughty Boys, asking questions touching on questions of modern identity, and prosperity, now represent the presence of a different pecking order in the production of cultural forms? The song, in the form of a confessional monologue of a person who realizes that there is something hidden in his past that needs to be revealed, includes this section:

Ngavela ngabona kodwa Mama—zonke izingane zakwethu zigcatshiwe
Mina angigcatshwanga
Singisizile isangoma, sangitshele ukuthi ngihlupheka kangaka nje. . . .
Angiyena owakaMbanjwa mina
Mama ngicela ungitshele isibongo sami!!

But I saw Mother—all the children of our family have facial markings
But I have none
An isangoma helped me and told me why I was having such trouble. . . .
I'm not an Mbanjwa
Mother, please tell me my real name?
(Naughty Boys)

It is this capacity of this genre of popular culture to negotiate the present painful dilemmas about belonging, in both the micro and macro sense of belonging to community at a number of different levels, and belonging at the national level, and its accessibility yet demanding aesthetics, that renders it powerful at the present time. Whether the venerable genre of *izibongo* will still retain the resilience it has shown in previous decades or will change beyond recognition or disappear completely remains to be seen.

"Where Shall I Wonder under the Thunder Who's that Black Boys Making that Black Noise Step a Little Closer to the Mic": Prophets of da City and Urban (South African) Identity

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I kick messages to society
But if you diss me you'll see a
A totally different side of me
A totally opposite side of the Prophet
There's no way you can stop it
When it gets catastrophic
I explode and drop the next load of rhymes
You mind and you find that the episode
Can't kick as I come equipped
To make sure that I hit
I won't quit

Don't stop, let the speakers pop
Just dance until you drop.
Prophets of da City, "Kickin' Non-Stop"

In this essay I investigate expressions of identity and belonging in South African rap music, focusing specifically on the band Prophets of da City (POC). My concern is with the way in which identity is articulated, claimed, and performed through lyrics, music, dance, style, and the associated activities of hip-hop culture, including graffiti or spray-can art. Writing critical accounts of performance forms always involves difficult questions of approach and methodology. But rap is a form—mobile, shifting, yet with a long generic history; playful, irreverent, deeply serious; challenging and confrontational, yet often deeply conservative; finding politics in pleasure—with its own very specific challenges for criticism. Part of the task of this essay, then, is to find an approach and a form to deal with rap music that has sufficient theoretical grounding to take up the necessary task of critical analysis but is nimble enough for the

mobilities and pleasures of the genre itself, that can maintain the validity of academic enquiry while subjecting the academy to challenge by voices outside of it—specifically here the rappers themselves, whose response to those attempting institutional definition and control is often an aggressive "Fuck Off!"[1]

POC are one of the oldest, best-known, and most prolific (some would add most influential) rap bands in South Africa. A consideration of their work takes one into a history of the form in South Africa, as well as the extent of its imbrication in senses of local identity for many young South Africans. POC have produced six albums to date: *Our World* (1990); *Boomstyle* (1992); *Age of Truth* (1993); *Phunk Phlow* (1994); *Universal Souljaz* (1995: U.K. and European release only); and *Ghetto Code* (1997). The latest album is still in the production process. From its inception the band has centered on Shaheen aka DSA (Shaheen Ariefdien) and Ready D aka DJ X-Plode (Deon Daniels), but membership has been as fluid as the musical form itself (the album credits indicate a blurring between the band itself and the larger POC crew/posse). At the time of the launch of the first album, the band also included Ramone (the group's dancer) and Jazmo (a beat boxer). Ramone left the band temporarily to be replaced by Junior "Danisa" Dread on the third album (who left before the release of *Phunk Phlow*) and Ishmael Morabe. The first two albums contained rap mainly in English and Afrikaans, but Ishmael and Danisa have included Zulu and Xhosa. For the latest album, the band comprised Ready D, Ishmael, Shaheen, Mark (a breakdancer and the youngest and newest member), and Ramone. More recently the lineup has changed again, with Shaheen leaving the band in 1999 and Ishmael focusing increasingly on his career as kwaito star E'Smile. Ready D himself is also involved with another rap band, Brasse vannie Kaap, and has an active career as a DJ.

POC have earned acclaim locally and internationally, though—like most rap bands—they have a thorny relationship with the media and recording industry. They have toured South Africa, Europe, and America, playing among others at the Glastonbury festival and at Nelson Mandela's inauguration as president. They supported James Brown at the

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[1] An example of academic discourse that seems to me far too stolid for its subject matter is the following section, from an article on hip-hop spray can art, in which Klopper quotes Erasmus and Pieterse: "It is important to conceptualise coloured identities as relational identities shaped by complex networks of concrete social relations rather than seeing 'coloured' as a particular category of individuals and/or simply an imposed name from a racist past." The value of this approach, they argue, "is its challenge to any notions of colouredness as homogenous and/or an essentialist ethnic identity with fixed cultural boundaries as well as its acknowledgement of the particularity of identities" (193).

Brixton Academy and the British band Skunk Anansie on their recent South African tour. They have also shared stages with Shabba Ranks, Afrika Bambaataa (with whom they also recorded a track), Public Enemy, and The Fugees and appeared with Liz Hurley and Ice Cube in the 1996 movie *Dangerous Ground*.[2] Their single "Neva Again" was nominated as single of the week by *New Musical Express* and featured on the magazine's 1995 compilation album, the first South African act to be so featured. They received the First National Bank South African music award for best rap album in 1995 for *Phunk Phlow* and won the 1997 Cannes/Midem Award for best video for "Understand Where I'm Coming From." Despite such recognition and critical acclaim, POC's albums and videos have consistently been banned by SABC radio and television, either for political content or expletives, and the band complains constantly, and it seems with justification, about lack of support from their record company. (The credits on their first album end: "We will change the industry for the better. There are far too many norms.") Like many rap artists locally and internationally, POC have remained with an independent record label, through which they also record and promote other rap and kwaito artists, including Skeem, D'Low, Brasse vannie Kaap, 4FT Deep, Odameester, E'Smile, and Mister Devious, though their distribution has from the outset been handled by major companies (initially Teal, then Tusk, and now Polygram). Their British record label is the independent Beggars Banquet. There have been more promising developments recently, with increased support for rap artists from record labels such as Polygram and greater airtime offered by local radio stations.

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With vice I hold the mike device
With force I keep it away of course
And I'm keepin' you from sleepin'
And on the stage I rage
And I'm rollin'
To the poor, I pour it on in metaphors
Not bluffin', it's nothin'
We ain't did before.
Public Enemy, "Prophets of Rage"

I was out there dancing just to put bread on the table.... Then later I started to practise with the turntable, day-in, day-out. At the weekends

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2 The album sleeve of *Ghetto Code* includes pictures of band members with, among others, James Brown, Quincy Jones, and Ice Cube.

> we'd take the hi-fi out into the road and dance. Then, later on, I'd have 20 to 30 people in our little home and neighbours would start banging on the walls. My mother found it nerve-wracking. (Ready D in Rouse)

Rap is a musical form that involves rhythmic performance of words to a distinct—usually bass-heavy—beat. Though it is now often digitally sampled, the beat was originally created by dextrous manipulation of a vinyl record by a DJ using one and later two turntables, moving the needle back and forth between set portions of a vinyl record (backspinning or scratching). The words of the rapper (MC) play off and work through and around the beats of the DJ and "hook" with the samples of other records (choruses, instrument breaks, etc.), which the DJ mixes in. Something of the skill involved is suggested by this description of a performance—using only two turntables—by one of the pioneers of the form, Grandmaster Flash, on an early track, "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel":

> It begins with "you say one for the trouble", the opening phrase of Spoonie Gee's "Monster Jam", broken down to "you say" seven times, setting the tone for a record that uses the music and vocals of Queen's "Another One Bites the Dust", the Sugar Hill Gang's "8th Wonder", and Chic's "Good Times" as musical pawns that Flash manipulates at whim. He repeats "Flash is bad" from Blondie's "Rapture" three times, turning singer Deborah Harry's dispassion into total adoration. While playing "Another One Bites the Dust", Flash places a record on the second turntable, then shoves the needle and the record against each other. The result is a grumbling, gruff imitation of the song's bassline. As the guitar feedback on "Dust" builds, so does Flash's rumble, until we're grooving on "Good Times." Next, "Freedom" explodes between the pauses in Chic's "Good Times" bassline. His bass thumps, and then the Furious Five chant, "Grandmaster cuts faster." Bass. "Grandmaster." Bass. "Cut." Bass. "Cuts … cuts … faster." But the cold crusher comes at the end when, during "8th Wonder," Flash places a wheezing sound of needle on vinyl in the spaces separating a series of claps. (Nelson George, quoted in Rose: 54)

Rap began in the South Bronx in New York City as part of hip-hop, "an African-American and Afro-Caribbean youth culture composed of graffiti, breakdancing, and rap music. From the outset, rap music has articulated the pleasures and problems of black urban life in contemporary America" (Rose: 2). With the prominence and popularity of rap, the attention it receives in the media (though much of it adverse), and its commercial success, it is often treated as if it were an entirely new phenomenon. In fact, as David Toop argues, rap is "a word that has been part of Afro-American vocabulary for a long time" (8): "Rap's forebears stretch back through

disco, street funk, radio DJs, Bo Diddley, the bebop singers, Cab Calloway, Pigmeat Markham, the tap dancers and comics, The Last Poets, Gil Scott-Heron, Muhammad Ali, acapella and doo-wop groups, ring games, skip-rope rhymes, prison and army songs, toasts, signifying and the dozens, all the way to the griots of Nigeria and Gambia" (19). Certainly POC's tribute to Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim) on the cover of *Our World* and the contribution of Shaheen's father, jazz musician Issy Ariefdien, as both co-producer and musician on the first two albums, suggests that they too perceive rap as part of a continuing black musical history.

Rap was from the start a form expressing urban identity and agency:

> North American blacks, Jamaicans, Puerto Ricans, and other Caribbean people with roots in other postcolonial contexts reshaped their cultural identities and expressions in a hostile, technologically sophisticated, multiethnic, urban terrain. Although city leaders and the popular press had literally and figuratively condemned the South Bronx neighbourhoods and their inhabitants, its youngest black and Hispanic residents answered back. (Rose: 34)

DJs such as Kool Herc would set up impromptu street performances with massive sound systems and beatboxes or ghettoblasters, tapping illegal power from streetlights. The control and manipulation of visual and sound technology were at the center of rap's social and aesthetic ontology from the start:

> At a time when cuts in school music programs drastically reduced access to traditional forms of instrumentation and composition, inner-city youths increasingly relied on recorded sound. Breakdancers used their bodies to mimic "transformers" and other futuristic robots in symbolic street battles. Early Puerto Rican, Afro-Caribbean, and black American hip-hop artists transformed obsolete vocational skills from marginal occupations into the raw materials for creativity and resistance. (Rose: 34–35)

The first commercial rap singles were "Rapper's Delight" by the Sugar Hill Gang and the rather less successful "King Tim III (Personality Jock)" by The Fatback Band, and early rap bands included Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five, Afrika Bambaataa and the Cosmic Force, The Tremendous Three, and The Funky Four Plus One More. From its fugitive beginnings, rap has become an international musical force, particularly following the (often ambiguous) publicity of so-called gangsta rappers of the 1980s (Ice T, NWA, Ice Cube, Too Short), the film projects of Spike Lee, the launch of an MTV rap channel (and locally OTV), and the more recent public debate around controversial white rapper Eminem (Marshall Mathers). Indeed, rap is fast becoming a global episteme.

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> Rap is the Black man's CNN. (Chuck D, Public Enemy, quoted in Stapleton)
>
> It's the way you talk, the way you walk … whatever you do is hip-hop-pified. (Sparrow, quoted in Watkins: 105)
>
> It might be that to truly understand hip-hop you need a masters degree in sociology, a stint in the joint, and an intimate understanding of African rhythm. (George: ix)

There have been various critical and theoretical accounts of rap and hip-hop internationally, including those by Rose, Toop and Schumacher, and two studies of POC produced locally, by Haupt and Watkins. Of the broad conceptual approaches to rap, I find Rose's approach the most compelling,[3] particularly in her attempts to write from within and outside of the academy and her insistence on a contextual reading of hip-hop as emerging from conditions of urban dislocation and economic disempowerment. Rose's emphasis on postindustrial contextualization does not, however, entail a denial of rap's roots in Afrodiasporic performance practices; instead, she insists that "[i]t is the tension between the cultural fractures produced by postindustrial oppression and the binding ties of black cultural expressivity that sets the critical frame for the development of hip hop" (21).

Several critics overemphasize either the premodern or postmodern aspects of rap: stressing exclusively its origins in (West) African performance traditions or locating it almost entirely within the realm of postmodern play/pastiche (especially through its use of sampled sounds). Yet central to rap and hip-hop is its drawing together, in contexts of differentiated modernities and postmodernities, advanced technological and "traditional" performance techniques into a form that claims, and accomplishes, an identity of belonging. This traditional/technological conjunction is epitomized, for example, in rappers' dismissal of certain samplers and drum machines for sounding "too white" and their recording "into the red" to turn technology to new cultural expressivities. Rejecting both pre- and postmodern readings of hip-hop, Rose wishes instead to show "how hip hop's primary properties … simultaneously reflect and contest the social roles open to urban inner-city youths at the end of the twentieth century" (22).

Beadle has suggested that rap is "to the black American urban youth more or less what punk was to its British white counterpart" (77). The

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3 Both Haupt and Watkins also draw on Rose's approach.

analogy is a good one, particularly in view of the tendency in both forms to combine the social with the antisocial, the progressive with the reactionary, and the pleasurable with the political. There has been much media coverage of the destructive, violent, misogynist, and racist aspects of rap music. Ronald Ferguson, a black Harvard academic at the university's John F. Kennedy School of Government, even believes rap and hip-hop "may be responsible for the sharp decline in examination results, especially the decline in reading and mathematic abilities" (*Sunday Tribune*). In reply, rappers emphasize the educative aspects of hip-hop culture, going so far, in the case of South African rapper Emile (himself an ex–school teacher), as to claim that it is more educative than formal schooling (Watkins: 58). Responding to rap's bad press—which many feel simply reflects broader racist perceptions of black culture—and drawing on perceptions such as Emile's above, some critics have overcompensated by presenting rap almost exclusively as social upliftment. Watkins, for example, defines the form (and his own intellectual project) in somewhat messianic terms:

> Informants emphasise the importance of being positive, and of structuring their identities by way of the relationship they have with their environment. Hip-hop builds the individual's strength within the collective crew. Identities are split between the individual and the crew, yet this boundary is blurred when the crew is mobilised, or mobilising. Since hip-hoppers organise themselves into crews, their expressions allude to a form of group identification nurtured by the promise of an empowered self. For them, the production and consumption of rap music is an overt political process which generates feelings and relationships which enable them to think positively, and behave competently in fields that are not musical. (60)

As a result, in what is otherwise a fascinating study Watkins does not really move beyond what the hip-hoppers themselves claim they are doing into a critical interrogation of rap and rappers. A crucial part of such an interrogation should involve also those aspects of the form less amenable to critical recuperation. Watkins himself quotes some of the more flippant or confrontational statements of rappers, including Sparrow's memorable "If I want to motherfuck I can motherfuck, if I want to shit I can shit" (63), but he does not tie the deliberately dangerous or pleasurable aspects of rap centrally to the form.[4]

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4 One of the strongly antivalorizing statements quoted by Watkins is the following from Emile: "Sometimes we perform at shows and I wonder what the fuck am I doing here, like the show for the Olympics. I didn't support the bid but we were performing there and I was so relieved when we didn't get it. We appear in the show because they pay us and we

The double-valency of the term "bad" in hip-hop speak—good and/or dangerous—points to the crucial duality at the heart of the culture and its lifestyle, which must be central to any critical engagement. The members of POC point to the ambiguous responses of family members to their music: a combination of pride at their achievements and discomfort that their chosen form is *daai vloek musiek* ("that swearing music"). Talking of how he got into hip-hop, Ready D emphasizes the social/political affinities between black U.S. and South African contexts: "Everything the people were speaking about, we could basically feel and understand it, because we share the same war stories, we share the same ghetto stories, because it all started out in the same poverty-stricken areas." But he also refers to sheer musical groove: "Man, I can't give a specific reason why we started, but one is … I mean everything we encountered as far as hip-hop goes was just, as James Brown would say, too damn funky!" (Magnette). The project of rap is (also) in the jams and the play, in making the urban space funky and liveable. POC participate in voter education and literacy programs, but they live the perils and pleasures of the Cape Flats, carrying hand guns to protect themselves from gang violence while knowing "how to rock a party," to rap "to the rhythm of the bass" ("Kickin' Non-Stop"). Raoul, from the Cape Town crew Grave Diggers Productions, talks of hip-hop giving "you something there … like gravity" (Watkins: 29), but it is clear that gravity does not imply gravitas, that part of rap's purpose is to disrupt, to ridicule, to overcome, with the power of its sonic assault, that the reason is in the rhyme.

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Most of my heroes don't appear on stamps.
Public Enemy, "Fight the Power"

I like doin' hip-hop because I'm from the Kaap.
Prophets of da City, "The Roof Is on Fire"

Question: What do you want to be when you get older?
Answer: Older!
(Well-known joke from the Cape Flats, quoted in Friedman)

Hip-hop and rap are forms of urban location: graffiti "tags" and slogans cover walls and trains; bass-heavy beats thump out of cars,

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didn't care a fuck.… it is just our money anyway that they blew like that.… life would have been unbearable in this place" (Watkins: 100).

minibuses, and buildings; the distinctive style and clothing (constantly changing but including oversized pants and jackets, overtly branded athletic wear, bandannas, baseball caps, heavy jewelry) are everywhere. In de Certeau's terms, the "place" of urban impoverishment and regulation becomes the "space" of hip-hop movement and assertion; the official "strategy" is countered by the mobile "tactic" of style and performance.

While there were developments in other centers, rap in South Africa really began in Cape Town in the early eighties. The center was initially Club T-zers, later renamed The Base, at which the African Hip-Hop Alliance, based on "black empowerment and mutual respect," was formed (Eyal). Groups included The Ballastic Rockers (later to become POC), The Freaks, Chill Crush Crew, Organised Rhyme, Jam B, Cool Posse, AK 47, Sisters in Command, Cool Out Crew, TMD, MC Revolt, Sell Out Syndicate, The Supreme Breakers, The Break Xplosion, The Dream Team Breakers, The Pop Glide Breakers, and the Cape Town City Breakers. POC's Shaheen and Ready D were at the forefront of developments from the beginning, the latter having honed his DJing skills during a period in Liverpool, sponsored by a young white hip-hopper from Cape Town, DJ Aski, who had moved to the U.K. to avoid conscription.

Rap and hip-hop were ambiguously placed in the South African political struggles of the 1980s. Rappers and breakdancers performed at political rallies, and Ready D and Shaheen, in particular, took part in several resistance actions, but hip-hop was also criticized for being politically "irrelevant," particularly in its American influences and its emphasis on expensive brand names. However, hip-hop has a central and continuing role in claiming a rooted, yet modern urban identity and belonging and ironically may have greater purchase and currency for many in current circumstances than what are perceived to be the rather stale, or anachronistic, struggle narratives and roles of the past. In Watkins's suggestive phrase, rappers continue to be "voices from behind the railway line" (48), speaking of the problems and pleasures of black urban life.

Hip-hop in South Africa is closely linked with the urban locale of the Cape Flats and its history of gangsterism. Explaining the origins of the group's name, Ready D says: "[W]e grew up in gang-infested areas, the area with a high degree of poverty going on … so the reason we choose Prophets of da City is to tell people man … it's easy to predict what's going to happen. If we get into this whole drug and gang bullshit that is going on" (Watkins: 54). The band members themselves have a history of involvement in gang-related activities and perceive POC and hip-hop as an escape route, as an alternative form of identification and commitment: "All my friends were in gangs," says Ready D. "A lot of them are in prison for murder. Everyone expected me to go down that route. I can

remember when people were stabbed for a pair of Ray Bans" (Rouse). Even though the band is now based in Johannesburg for professional reasons, POC's social and imaginative location remains the Cape Flats.

Friedman links the emergence of gangsterism on the Cape Flats particularly with the context of apartheid forced removals:

> Gangsterism, of course, was there before the removals, but it was influenced mainly by Chicago-style gangs, too busy taking pot shots at each other to take it out on the rest of the community. And relentless police action, during the 1940s in particular, kept the gangs under control.
>
> But the forced removals provided fertile gangster soil for a community forced to contend with cultural, economic and political dispossession. Gangsterism flourished alongside unemployment, alienation and anger. Today it is estimated that there are at least 80 000 gangsters in the Cape Flats area alone.

She quotes a 1996 study by Pinnock and Douglas-Hamilton in which they found that

> in communities stricken by poverty, racism, broken homes or drugs, there was an ever-present danger that emotions usually held in check by social pressure might be released. Among disadvantaged youth in particular, the search for "respect" in the crossing to adulthood takes on larger-than-life proportions. Gangs provide glamour, status and a road to respect seemingly beyond reach through conventional behaviour. (Friedman)

In this context, in which in one area safe passage for children to school is guaranteed by a temporary truce, agreed to by gangs and police, signaled by the blowing of a whistle, POC have involved themselves in several initiatives, including the African Hip Hop Alliance Support network, to offer young people a "way out." The form and its lifestyle become means of reclaiming identity, agency and location.

This reclaiming is most powerfully evident in the videos that accompany most rap songs. Often self-produced and funded, the videos generally follow a similar format, involving the rappers and their posses (the term "homeboy" connoting the importance of belonging) within the 'hood. As Rose argues:

> Rappers' emphasis on posses and neighbourhoods has brought the ghetto back into the public consciousness. It satisfies poor young black people's profound need to have their territories acknowledged, recognized, and celebrated. These are the street corners and neighbourhoods that usually serve as lurid backdrops for street crimes on the nightly news. Few local people are given the opportunity to speak, and their points of view are always contained by expert testimony. In rap videos,

> young mostly black male residents speak for themselves and for the community, they speak when and how they wish about subjects of their own choosing. These local turf scenes are not isolated voices; they are voices from a variety of social margins that are in dialogue with one another. (11)

Although, as I have suggested, POC's primary imaginative and social location remains the Cape Flats, they increasingly claim, and speak for, a more generic black urban identity and location. A journalist offers this account of traveling through Soweto with the band:

> Shaheen points to where POC did their most recent video. The site is a playing field littered with debris. Near to the swings, which no longer have the chains and seats dangling from the crossbar, a rubbish-filled skip smoulders. There are no kids playing there. The equipment looks like extinct dinosaurs, just fossilised remains of former magnificence. Lance pulls up at a heavily fortified general store. [There is a] piece Gogga [POC's own graphic/spraycan artist] did for the elections, with that slogan "Never Again" sprawling across the wall. Shaheen and Ramone climb inside the barbed wire that the proprietor of the shop has proudly erected to safeguard this masterpiece.
>
> "Hey Stephen, listen," Lance calls over. "The kids over there. . . ," he adds gesturing across the road. A group of young children inside the perimeter of the house opposite are shrieking and wailing. They have spotted Shaheen and Ramone posing for pictures and they are quoting Mandela and singing Prophets lyrics. "Never again, never again," they squeal, running away as the camera's turned on them. (Worthy: 49)

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> Would you like me to sing you a lullaby?
> I want a rap song.
>
> Prophets of da City, "Bass Drive"

> Who's in the house?
> Prophets of the City getting busy
> Are you with me?
>
> Prophets of da City, "Intro—Prophets Getting Busy"

> I think POC contributed somehow in exposing hip-hop to a large part of the country who didn't know that hip-hop existed ... 'cause we performed in places where there was no electricity and dust roads and you had to use four or five extension cables to get electricity, and we performed in places where people didn't know you can use a turntable as an instrument and there was music where there wasn't actually instruments, and the type of dancing. (Shaheen, quoted in Watkins: 55)

The process by which I got hold of the POC albums says much about the ambiguities, contradictions, and possibilities of the form itself. I could find nothing whatsoever in Durban, whether from mainstream outlets (Musica, Look & Listen) or from independent or informal vendors. I finally found a copy of *Age of Truth* in East London, and had to mail-order *Ghetto Code* from the African Music Store in Cape Town. Eventually I contacted POC's record company, Ghetto Ruff, and was greeted with real warmth and kindness by Delphine Klassen and Lance Stehr (POC's manager). I was informed that even they had only vinyl copies of *Our World* and *Boom Style,* and an album of 12" remixes off *Phunk Phlow,* but offered them to me for nothing, with a stack of press clippings. It seems the only remaining copy of *Phunk Phlow* at Ghetto Ruff has been lent to a film company making a documentary on POC—an act as risky as it is generous, which seems aptly to characterize POC and crew.

From the first beat of their debut album, POC signaled that theirs was a local interpretation of hip-hop, offering "rich portayals of locally embedded and globally connected performance practices" (Erlmann: 12). The songs are strongly influenced by South African musical genres, with rap weaving across and through the instrumentation. In comparison to the later material, which is heavier, more aggressive, and dissonant, the production is more melodic and bass-lite. The handwritten sleeve notes say: "The music on this rap album is influenced by the music and people we grew up with. We chose to do this album different from your average rap L.P. so that our people can relate to it easily (goema, kwela, jazz, disco, lang arm and POC music, Abdullah Ibrahim [Dollar Brand])." This sentiment is also echoed in the song "Musical Madness" from the second album, which talks explicitly of using more familiar genres to draw audiences into rap and hip-hop.

The sleeve notes also offer a topography of Cape Town, simultaneously naming and claiming the place in a linguistically transitive act: "Lavis … Black Heath … Hanover Park … Parkwood … Elsie's River … Ravensmead … Woodstock en die Salts … Bonitas … Mitchell's Plain … Bonta's." This naming finds musical accompaniment in the forms mentioned above. In the song "I Remember District Six" from their most recent album, *Ghetto Code,* POC explicitly link their sound and performance with a sense of placement and displacement, combining oral testimony, melodic jazz, and the rapper's own voice of remembrance:

> I remember the days in District Six
> The laughter of adults and little kids
> Hanover Street and the markets with fish
> Goema music was always the heartbeat
> I remember the days of District Six

The sound of the snoekhorn and the ouens used to
Break with a lekker song.

As Rose argues, rappers "tell long, involved, and sometimes abstract stories with catchy and memorable phrases and beats that lend themselves to black sound bite packaging, storing critical narratives in fast-paced electrified rhythms" (3). A crucial part of this narrativization involves naming, not only of place, but of person(a). As I indicated at the beginning of the essay, the POC members have hip-hop names, which testify to their status and prowess (DSA means "Dominator of Sound All Around"; DJ X-Plode is the one who "wrecks the decks"). It is particularly in performance that this aspect of hip-hop is evident, as rappers claim and enact—in a manner that stresses the affinities between rap and praise poetry or "boasting"—their ability and identity. This is often through aggressive metaphors and barbed "disses." Even on the first album, the lyrics of which tend toward the ameliorative, stressing social upliftment and an end to crime and violence, the song "Murder on Stage" presents the MC's superior lyrical ability as the literal annihilation of opposition:

I'm a definite threat to you and your posse
You wanna be bossy
Showing off with your gold that's glossy
But that's basically all you can show
Put you on the stage, can you flow? No no
But then comes DSA and Ready D
You wanna step to us, just let us be
Cause I'm a poltergeist on the rise
I'll cut you down to size.
. . .
I'm the assassin with a rhyming passion
Cruisin' along, crashin' and bashin'
. . .
So I strangle, you can't handle
You say you burn, but I blow you like a candle
. . .
Murder, murder on stage.

It is clear that the band sees the "controlled" violence of hip-hop performance as an alternative to the destructiveness of gangsterism and drug use, but the aggressive competitiveness they enact is a crucial aspect of hip-hop's attraction for urban youth, and one that criticism must acknowledge. At the center of the performance space, lyrically and visually, is the "mic," and sound amplification becomes for rappers "a life-giving source" (Rose: 22): they claim and patrol the stage, flaunting their style and movement, displaying their mastery of sound and technology.

For POC, hip-hop—which they call "the culture"—is crucially linked with Black Consciousness and the process of self affirmation. Ready D says of POC's mission: "The basic principle is just to be real to yourself, trying to respect yourself and the culture. That is the basic principle we operate on. It's a hip-hop thing, we think of hip-hop before we do anything else. Because we don't see ourselves as doing hip-hop, we see ourselves as hip-hop because we live this on a day to day basis" (Watkins: 55). For Ready D and other band members this involves reading people like Steve Biko, Marcus Garvey, Malcom X, and others and a proper knowledge of, and respect for, black cultural traditions. The songs constantly articulate this reclamation of blackness: "Black man raise your fist, say what you say" ("Power 2 da People"); "I don't have blue eyes, I don't have blonde hair / I'm black to the bone" ("Remember Where You Came From"); or "Fuck 'Die Stem' it's the white man's anthem" ("African Very African"). Largely because of their directly political position, POC have battled over the artistic control and distribution of their work. The band members claim that their first two albums involved a great deal of compromise with regard to the way in which they represented themselves because conditions were very oppressive, and they themselves were very inexperienced in dealing with the recording industry (Haupt 1995: 47). Despite their apparent moderation, however, "Roots" and "Ons Stem" from the first and second albums respectively were banned. With the release of *Age of Truth* in October 1993, however, the band took increasing responsibility for the material and greater advantage of the less restrictive political context. Whereas even the word "SHIT" was censored to "S–T" on the sleeve notes of the first album, *Age of Truth* includes lines such as "Fuck Mangope even if we record here," which led to their DAT tapes being confiscated by Bophutatswana police and Tusk music having its lawyers (literally) "counting the fucks." The album specifically attacked the National Party and the apartheid security establishment, which was still very much in evidence, and most of the tracks were either banned or prohibited from being played on SABC television or radio.[5] After 1994, Lance Stehr approached the SABC to get some air time for the album and video but was told that the SABC no longer bans tracks; it simply does not play them (Haupt 1995: 67 n.). After the hard-hitting bass and dissonance of *Phunk Phlow,* POC feel that their latest album *Ghetto Code* is far more accessible. Despite Ready D's sense that "[t]he music is not as

5 According to Lance Stehr, fifteen tracks from the album were banned for lyrical content, as was the video for "Understand Where I'm Coming From," probably because it contained unrest footage (personal communication).

harsh as it used to be on previous albums" (Feldman) and Shaheen's claim that "This record is something for South African audiences who supported us. We are finally doing what you wanted us to do" (ibid.), there has been little radio or television exposure.

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My gesig is so swart soos die nag
En jy staan en lag
Met jou mag het jy ons mense verkrag
Jy het vergeet van die dag van gebod
My wapen is my mond
En dit sal ontplof soos 'n bom.
Prophets of da City, "Ons Stem"

This is a sampling sport.
Public Enemy, "Caught, Can We Get a Witness"

Like most rappers, POC pay careful attention to the lyrical form of their songs. Ready D talks of the importance of being able "to rap in different styles … get the different styles of lyrics … to be able to do like similes, metaphors … [to] … throw it around and so on," and Shaheen says: "As far as the media and that hype is concerned it means absolutely nothing. I find more joy if somebody comes to me and says that, 'the line you used in such and such a song where you used alliteration into a metaphor into a simile into a pun, like in two lines, that was kwaai'" (Watkins: 62, 108). More than with any other oral form, perhaps, rap must be heard: it is crucially rhythm, rhyme, verbal inflection, and the syncopation of these with sound and beat. Rhythm and rhyme in the lyrics may depend on verbal "playing" with syllabic length and stress to create complex, pleasing, or disturbing patterns and emphases. A "literary" scanning of a few lines from "Boomstyle" for rhythm and rhyme would be as follows:

˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ / ˘
a b c b b
They blew me away that is only what they say to build up

˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘
c a c (a?) c
Their egos, it was proven at many shows who flow and

/ ˘ ˘ ˘ / ˘ / ˘ /
c (c?) c c
Glow and have the power to overthrow

˘ / ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ / ˘
d d b c b e
And never get played like a domino game. I kick the

/ ˘ / / ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ / ˘
d e d b e e b
Message and still entertain, with a mission I came to

/ / ˘ / ˘
d b b
Explain the aim, I'm

/ ˘ ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /
b b b
Trained not to be lame on the brain . . .

Rhythm and rhyme are used particularly effectively by POC in destabilizing official discourses. In the song "Ons Stem," which opens with a brief sample from "Die Stem," rhyme satirically undermines the former apartheid national anthem: "Eendrag maak mag, ek wil lag / want 'n hele ras, ongeag van geslag / wag vir vryheid." This song was banned yet continued to be performed—a contradiction at the center of performance genres such as rap, in which "resistive transcripts are articulated and acted out in both hidden and public domains, making them highly visible, yet difficult to contain and confine" (Rose: 101).

Drawing on the work of Arthur Jafa, Rose argues that hip-hop form centers on three concepts—flow, layering, and ruptures in line: "In hip hop, visual, physical, musical, and lyrical lines are set in motion, broken abruptly with sharp angular breaks, yet they sustain motion and energy through fluidity and flow" (Rose: 38).[6] As she points out, rappers speak constantly in their lyrics about "flow" (or "phlow"), "referring to an ability to move easily and powerfully through complex lyrics as well as the flow of the music":

> The flow and motion of the initial bass or drum line in rap music is abruptly ruptured by scratching (a process that highlights as it breaks the flow of the base rhythm), or the rhythmic flow is interrupted by other musical passages. Rappers stutter and alternatively race through passages, always moving within the beat or in response to it, often using

6 Watkins talks of moving beyond Rose's model "by suggesting that hip-hop style is, more definitively, about the blending and juxtaposition of differences," what he calls "texture" (130–31). While I agree that texture is indeed an important aspect of hip-hop, it seems to me that texture often constitutes simply a subtle, or stark, form of Rose's layering, and rupture.

> the music as a partner in rhyme. These verbal moves highlight lyrical flow and points of rupture. Rappers layer meaning by using the same word to signify a variety of actions and objects; they call out to the DJ to "lay down a beat," which is expected to be interrupted, ruptured. DJs layer sounds literally one on top of each other, creating a dialogue between sampled sounds and words. (39)

A good example of this formal principle is in the POC song "Understand Where I'm Coming From" off the album *Age of Truth.* The song opens with a musical sample, ruptured by scratching and then with Mzwakhe Mbuli's voice layered over saying "Listen to the voices," which flows into the choral refrain "Hlanganani." Rupture is introduced as the Latin "Dulce et Decorum Est Pro Patria Mori" is rapped, though the lyrics flow from the Latin through the rhyme ("Mori … sorry … story … for me"): "I'm sorry that story's not for me." Rupture is introduced again about four lines later as the rhythm and bassline change with the interjection: "and it's not a funny sight, cause money's tight." Rose argues that this formal model is functional within rap's negotiation of urban space and identity:

> Interpreting these concepts theoretically, one can argue that they create and sustain rhythmic motion, continuity, and circularity via flow; accumulate, reinforce, and embellish this continuity through layering; and manage threats to these narratives by building in ruptures that highlight the continuity as they momentarily challenge it. These effects at the level of style and aesthetics suggest affirmative ways in which profound social dislocation and rupture can be managed and perhaps contested in the cultural arena. Let us imagine these hip hop principles as a blueprint for social resistance and affirmation: create sustaining narratives, accumulate them, layer them, embellish and transform them. However, be also prepared for rupture, find pleasure in it, *plan on* social rupture. When these ruptures occur, use them in creative ways that will prepare you for a future in which survival will demand a sudden shift in ground tactics. (39)

Central to rap's formal and social articulation is the use of sampled sounds. Whereas samplers were originally intended to save time in the recording process, rappers have made them into musical instruments, reconceptualizing the technology within their own aesthetic paradigms. POC often use samples to undermine colonial or apartheid discourses. "Blast from da Past," a fifty-three-second track from *Age of Truth* is constructed entirely from samples, aggressively countering racist historiography with voices of black assertion and "noise":

> "More than three hundred years ago…" (Voice of officialdom)
> "The revolution…" (Black American rapper/politician)

"Africa shall know no peace until we in the south are free" (Mzwakhe Mbuli)
"Time is running out" (distorted)
"Daar kom die Alibama" (sung)
"Ons Suid-Afrika" (X3), "Jan van Riebeeck" (Afrikaans male voice)
"FUCK OFF" (POC)
"A commander whose name was Jan van Riebeeck" (Afrikaans male voice)
"FUCK OFF" (POC) … "Jan" … "FUCK OFF" … "Jan" … "FUCK OFF" … "Jan van Riebeeck" … "FUCK OFF"
"The revolution" (Black American rapper/politician)
Bassline
"Jan van Riebeeck" … "FUCK OFF"
"Jan van Riebeeck" … "FUCK OFF"
"Jan van Riebeeck" … "FUCK OFF"
"Ons Suid Afrika" … "FUCK OFF"
When the Hottentot men shoot at us with their bows and arrows, they will not harm us." (Afrikaans male voice)
"Time is running out" (X3)
"FUCK OFF" (POC).

It is certainly possible to read such use of samples in postmodern ways as "unsettl[ing] the hegemonic practice of controlling polysemy or play in the signification process which, ultimately, violently suppresses any attempts by those on the margins to articulate difference" (Haupt 1995: 56). However, a more productive and challenging contention is, as certain critics have suggested, to link rap's use of samples to the history of black performative practice that Gates refers to as "Signifyin(g)," "turn[ing] on the play and chain of signifiers" (Gates 1987: 238), in which "texts seem concerned to address their antecedents" (Gates 1988: 51). Indeed it is difficult to distinguish conceptually between the use of a "sample" in a rap song and the "borrowing" of praises in, say, Zulu *izibongo.* Like many other hip-hop performers, POC perceive the sampling controversy in racial terms. Of their local albums only *Age of Truth* has an (incomplete) list of sample credits (though their U.K. release *Universal Souljaz* faced lengthy sample clearance delays), and Ready D says:

> But now you've got some record companies that's setting up some ridiculous publishing shit, you know, where … you've got to pay thousands of rands just to use a sample. And, I mean, hip hop is basically about fusing all type of stuff; scratching, you know, mixing.… So you get this white motherfucker doing all sorts of ridiculous shit and at the end of the day saying it's business, you know. And I mean, fuck that. Somebody want to sample our record it's fine by me. (Haupt 1995: 39)

Such an (inter)textual model offers radical challenges to Western notions of rights, ownership, and property, and rappers and their record

companies are constantly embroiled in legal disputes over copyright. As Schumacher (drawing on Frith) argues:

> "[C]opyright law defines music in terms of nineteenth-century Western conventions and is not well suited to the protection of African-American musicians' improvisational art." The formal practices of Signifyin(g) in rap music defy traditional definitions of authorship because they are ultimately premised on referencing the other and by explicitly relying on previous utterances. (265)

He argues instead that approaches to rap need, as I suggested at the outset, to allow the form its own playfulness, irreverence, and difficulty. He suggests that the "Carnival" offers a more appropriate conceptual model than that of the individual creative *artiste*/author:

> Collins and Skover … present a "cultural" analysis of free expression which they call "pissing in the snow." They suggest that actual speech practices (not idealized ones from legal theory) assume a Carnivalesque quality in that they tend not to abide by existing rules or laws. In the carnival of popular culture, speech is directed more by the demands of listeners than by a fear of infringement:
>
> The "anarchistic" quality of the carnival is fundamentally at odds with the notion of a government of laws. The very character of the Carnival is to push all boundaries, including the fixed lines of the law. (Schumacher: 268)

Hence like Ready D above, he advocates "the freedom of unauthorized sampling, much in the spirit of the Carnival which respects no boundaries" (268–69).

The Carnival is fundamentally about pleasure—an aspect of rap that is particularly evident in its thumping bass and energetic dance. Curiously, especially in a thesis produced by a music student, Watkins says that "space and time" mean that he has had to leave various issues, including "musical analysis" and "technology and rap,"to "be explored in further studies" (21). Certain of POC's songs have few political or social referents; in fact, some have no lyrics at all, simply grooving on the scratching wizardry and rhythm of Ready D and emphasizing, on stage, extremely agile dance movement in an "emotional performative sound event" (Negus: 371). An understanding of rap music requires an alertness to rhythm, sound, noise, and timbre rather than melodic sequence; it is first and foremost a (per)cussive form. DJs will sample beats from extremely obscure soul records to achieve exactly the sound they want and will often record across more than one channel to manipulate noise to their satisfaction. Rose points out that, since all rap artists are heavily confined and policed, even apparently "apolitical" rap is heavily politicized

(124), and she argues that displays of black pleasure and sexuality ("shakin' your thang") are often ideologically directed. POC emphasize bass rhythm within the sonic and performative space. The song "Bass Drive" not only creates its own powerful rhythm but, as Haupt suggests, "signifies" in its lyrics on the nature of bass (1995: 47): "So don't waste time when u hear the bassline goes in time with the rhyme." The bassline, which moves the dancers on the floor, becomes both metaphor for and actualization of POC's force: "POC is pumping bassdrive." And an appreciation of bass defines the communal identity: "We drop bass on the dance floor and leave it full of potholes / the only ones who survive are the ones who got soul."

****

Step up if you don't know what DSA means
Or X-Plode's many tricks and when he picks a mix
More accurate than 1026
And when he kicks ballistics
I drop linguistics on this mix
So stay back 'cause I'm a maniac
Time to pay back the ones who say that
The prophets cannot really drop it.
Prophets of da City, "Hard Time on Stage"

A key aspect of performance and the articulation of identity is language. POC exhibit a great deal of reflexivity about language, being able to shift codes and registers on stage in relation to different audiences. Their most recent album *Ghetto Code* takes up the question of linguistic identity explicitly: "so I think we're at a stage where we're trying to create our own style and our own identity. A lot of us are trying by first, to incorporate the language that we're speaking and we call it ghetto code, the type of code you speak where people don't understand you" (Shaheen, quoted in Watkins: 55). There are two crucial aspects to POC's use of language. The first, evident in their decision to change their name in 1993 from Prophets of *the* City to Prophets of *da* City links with notions of a globalized black English, central to hip-hop but not restricted to it. The second relates to POC's use of linguistic codes or languages, including Afrikaans, which tie them more closely to notions of ethnic specificity. These two aspects—like so much in hip-hop and popular culture generally—are in both productive and problematic relationship.

The notion of a globalized black English is reflected in choices of vocabulary, phonology, and orthography through which POC and other rap bands wish to stress their connectedness—in the spirit of Black Consciousness—with disenfranchised people of African origin around the

globe. (This language is clearly connected with that of fashion or style that has equivalent global valencies.) Spellings are altered ("phat" for "fat," "phlow" for "flow," "4" for "for," "u" for "you"), a vocabulary often impenetrable to others is adopted ("dope"—"good," "kicks"—"shoes"), and apparently eccentric syntax and pronunciation are used. This language becomes a means of creating, sustaining, and defending community, as well as a source of pleasure—what Rose refers to as "[d]eveloping a style nobody can deal with" (61).

However, in the same way that POC signal musically that they offer a localized (indigenized?) version of hip-hop, their use of language is also firmly rooted in South Africa, and specifically the Cape Flats. Shaheen, for example, says:

> We want to be street, you know? When we do interviews and shit like that and we speak gamtaal, or whatever, that shit's on purpose so the kid at home can say, "Fuck, they're speaking my language," you know? They're representing, you know, what comes out of the township and shit. So if some middle class motherfucker comes, "Oe God, skollietaal." The shit's not for them, you know what I mean. I don't care if some white-ass dude at home thinks, "Oh shit, look at this … uncultured," you know. I want some kid from the ghetto to think, "Naa, we can relate to that." (Haupt 1995: 65)

The strength of this is the music's rootedness in community, and POC's following in the Cape Flats is well established. Their use of local dialect, in this case of Afrikaans, is well illustrated in "Dallah Flet 2":

> My broertjie kry 'n skoot dwars deur sy kop
> Want daar was 'n gang fight op onse blok.
> Die fight het gekom deur 'n gestryery oor dop en 'n stop
> All of a sudden gryp iemand 'n stok
> 'n Borrel word gebriek, 'n jong word gestiek,
> Sonder dat hy wiet is 'n nogge een geskiet.…

The song is extremely effective in using "ghetto code" to evoke the violence and social disorder of Cape Flats gangsterism, but it also risks reaffirming the process of ghettoization. POC are aware of the dangers of being labeled as a "coloured" band. After an interview with *The Face* magazine in the U.K., Ready D was concerned that so much was made of the "coloured" issue: "I don't see myself as coloured, number one … and there is still no respect in South Africa for the so-called coloured population. Calling someone coloured is a total form of disrespect whether it comes from a black or a white man"; and he recounts how, as a boy, he had to go through the indignity of the pencil test: "They tried to stand a [pencil] in your hair and if it fell then you were classified as European

and if it stuck you were coloured" (Rouse). The band was similarly unhappy about a radio interview with Mark Gillman, at that time on radio Good Hope, because of Gillman's constant attempts to portray them as "gam." Shaheen insists that their use of dialect on tracks such as "Dallah Flet" has national appeal and represents an attempt to dissociate it from "coloured" identity and that, with the inclusion of Ishmael and Danisa into the group and their rapping in African languages, they are trying to steer away from being labelled "gam" or "coloured" and so falling under Afrikaner Nationalist conceptions of ethnicity and racial identity (Haupt 1995: 66). The ambiguities of POC's position in this regard—simultaneously offering local affirmation/identification and exclusion/ethnicity—reflect broader uncertainties about difference and belonging, acute in South Africa in the postapartheid context but endemic to all postcolonial or "multicultural" societies.

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> I would like to thank: Lord God Almighty Allah for bringing us as far as we got and I pray that Allah may guide us as a people to unity and let peace prevail within us and on earth.
>
> Ready D's shout out on *Age of Truth*

POC's name has deliberately religious connotations. Ready D says it refers to "being witness and paying respect to all the great people and prophets . . . from Jesus to Moses, all the way to the prophet Mohammed. It's very social, very political and very spiritual" (Watkins: 54). The album *Our World* is dedicated to, among others, "All the Imams, Priests, Organisations and The Public who are fighting social diseases," and the sleeve notes to *Ghetto Code* contain further thanks to Allah. But often "Allah" seems to be a shifting signifier for "God" in a more pluralist sense, for Ishmael's shout out on the *Age of Truth* album reads, "I would like to thank God and his son Jesus," and apparently does not contradict Ready D's claiming Islamic blessing for the band. Islam has been one of the strongest forces critiquing the hegemony of the West in localized or global politics and has been central to the Black Consciousness organisations that have shaped the growth of hip-hop in the U.S., particularly the Nation of Islam and Afrika Bambaataa's Zulu Nation. In South Africa and the Cape Flats specifically, Islam is closely bound up both with racial politics and the context of gangsterism. Perhaps because of the complexities of the issue, the danger of being misconstrued, and their own very genuine concern for tolerance (of which their shifting signification of God/Allah may be symptomatic) POC's religious identification is largely restricted to the sleeve notes (though a more thoroughgoing analysis of Cape hip-hop and Islam would be enlightening).

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Ek praat nou van 'n meit…
Prophets of da City, "Dallah Flet 2"

Rap's most resistant strain, and one frequently discussed in the media, is its gender politics. Perhaps at least in part because of its alliance with the black nationalist discourses of Islam, and despite the emergence of women rappers such as Queen Latifa, Sister Souljah, Salt 'n Pepa, or Lil' Kim, hip-hop "follows in the steps of sixties black militancy by positioning black women who do not conform to the ideals of the patriarchal family structure as ungrateful wives or gold-digging lovers" (Decker: 68). POC are in public support of gender equality, and Ready D himself has spoken about the importance of women being equals in hip-hop—though with some degree of confusion and apparently complete sublimation of the problems of Islam in this regard:

> You know especially growing up in a Western society … It teaches you that the man is the provider. He is much stronger and all this bullshit … so I think in the female subconscious that holds for the majority of females. Then you get the strong women that comes around and says, to hell with this … you know … if you're a man I'm able to get into your territory and still do damage in your scene … and that's the attitude that we like to encourage. We want to tell them that if you have a problem with whoever tell them this is a lot of bullshit … and come up with better skills and show them a thing or two. I'm not threatened by women participating. I think with females participating it will get the culture motivated much more. (Watkins: 136)

Their lyrics occasionally suggest otherwise, though. "Dallah Flet 2" addresses a coloured woman with the apartheid appellation of "meit" and rejects claims of paternity with an aggressively racist and sexist diatribe:

Of soek jy 'n pa vir jou laaitie
Jy hou nou haaitie taaitie
But daai issie alright nie
Wat ek mean om to sê
Jy was gewillig om to lê
But now you wanna give me a scare
'Cause the baby is there
I may be 'n derra, 'n pa
Maar Ramone was ook daar
Moenie kla nie, ek issie vaakie
Nege maande gelede was ek nie eers innie Kaapie
Dis 'n haatie, jy't nie 'n saak nie
Hou jou mond, moenie eers praat nie

> Want jy kan niks maakie
> Genoeg van daai
> Ek praat nou van 'n meit
> . . .
> Jy's stuck up, jy's fucked up en wat
> Wat dink jy jy is wit met jou swart gat ...

Such sentiments are difficult to deal with, and rap's misogyny (and racism) has provided ample ammunition to its detractors. George is correct, though, in claiming of hip-hop in the U.S. that it should not be held to sole account for more widespread social prejudices: "Despite the 'dangerous' edge of so much hip hop culture, all of its disturbing themes are rooted in this country's dysfunctional values. Anti-Semitism , racism, violence, and sexism are hardly unique to rap stars but are the most sinister aspects of the national character" (xiii). Rose, while herself extremely critical of sexism within rap, concurs:

> Rap's contradictory articulations are not signs of absent intellectual clarity; they are a common feature of community and popular cultural dialogues that always offer more than one cultural, social, or political viewpoint. These unusually abundant polyvocal conversations seem irrational when they are severed from the social contexts where everyday struggles over resources, pleasure, and meanings take place. (2)

Indeed she goes further, stressing that its contradictions and conservatisms are often what give hip-hop popular attraction and should not simply be suppressed by "progressive" political agendas:

> [T]hese contradictions [are] *central* to hip hop and to popular cultural articulations in general. Hip hop's liberatory, visionary, and politically progressive elements are deeply linked to those regressive elements that Willis believes "sell the tradition short." This aspect of hip hop's contradictions is not unique to postmodernity, it is a central aspect of popular expression and popular thought. In other words, cultural forms contain cultural ideas and ways of thinking that are already part of social life. In fact, it is these contradictions that make the culture coherent and relevant to the society in which it operates. It is the contradictory nature of pleasure and social resistance in the popular realm that must be confronted, theorized, and understood, instead of erasing it or rigidly rejecting those practices that ruin our quest for untainted politically progressive cultural expressions. (24)

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> Rap music is one of the most heavily traded popular commodities in the market, yet it still defies total corporate control over the music, its

> local use and incorporation at the level of stable or exposed meanings. (Rose: 41).
>
> [T]he combi, which had been jumping about like a bucking bronco for an hour, finally loses power. There's a problem with the fuel pump. (account of POC on the way to a gig; Worthy: 46)

There are many metaphors one could use in writing about hip-hop in South Africa. Dror Eyal describes what he perceives to be rap's decline in the face of kwaito in terms of a subway tunnel: "Hip-Hop has gone back underground to its roots, back to the deep bass rumble at the bottom of a graffiti-covered tunnel" (4). Watkins uses as his central metaphor for discussing hip-hop in Cape Town the train line, which implies and maintains social movement and division. He quotes one Cape Town hip-hopper who comments, somewhat caustically, that although POC travel by car, their videos maintain the centrality of the train as symbol for the traversing of urban space (31). And yet, POC's actual mode of transport is richly suggestive. Articles on the band refer constantly to their vehicle's breaking down, as they traverse major and minor roads taking their music to communities throughout the country. Perhaps most emblematic of their achievements in South Africa, despite—or because of—a lack of institutional recognition is their inadvertently—and spectacularly—heading the bill at the 2000 Splashy Fen music festival because of a late arrival after yet another breakdown.*

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TRANSLATION AND THE VERNACULAR BIBLE IN THE DEBATE BETWEEN MY "TRADITIONAL" AND ACADEMIC WORLDVIEWS

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> The problem of describing to others how members of a remote tribe think then begins to appear largely as one of translation, of making the coherence primitive thought has in the languages it really lives in, as clear as possible in our own. (Godfrey Lienhardt in Robinson: 3)

INTRODUCTION: WHAT COLONIALISM?

I endeavor in this essay to describe my own experiences in the hands of the two worlds I inhabit. Thorough conversance with personal experiences notwithstanding, I am writing this paper as an inquirer. I am writing as one trying to create a coherent world for himself by pestering with irritating questions those who have been around longer than he has. In a sense this essay derives as much from personal needs as from a desire to remind the beneficiaries of the status quo about the frustrations of those who live in the valley of the shadow of identity crisis—an awkward dual identity.

I belong first of all with those who were (are) on colonialism's receiving end—*one of "the remote tribes"*—the Basotho of Southern Africa. It is fascinating that despite all that the indigenous peoples suffered in the hands of colonialism, one finds to date no scarcity of analysts who assert in various ways that colonialism did (these "poor people") more good than harm—thereby (unwittingly) justifying current forms of colonialism (e.g., Roy). And from among the remote tribes one also hears calls to abandon preoccupations with the past because it is gloomy and its remembering is still under the control of (erstwhile?) colonialists (e.g., Maluleke 1998a). Even as I contribute this essay, I am thus forced to

wonder about the apparent inevitability of colonialism (and how I might evade its cunning clutches).

I am like and unlike Lienhardt. He observes members of *some remote tribe* (implying that he and those implicit in "our own" do not belong to such an unrefined state of existence) and afterwards reports his observations in terms of his own finer worldview and jargon. I am like him in belonging to the elite guild of observers who must make assertions about remote tribes. But I am unlike him in belonging to and being happy to make claims about *my own* "remote tribe." I must translate experiences from my remote world in a manner that the guild will approve of, although the guild hardly encourages me to squeeze academic assumptions into the discourse of my mother-tongue world in my vernacular. The process is unidirectional, and in cases where I have to choose between my remote tribe's ways and academic practices, the former usually goes under. Am I hopelessly wrong in thus considering the possibility that the academy has colonized me? If I am not utterly misguided, then I cannot assume that colonialism is some past monster. I must qualify *what colonialism* the present essay seeks to engage—and there are many forms. Perhaps a historical case study will help this end.

A Cloud of Witnesses

I often find myself identifying with fellows such as Tiyo Soga, to exploit a well-studied (and thus not easily abuse-able) case. The Reverend Tiyo Soga was foremost of his peers (and thus enviable) in many ways: the first native "South African" to be trained and ordained a church minister (not to mention that it all happened abroad), to reject and refute the practice of circumcision as a mark of manhood (Xhosa people feel now just as strongly about the practice as they did then), to preach abroad following his ordination there (and at his return from Scotland he also preached in mixed or white "South African" congregations in addition to his usual work among the Xhosa), to translate *The Pilgrim's Progress* and portions of the Bible into Xhosa, to write hymns, to record Xhosa history and custom including a genealogy of Xhosa chiefs, and so forth.

Chief of all, in my estimation, he was among the first educated native South Africans to become disillusioned with the Christianity he had so wholeheartedly embraced. This disillusionment came about as a result of sustained exposure to unpleasant stimuli from both the fellow Xhosa and the expatriate colonialist and missionary colleagues. The shift is perceptible in his personal journal, as in the articles he contributed to *Indaba*—in particular the one entitled "What Is the Destiny of the Kafir Race?" This article (another first—the "first published statement of black consciousness in the history of South Africa" [Saunders: 134–35]) was written in

response to predictions by John Chalmers (a junior missionary colleague who was later to write the first biography of Tiyo Soga) that if blacks do not "rise in the scale of civilization" then "every year must witness their extinction until at last they pass away, and be forgotten forever" (*King William's Town Gazette,* 3 April 1865). It pushed Soga to the point of mustering every resource he had—the Bible, history, traditional wisdom, reason—to the rebuttal of such arrogance. In a quest for sanity, he was forced to look at everything that defined him, including the once-abandoned traditional worldview. The advice he gave his "Coloured" children betrays the synthesis the matured Tiyo Soga had cultured within himself.

Interestingly enough, history in (South) Africa has repeated itself over and again in the lives of men and women who initially left all to embrace the new Way, only later to reconsider, return to, and work toward the resuscitation of their traditional ways of life—some seeking a mutual synthesis with Christianity while others totally abandoning ship. Many who teach in theological faculties will avouch the crisis (facilitated by a clash of worldviews) that their students undergo during theological training. I have, in addition, often wondered why it is that I lack interest in "anthropology" as an academic discipline (and sometimes actually resent it). I am happy to supply data about *my tribal* practices and beliefs, but I am uncomfortable with going a step further and theorizing about them.

As Judith Coullie reminded us,[1] theorizing "involves supposition, conjecture, hypothesis, speculation." To theorize about my customs and beliefs is impracticable for a couple of reasons. First, inherited customs and beliefs were fabricated in response to reality as experienced by ancestors and accordingly modified during the oral handing-down process from generation to generation. To theorize about them is to presume that I am able to transcend the wisdom and reality of my society in order to appeal to some *other* universal (objective) grid of possible responses on the basis of which my people's response was tribal. This is perhaps the reason outsiders find it a lot easier to theorize about the other, because while—often naively—taking the self as the universal standard (subjective), they can then (de-)grade the remote other. "If she is a wall, we will…; but if she is a door, we will…" (Song 8:8).

Why can't I become a mature woman without my brainy big brothers arranging and planning all sorts of contingencies for me? Moreover, it is exhausting to "always" be the object of someone else's theorizing. Where are instances in which those who have "always" been on colonialism's

[1] In an unpublished presentation at the colloquium out of which this volume arose.

receiving end set out to study the customs of the technologically advanced (big-brother type) tribes? Those who have tried it know that it is like running in shifting sands, like a mirage—the rules and the playfields shift faster than anyone with limited resources (for no fault of her own) can keep up with. One might add that it is as impossible as the likelihood of cadavers, ants, or plants ever studying human beings *and* having their research findings celebrated by the academy.[2] I am ever so glad that animals have not necessarily bought into the labels we humans give them (at least we have no way of knowing); sadly, I cannot say the same of many a human society.

Orality, Literacy and Colonialism: What Basis?

Do the preceding concerns imply that all we of the academy are involved in is self-satiation (regardless of at whose expense it comes)? Is our prolificity as theory output machines and articulators a function of our desire to stay in control of the remote other's self-perception? What is it helping members of the remote tribes that archives containing stories about their ancestors are locked up in some far-off country or in some medium to which they have no access? Is it the noblest of vocations to be an expert in some remote other? This is not an essay in ethics, but every discipline does have ethical questions to answer—and I hope that we each begin at self-criticism.

And so I ask myself, What informs our study of Orality, Literacy and Colonialism? What are our presuppositions? I would like to attempt an

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2 As a medical student, I experienced profound awe in my second-year dissection class when coming face to face with a human cadaver, the kind of reverence that I did not feel in my first year while practicing the dissection skill on a mouse. That it was *named* a "cadaver" and not a "corpse" helped the rapport-building process, because I always dreaded my first encounter with a "dead human body," which up until then I knew as a "corpse." Although in the first day of our encounter with cadavers some of my classmates were so overwhelmed that they fainted, several weeks later we were all so accustomed to these specimens that we could have snacks as we worked on them. Now that we had opened them up, had applied the instructions of the dissection manual carefully so we did not miss anything worth observing, had noted with fascination as some showed deficiencies or exaggerations in places, and had convinced ourselves that we knew just what to expect from them (i.e., we were experts), there could be no surprises. These cadavers were valuable tools for our learning, but they were dead and we were alive; we knew what we were doing, and they had no idea what day it was; we came and left as we pleased, and they could only lie there unprogressive. In spite of formal introductions at the beginning and the nametags on their hands, I cannot remember the name of my cadaver or his place of origin; I also suspect that the reason I can still recall that he was male is because I had to use a friend's female cadaver to observe whatever else mine could not afford me. In many ways I fear that we continue in the academy to speak of other contemporary human cultures as though they were cadavers.

answer by drawing from personal reflections on the age-old practice of *naming* (*onomastics*). My first argument is that people rarely name themselves, and whenever they do it is almost always in reaction (positive or negative) to some other label or to the need imposed by an encounter with a distinct other. I have battled to come across credible evidence regarding the origins of the label of my "ethnic" group—*Basotho.* It is fair to suppose that my confusion arises because whoever coined the category "Basotho"[3] ("the Suto" is the nineteenth-century version) was more interested in clumping them together (on the basis of cultural-linguistic affinities) than in their elaborate self-descriptions. Consequently, there is ambiguity as to who exactly belong in the category Basotho[4] (or more tellingly, the Sotho-Tswana).

That *sotho* and its diminutive *sothwana* are Sotho words for "brown" made some students think that the origins of the name "Basotho" lies in the skin shade (the Zulu also use *abaNsundu* from their word for the color "brown" to refer to "blacks"). Other students have conjectured that Basotho derives from the contraction of *Batho* (the Sotho counterpart of "Bantu") and *-tsho,* the root word for "black." There are problems with this suggestion, mainly on linguistic grounds. Whatever the case may be, I am convinced that the category Basotho (or the Sotho) was coined at the encounter with a distinctly different other, whereas prior to that encounter the word *motho* or *batho* sufficed.[5] For that matter, to date, most rural areas are still called after their chief's or clan names (e.g., *Ha-Maja*), and inhabitants accordingly call themselves *Baha-Maja* in association with the land. As Batho/Bantu, the only association they need is with their land and/or ancestry.

My second thesis claims that naming is a function of power, exercised to serve the concerns of the name-giver. Adrian Koopman points out the

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3 The "Bantu" (of which the Basotho are a member group) on the other hand is clearly derived from the people's conception. In all the groups belonging under Bantu, the word "bantu" or some variant of it means "people." Bantu thus acknowledges the people's self-conception in a way that Basotho does not, at least as far as I can gather.

4 The conventional divisions are geographical: Southern Sotho (King Moshoeshoe's), Northern Sotho (Pedi) and "Western" Sotho (Tswana). The previous (colonial) education system created (extant) representative dialects for these three conglomerations, and these were taught in school. The Southern Sotho generally understand themselves exclusively whenever Basotho is mentioned. The Tswana do not generally fancy inclusion under the category Basotho (hence the category "Sotho-Tswana"). The Northern Sotho's story is even more complex: "The Northern Sotho are linguistically and culturally the most diverse of all the Sotho-Tswana" (Magubane: 11). There are groups hereunder who legitimately do not regard themselves as belonging under Pedi (e.g., Balovedu), and yet the Northern Sotho groups generally regard themselves as Basotho.

5 In fact, in ordinary conversation, and in contradistinction from whites, the Zulu still refer to Zulus, Ngunis, or "blacks" as *muntu/bantu* without the descriptive adjective.

fact that although parents usually carry out the rite, older siblings or relatives (sometimes even friends) may usurp it (1986: 32–33). This point is benign until you appreciate that with "African names generally"—and thus with regard to African conceptualization of naming as such—there is "a link between [the] names and identity" of the entities being named and also between the "names and existence" as experienced and/or anticipated by those naming (15–17). Much like in Hebrew cosmology, a person's name is undivorceable from the person—thus the prohibition against taking Yahweh's name in vain and so forth.

In Zulu society "givers and bearers" of names "are always aware of the meaning of the name" (Koopman[6]). "Meaning" here approximates "underlying reasons." Koopman then cites Evans Pritchard (237), who says, "Names of all kinds are social documents which *fix a person's position in the social structure and define his relations to other members of society*" (my italics). To name someone therefore is to prescribe his or her identity and potential. Naming is thus both a prerogative and a responsibility of immense implications. According to Mbali Shabalala, "when a lexical item becomes a name, the lexical meaning becomes irrelevant and as time goes by it may disappear. The referential function of uniquely identifying an entity becomes primary" (21). In other words, the lexical meaning of *imbali,*that is, flower, was not foremost in the minds of those who named her. What was foremost was, "At last, a girl!"—revealing that several boys preceded her . Thus my dissatisfaction with my failure to understand who coined the name Basotho and why.[7] Similarly, I am cautious with, though realizing the inevitability of, labels such as oral, literate, colonist, and so on. When naming, we chart out paths for those we have named, and, ironically, we are often surprised when they follow those paths! According to Sotho wisdom, *Bitso lebe ke seromo* meaning—roughly—"a bad name is a permanent blemish."

Third and finally, naming implies relationship. You only name what you have dealings with—although most of us are ignorant of these relationships. As Shabalala reminds us, "It is through names that one can uniquely identify what exists around him/her" (19). The well-known story of Adam naming the rest of God's creatures including his own wife attests

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6 In an undated Zulu Honours Coursebook (see volume bibliography) whose page numbering is also useless.

7 A similar concern is expressed by Frantz Fanton (in *The Wretched of the Earth,* Penguin, p. 170): "The Negro, never so much a Negro as since he has been dominated by the whites, when he decides to prove that he has a culture and to behave like a cultured person, comes to realize that history points out a well-defined path to him: he must demonstrate that a Negro culture exists." Reminds me a lot about Tiyo Soga.

this claim: How would he live with them unless he had encoded them? Since I name for my own benefit, and I have to relate to the named in a relationship favorable to me, it follows that I will not name toward my denigration. Sadly, we usually name things and people who baffle us in the most pejorative of terms. Naming is among the first steps we take in our endeavor to "understand" (i.e., program) the other in order to then relate therewith. Perhaps it is time to seek a middle ground where names are not given (and loaded) a priori but rather the self-conception (and, where possible, the self-naming) of the human "subjects" we study is taken seriously.

So we must ask ourselves, what presuppositions and images are conjured within us by the concepts orality, literacy, and colonialism? For instance, is our basic instinct *intracultural, intercultural,* or both? An intracultural premise would entail exclusively either a particular Western or African culture, or even the academic society—conceding the nonmonolithic texture of each. An intercultural premise, on the other hand, would specifically mean a comparison across either pair of the categories just mentioned—presuming cultural differences between them. Of course, as widely held wisdom teaches, pretending that nothing else influences you other than what you are currently observing is delusional. It is fast becoming conventional, therefore, to explicate one's assumptions, reference points, agenda, et cetera. We should perhaps realize that attempting to make "the coherence primitive thought has in the languages it really lives in, as clear as possible in our own" is inexorably observer-oriented; "our own" serves as the standard that the remote other has to measure up to, and our brief is to show how the coherence of remote tribes is no coherence at all or, at best, only primitive coherence.

Because I have the resources to spend a year or two living among you, observing your ways and trying to fit them into "our own" ways of understanding, I am a professional literate anthropologist and you are a remote oral tribe. Is it not true then that *our interest in orality derives from our being literate*? It is interesting then, that orality as an object of study is postliterate; that is, you have to be literate to appreciate orality, and the theorem may not be proportionally inversed.

Worse still, if you happen to come from the remote tribes, literacy means not only the ability to read and write but also, significantly, the ability to do so in the language(s) of the colonizers. For one who comes from a remote tribe, the ability to read and write in the idiom of the remote tribe must follow or at most co-issue with, but definitely not precede, literacy in the colonizer's lingo. Without denying that the colonized have utilized this handicap to their own ends (as several scholars are eager to emphasize), sometimes creating from recognizable forms of the colonizer's tongue a language that only they could understand, we must also accept that vernacular literacy being subsequent to an-other entails

that the literate one is severed from the world of her origins. That is, to become literate, you first have to apostatize from your "oral" worldview, to which you may subsequently return as a literate analyst (or skeptic).[8]

Bible Translation in South Africa: What Priorities?

It was out of the preceding apprehension that for my master's dissertation I attempted a personal reintegration into the world and discourse of my people, Basotho. Why, when I am being trained to work among Basotho, should my studies be entirely in English? Why is it nobody's concern whether or not I can "translate" my theological training into a medium that my people can relate to? How shall I appreciate and preach from the Sesotho Bible and worldview when all I have consulted in my theological reflection (and theorizing) is a plethora of foreign commentaries? These questions got me geared up to attempt an application of my theological skills to my Sesotho Bible and world as critical interlocutors—a reversal of Lienhardt's self-declared "translation" process.

No sooner than I had begun to work with the Greek and Sesotho Bibles did it dawn to me that I couldn't evade questions pertaining to the making available of the Bible in Sesotho: translation theory and practice with regard to the Bible. I could produce my own Sesotho version directly from the Greek text, but my congregants already have much-cherished Sesotho Bibles on which they depend for nourishment.[9] Moreover, what would preclude mine from falling into the same traps that the present translations may have fallen into? What is the value of the Sesotho Bibles in circulation with regard to a sound existence for Basotho? How useful is a Bible "written" (translators are authors) by literate people within a largely "oral" milieu? How much affinity does the

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8 "It would appear, then, that the impact of literacy education as a socialization agent on individuals' cultural identity can be either destructive or constructive. When the person loses the capability to derive and create meaning in a culturally significant way, he or she becomes less, not more, literate. To the extent that successful learning, as defined from the school's point of view, forces the ethnic minority child to become disconnected from what is personally significant, his or her ability to construct a positive and coherent cultural identity will be weakened" (Ferdman: 199).

9 There being no parabiblical resources in most indigenous languages (except perhaps translations of *Pilgrim's Progress*-type stories), the majority of indigenous believers only have "the black book with red lips" (their affectionate phrase) and seem not to need anything else. My father cherishes the Bible so much that he cannot bear to see a person underline or make notes in it. The Bible as they have it (notwithstanding the way it has "always" been understood among them, i.e., orally and literally) informs the theology and praxis of these believers. A cursory look at the quality of their Christianity does not seem to call for emergency interventions. But need we be content with such disparity?

Bible (with its chiefly oral provenance) have with Sesotho culture? I shall now share some of the findings of that (ongoing) research.

That the Bible is a popular book among South African indigenous groups is hardly questionable—which means reflecting on its outworking is no trivial matter. That Bible translators customarily venerate the Bible as "the Word of God" is more than a cliché—which means we can trust their motivations. The growing consensus that oral and literate worlds are not easily comparable is another important step in the right direction—to the discredit of swift generalizations. That a missionary's account of events would be different from that of the missionized is obvious—a story is incomplete (and dangerous) when only one side thereof has been heard.

Accessibility Questions

A dangerously brief summation of South African translation politics now ensues. The complete Southern Sotho Bible first appeared in 1881/3 (translation work having commenced in 1835).[10] The story of the English Bible poses transnational challenges and thus squeezes its way out of a possible comparison with that of the Sesotho Bible. The complete Afrikaans Bible appeared in 1933 (translation work having begun in 1889). Whereas the Sesotho Bible could only enjoy revisions between 1883 and 1976, several interesting developments accrued to the Afrikaans Bible. "Die Bybel in Afrikaans met Deuterokanonieke Boeke" (1965) is one of the *first* Bibles with deuterocanonical books to be published in Africa, only thirty-two years from 1933. Similarly, the large-print Afrikaans edition of the Bible was the *first* complete African Bible to be printed in South Africa (1969), followed by a complete Afrikaans Audio Bible (1989), an Afrikaans Reference Bible (1995), and since 1935 portions of the Afrikaans Braille Bible.

The "dynamic/functional" equivalent Afrikaans Bible was published by the Bible Society of South Africa (BSSA) in 1983, the Southern Sotho one in 1989, and we still await (since 1857) the corresponding Tswana one. I was privileged to attend a successful Symposium on Bible Translation organized by the BSSA in Kempton Park (20–22 August 2001).[11] Its

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10 Robert Moffat's translation of Luke into Tlhaping Tswana in 1830 is the earliest South African indigenous book of the Bible; his complete Bible published in 1857 is the first complete Bible in an indigenous South African tongue and the third complete Bible in an indigenous African language. (The first complete Zulu Bible appeared in 1883, while the Northern Sotho one appeared in 1904.) As Moffat's case clearly illustrates, portions of the Bible exist separately and accumulate into a complete Bible over several decades.

11 My attendance at this event was sponsored by the NRF IKS grant that also supported this colloquium.

agenda was twofold: (1) to update translators on recent developments in translation, linguistic, and literary studies; and (2) to explore the possibility of producing another Afrikaans Bible (seeing that the 1983 version endured mixed reception). Other indigenous vernaculars clearly cannot compete with Afrikaans, despite the presence of "the (biblical) text" among them for so many decades. Most indigenous languages boast at most two versions (not to be confused with editions or revisions) of the Bible, while others such as Southern Ndebele still await a complete Bible for the *first* time ever (for more, see Coldham; Smit; Reyneke; and Hermanson).

Afrikaans, the next best thing to English in South Africa, is clearly privileged. Concomitant with this state of affairs or resultant from it, as Jeanne Maartens (1998) intimates that evidence betrays, little value is attached to other (since Afrikaans also is one) indigenous languages by even those for whom such are mother tongues. Watching any television program today and hearing young African children fail to answer questions or to engage issues in their own mother tongues makes one doubt even the validity or motivation of such rationalizations as "hidden versus public transcripts," "bricolage," and the like (Scott 1990; Gee 1996; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Legge; Ranger 1992a). Those who have keep getting more; those who lack lose even the little they had.

Clearly these disparities engender slower development of the disfavored languages—rendering them perpetual specimens of oral cultures—while at the same time "the majority of [South African] people (approximately 80%) do not have the command of English needed to succeed in higher education or to compete on an equal footing for the prestigious and higher paid jobs" (Maartens: 35; see also van Niekerk: 150). Or from a Bible translation perspective, Afrikaans Bible translation proceeded "differently in that there was a larger Editorial Committee . . . all of whom were proficient in either Greek or Hebrew and could therefore translate from the original text" (Hermanson: 4)—while translation projects into other indigenous languages still lie largely in the hands of foreign expertise.

Quality Questions

This immediately raises the important question of the quality we are to expect from the Sesotho Bible if, unlike the Afrikaans Bible, its effective translators are not mother-tongue Sesotho speakers. Without intending to be ungrateful and unappreciative of the missionaries and Bible society toils for the indigenous peoples, all I am asking is, When are the latter going to stop being dependent? Why must it be acceptable that—in spite of the Bible being among them for over a century—there

are no mother-tongue Sesotho translation consultants yet? The simple answer is, in a word, *apartheid* or *colonialism.* But things cannot be that simple. Are Sesotho speakers so brainwashed as to believe either that English and Afrikaans Bibles (in their multiplicity) are a sufficient means of access to theology or that they cannot themselves cope with the enormous demands of learning the original biblical languages and translation theory and skills?

Without rewriting my master's dissertation, I would like to aver that working from Greek into Sesotho was for me a liberating experience. My eyes opened to the peculiar challenges facing Bible translation into Sesotho—such as the translation of *logos* and *phonē.* Both words are rightly rendered in Sesotho as *lentswe.* In the context of John 1, *logos* is a reference to Jesus Christ and *phonē* to John the Baptizer—so the only way that translators could address the vagueness found here in Southern and Northern Sotho Bibles was by giving *Lentswe* for *logos* and *lentswe* for *phonē.* But sure as this solution might aid the attentive reader, it hardly is of benefit to the hearer. In fact, this also got me wondering about the referent of *lentswe* in the popular chorus *Lentswe Bua* (It may be translated "Oh Word, Speak; The Word is of Jesus; If we pray to the Lord we shall be saved by 'Him'; Speak, The Word belongs to Jesus"). To make matters worse, what do Basotho understand when they call the Bible the *Lentswe* of God? And what about when they name a (male) child *Lentswe* (or *Zulu Lizwi*)? How all these might contribute to an interesting sermon is evident, but they are also serious challenges with which I should turn both to the academy and to Basotho believers for assistance—but alas, and to my distress, there is a void.

The two Northern Sotho versions I consulted render *egennēthēsan* ('were born," in John 1:13) as *tswalwa* (passive), the word I was taught not to use when referring to human beings. As a young Pedi person, I was socialized to believe that people are *belegwa* (passive) instead. *Tswala* (active) is crude and thus reserved for the birth process of animals—though now increasingly used of humans by the literatis probably as a consequence of what may prove to be erratic Bible translation (this usage of *tswala* instead of *belega* is repeated in the Matthean genealogy of Jesus). *Belega* (active) is respectful in keeping with the euphemistic tendency of the Northern Sotho people; it also enjoys the ambiguity that "bear" enjoys in English.[12] The reader is likely to overlook this distortion of

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12 In fact, the influence of English seems palpable in the Old Testament, where a cursory look (in the absence of Sotho concordances et al.) indicates that both words are used interchangeably and variably within and across the two Northern Sotho versions, with *belega* leading in cases where the subject is feminine and *tswala* where the subject is masculine.

Northern Sotho custom, while the hearer will be displeased not only by the odd word but also by the fact that (as is most usually the case) it would be proceeding from the lips of a much younger reader. It is difficult to ascertain whether it is my socialization (or "dialect") that is at fault on this matter or indeed the fault rests with the translators of the Northern Sotho Bible. One of the perennial challenges of orality is that languages evolve and the process of gathering reliable unanachronistic or "original" information is practically impossible.

Other observations, though pertinent, are not necessarily restricted to the Sesotho Bible. For example, it is interesting that the four Sesotho versions consulted give John's Prologue different headings: *Lentswe le entsweng nama* ("The Word that has been [was] made flesh," Southern Sotho, 1987), *Lentswe le fetoha motho* ("The Word becomes [turns into] a person," Southern Sotho, 1989), *Kriste ke Modimo* ("Christ is God," Northern Sotho, 1986), and *Lentšu ke Jesu Kriste* ("The Word is Jesus Christ," Northern Sotho, 2000). Though strictly not part of the text, these captions influence most readers of the Bible (in fact, these readers almost always commence their public readings with a reading of the caption). Now clearly it does matter whether the title reads "The Word that has been (was) made flesh" or "The Word becomes a person" or "Christ is God" or "The Word is Jesus Christ." For one thing, the Word is passive in the first, active in the second; it is equated with Jesus Christ in the fourth, while the third is outright doctrinal.

Studying the four versions side by side proved more useful than I had originally thought; for instance, I noted a number of peculiarities that each language and each version displays. The Southern Sotho versions felt correct in their translation of the pronoun for the *logos* as "it" for most of the pericope, while the Northern Sotho translations rightly render the pronoun "him" throughout. Moreover, it is clear how a personal or impersonal pronoun affects the sense of the text.

The last observation I recall for the present is the feeling of sympathy I developed toward Bible translators' efforts to engage both the immediate textual as well as the wider Christian contexts. An instance is my struggle with *katelaben* (v. 5), rendered by one version of each language as "received" or "overcome" respectively. The problem arises from the ambiguity of the word itself and thus forces translators (myself included) to make an intellectual conjecture in the *tertium comparationis* before seeking an equivalent in Sesotho. Noting the inevitability of a *tertium comparationis* for an insider translator such as myself has also led me to believe that interlingual translation pursuits (production of polyglot Bibles) are more productive than monolingual ones. It is as various experts cooperate across the language divide that they will capture the spirit of the word and thus free one another from

the chains of the letter in order to express it most dynamically in the target languages.

So with regard to the quality of the vernacular Bible, the verdict is provisional and indecisive. The efforts of missionary translators are admirable, although the time has come for insider-translators (preferably working together across the language divides) to take matters further. This will ensure both the preservation of the cultural values as well as enable the most natural presentation of the material while simultaneously allowing the insider-translator to be at home in her own mother tongue as well as in any other.

The Potential of the Vernacular Bible

Let me conclude this essay by reflecting on the "theoretical" justification for my working in my mother tongue. Colonialism and yesteryear's imperial projects may not be deprived their contribution toward cross-cultural exposure between peoples. Exposure and negotiations had always obtained across cultures, but with the modern colonial projects the time factor was shortened drastically and the number of scramblers increased dramatically. With these developments the colonized saw (and often bought into) the devaluation of their worlds alongside the inflation of the colonizers' worlds. Referring to the feelings Tiyo Soga expressed as he came back home from the Scotland that had so impressed him, and which he affectionately calls "home," Christopher Saunders concludes that Soga was "already clearly a victim of cultural conquest" (128). If for Soga Scotland had now become home, then the land of his forebears became in several senses the world of a remote tribe, which tribe and world he must explain in the colonizer's terms as betrayed in his desire to "civilize fellow-Africans."[13] Such is the power of colonialism.

To recap, the world of the colonizers is the center against which the other is remote, and our tools for speaking about the other appear in some ways to be tools of colonialism. We ignore the manner in which members of remote tribes speak about themselves in order to coerce them into "universal" categories that (are intended to) engender inferiority within them. I am certainly not the first to note these matters; I even enjoy the company of some Western scholars. For instance, James Cox (1996a) exposes the very real possibility that the much-celebrated move from

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[13] I must perhaps simultaneously recommend David Attwell's lecture for an exposition of Soga's masterly use of the Queen's language and discernment of colonialism for what it was. Attwell also attributes to the nineteenth-century missionaries the entrenchment of English in South Africa.

"primitive" to "primal" is not quite a step forward because the underlying assumptions have not altered. Cox's claims remain highly plausible in spite of the warm reception that "primal" enjoys among groups formerly labeled "primitive." It would make more sense for me if primitive were replaced with a concept from the periphery rather than with another value-laden construct from the center. To name or label people, like naming a child, is to *give* them identity; it is to prescribe categories and boundaries wherein the people in question must be understood as well as understand themselves. Is it inconceivable, then, that Sotho literature is not literature until it measures up to (Western readings of) Homer or Shakespeare?

Bible-Based Literacy

The first reason why I respect the vernacular Bible has to do with what I call *Bible literacy.* Although both my parents are nonliterate, it is incredible that they spell-read the Sesotho Bible in a manner not too dissimilar from mine. (After many years of neglect, I cannot read in Sesotho as well as I can in English.) They combine their knowledge of biblical tradition, collected over the years from sermons and/or public readings of the Bible, with a patient identification of each letter and syllable until each word, phrase, or sentence rings familiar. Isaiah Shembe (founder of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*) declares, "No, I have not been taught to read and write, but I am able to read the Bible a little, and that came to me by revelation and not by learning. It came to me by miracle" (cited in Gunner 1986: 187).

Many elderly oral-aural readers of the Bible from my context who possess this ability cannot tell precisely when it began. These nonliterate believers then read the Bible without whatever else attends the acquisition of literacy; that is, they read the Bible orally. I prepare my sermons and deliver them on the basis of a written outline and detail; they are ever ready to preach from the spirit of the Word. They memorize portions of the Bible but are not tied to the letter of the text in the manner that my exegesis has to be. They read the Bible orally and functionally, while I read literally and "systematically" (whatever that means). Their insistence, seeing that I have undergone some theological training, that I contribute something to their understanding of the Bible means that I must take the Sesotho Bible seriously.

Biblical Translatability

Stanley Porter's observation that "The history of Bible translation is charged with ideological issues" (18) cannot be distrusted. But in all honesty, Bible translators have generally had a genuine interest in rendering

"the Word of God" available in every "significant" tongue.[14] Though driven by the conviction "to distribute the Word of God 'without note or comment' to every one in his own language and at a price he could afford" (Smit: 3–4), Bible translators of the colonial era remained "children of their own particular epochs" who "believed that colonial hegemony was beneficial to the indigenous people so ruled"; they were thus "often too negatively critical of traditional African customs" and simultaneously "often naïvely uncritical of many aspects of European and western culture and customs" (Roy: 1–2).

The BSSA (then an auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Societies [BFBS] and now an influential member of the United Bible Societies [UBS]) similarly did little more than "following the political trend" (Smit: 86). In fact, in cases such as of the so-called "Chinese Question" on the Rand (in present-day Gauteng), "The Society was careful not to take sides in this controversial political issue," although "the Society did not shrink from its responsibility towards the spiritual needs of the Orientals" (Smit: 75). One can thus understand how the Afrikaans Bible gained the upper hand. Do Bible translation agencies need to settle for popular political trends?

There must be another ideologically less-depressing perspective. Well, two prominent African scholars share the Bible societies' conviction that the Bible is the Word of God. However, they also propound, in the words of their mentor, that "There is a history of translation of the Bible because there was a translation of the Word into flesh" (Walls: 24). In a nutshell, the thesis of Lamin Sanneh and Kwame Bediako is that Christianity or the gospel (epitomized in the Bible) is able to spread and remain relevant to various contexts firstly because of its fundamental preference for translatability, and secondly despite the handicaps of its media (missionaries/preachers, translators, or receptor cultures). I am able to appreciate and appropriate the Word of God in Sesotho today because built into the incarnation was an unquenchable ability for the Logos to be expressed in every human tongue and culture (John 1:14).

So the missionaries and Bible societies were merely responding to this quality of the Word of God when they felt the urge to render it in as many languages as are spoken in every "corner" of the world. All languages/cultures are equally sacred, because all languages/cultures, including ancient biblical languages, are (potential) receptor and sender

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[14] "Generally speaking, we may say that after more than a hundred years of faithful and active service, the Christian missionaries have by the grace of God 'evangelized' South Africa, so that no important tribe has been left untouched, no language of any consequence is untranslated, and no large territory remains wholly unoccupied" (Gerdener: 11).

languages/cultures. The emergence of Bible literacy is thus no spectacular development; it is a logical human response to the Logos; the latter will not stop its incarnations until every person everywhere is able to receive and in turn articulate it in her own mother tongue's discourse. Even a person who has no idea where Palestine is situated on the globe can still joyously receive the Word of God in her own cultural framework and thereby enjoy a meaningful relationship with her Creator. The Word of God is just as potent in Sesotho or Spanish as it is in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. The immense value of this argument is self-evident, particularly among people less concerned with the orthodoxy of commentaries and/or originals.[15] Each of us has to find something to keep ourselves sane amidst life's exigencies.

Some things may not be helped. For instance:

> Modern biblical translations inevitably arise out of particular political and cultural contexts. Translators are themselves products of one or another political culture. The ability to publish and disseminate the result of translation is also governed by local publishing conventions. Even the textual bases selected in translation and the linguistic medium employed rarely are entirely outside the influence of local political and cultural constraints. (Batalden: 68)

Other things can be helped. The foregoing presentation suggests to me that there is often discord between theory and practice or between the assumptions held by those who observe the other. This discord is particularly evident in the irony that while I have to use English to argue the

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[15] To view the Bible as anything but the Word of God is to introduce weakness to this perspective. Tinyiko Maluleke (1996; 1997a; 1997b), following Itumeleng Mosala (1989), has already expressed difficulties with this fundamental equation between the Bible and the Word of God. A perspective that separates the Bible from the Word of God allows us to scrutinize the Bible and its varied translators (or interpreters) as social entities with agendas and/or allegiances. It reminds us that there are no preserved originals of the text of the Bible and that translators author new books by making systemic and systematic choices on behalf of their readers. We may even ask, along with Daniel Arichea, whether it is the canon, the individual texts, ecclesiastical tradition, or the translators' own contexts that we encounter in the translated Bible. This question must be asked while we keep in mind that "no culture can be reproduced completely in any literary text, just as no source text can be fully reproduced in a translation" (Tymoczko 1999:23). Is it any wonder that—again—Andrew Walls (24) calls (Bible) translation "the art of the impossible"? Perhaps we must admit "It is, certainly, an interesting and somewhat daunting idea that this uncertainty exists concerning the meaning (and, in the case of textual criticism, content) of the documents upon which Christian (and, for the Hebrew Bible, Jewish) faith and practice are based, and with which Christians (and Jews) call others to do the same. Is it any wonder that translators of the Bible loathe to publicize this uncertainty?" (Pearson: 81–82).

case for Sesotho as an equally significant language, my nonliterate fellow Basotho continue to perceive and articulate reality in Sesotho oblivious to the threats I perceive Sesotho to be under. Perhaps, an end has finally come to the dualism I have endured wherein my life as a Mosotho believer is divorced from my life as a critical scholar. Otherwise my quests will be meaningful only in the academy and not to the people to whom there is hardly an-other reality and/or mode of expressing that reality.

LISTENING AGAIN: FINDING WAYS TO HOST THE TRC'S ORAL, AUTO/BIOGRAPHICAL SPACE

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The South African Interim Constitution of 1993 mapped out space in the political future of the new nation for a process that was to deal with the traumatic apartheid past. The clause that served as seedbed for the reconciliation process read:

> The adoption of this constitution lays the secure foundation for the people of South Africa to transcend the divisions and strife of the past, which generated gross violations of human rights, the transgression of humanitarian principles in violent conflicts and a legacy of hatred, fear, guilt and revenge.
>
> These can now be addressed on the basis that there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* but not for victimization. (cited in Krog: vii)

In 1995, the Justice Portfolio Committee, serving South Africa's first democratically elected government, drafted legislation that would establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) tasked with establishing as full a picture as possible of the causes, nature, and extent of the gross human-rights violations perpetrated in South Africa between 1960 and 1994. The Commission, which comprised three committees,[1] was to take statements from victims and amnesty applicants, investigate allegations and claims, facilitate and lead public hearings, advise the government on providing reparation and rehabilitation to victims, and present a report of their findings to the state president. But the TRC was a curious species of legal process, because commissioners were empowered to seize evidence, to subpoena witnesses, and to hear testimony

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1 The three committees were the Human Rights Violations Committee, the Amnesty Committee, and the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee.

delivered under oath, yet it could not mete out punishment, as is the prerogative of courts of law, nor did it make findings at the time of testimony, for its conclusions were to be published in a written report as the Commission's act of closure.[2] In total, the TRC received twenty thousand Human Rights Violations statements, of which two thousand came to public hearing; eight thousand applications for amnesty also came under review.

The Truth Commission event was designed as the large-scale performance requisite to national reinvention. From its inception, the Commission's implied audience was a national collective in transition to rainbow nationhood, so one of the TRC's primary motivations was to catalyze nation building. It did this symbolically at each human-rights violation hearing by blessing the new South Africa in opening prayer and anthem and by working to exorcise the nation's past in the presence of candles lit to its future. Positioning itself in this transitional moment, the mobile Commission undertook to remap South Africa's traumatized landscape with consecrated auto/biographical spaces marked by Christian, democratic discourses. Founded on metaphors of healing and the wounded body, the performance space established by the Truth Commission was a bifurcated arena in which victims and perpetrators received different levels of hospitality according to ostensibly different framing narratives. While perpetrators faced rigorous cross-examination reminiscent of courtroom procedure, victims poured their stories into a more therapeutic space characterized by Christian symbols and rituals in the form, for instance, of opening prayer and words of welcome delivered in tones of kindly receptivity. A candle symbolizing the radiance of truth was lit at each hearing to activate the sharing of a sacred performance space between community and commissioners.

But while each of these spaces (for amnesty and for narrative healing) downplayed the other within itself, amnesty hearings built themselves on the Christian exchange principle of forgiveness for truth, and human-rights hearings retained the rhythms of legal discourse in their designation of narrators as "witnesses" or "victims." Both spaces were constructed as being conditional on, and conditions for, the birth of the new nation: at human-rights violation hearings, for instance, prayer was followed by the national anthem. At both forms of hearing the presence, actual or virtual, of a national audience was implied by mechanisms present for the public broadcast of events. Adjacent to the room in which hearings occurred,

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2 As it turned out, compiling the reports was not the final act of the commission because amnesty trials had not concluded when the state president received the mammoth five-volume report.

makeshift television and radio studios recorded testimonies and bulletins for nationwide dissemination; translators converted witnesses' stories into South Africa's other official languages; and each speaker found her or his mark at a microphone alive with a dot of red light that beckoned the public inside the auto/biographical circle. The combination of obvious and subdued narratives framing TRC hearings both enabled and qualified the performance space created by the Commission.

My concern is with stories told at Human Rights Violation hearings in which the Commission appeared to open up new conditions of possibility for the oral auto/biographical act in South Africa. By encouraging "victims" to tell their stories in their own languages, and by omitting legal cross-examination from the content of the hearings, the Commission seemed to be receptive to various forms of narrative self-telling. Yet, as I have suggested, the quasi-judicial, protoreligious character of the hearings, together with their nation-building imperatives, constrained the Commission's interpretation of the stories brought before it. In this essay, I consider the way in which the reports of the Commission reflect a simultaneous granting and denial of oral auto/biographical space to "victims," and I reflect on the possibilities for opening new spaces to South Africa's traumatized storytellers in the texts of fiction, poetry, and scholarship. Michael Chapman's literary history, *Southern African Literatures,* advocates such projects by calling for a questioning of old authorities and traditions coupled with "a humanism of reconstruction, in terms of which damaged identities are reassembled" (5). In rereading two of the narratives recorded at the Commission (and mediated again in Antjie Krog's book *Country of My Skull*), I participate in a re-envisaging of the role of the South African intellectual by allowing traumatic narratives into academic discourse and by facilitating their empathetic critical mediation.

Like the Truth Commission event, the reports of the TRC speak in several languages, moving between rigid legal discourse and the open registers of psychology and narrative. The regularity and uncritical manner in which the reports switch codes is exemplified by their explicit concern with four different genres of truth, including forensic truth and narrative truth. The latter maps out space for therapy in which the broken body and psyche are released into story to be absorbed by an attentive national audience. The reports explicitly conceive of this space as an oral one: "In the (South) African context, where value continues to be attached to the oral tradition, the process of story-telling was particularly important" (1:112). One of the striking things about this assertion is its mix of present and past tenses to suggest that, while storytelling continues to be a dominant practice in (South) Africa, the process initiated by the TRC ended with the reports. Narrative process, in the context of the Truth Commission, is limited here to a collective act—the ripples and

possibilities of each story terminate with the dismantling of the national process. The TRC's postcolonial gesture in selecting, and acknowledging, an officially suppressed mode (the oral) as its own is further overshadowed by the reports' insistence that "[b]y telling their stories, both victims and perpetrators gave meaning to the multi-layered experiences of the South African story" (ibid.). Just as the reference to a broader African space of telling is both opened up and closed down by the parenthetical *South* in "(South) Africa," so the variety and polyphony of the oral arena is both admitted and denied by its having to produce the "multi-layered … South African story." The pressure of the national narrative and of having to record a settled archive seems to crowd out the possibility for individual narrative even as it sets aside safe spaces for personal telling.

It is made clear in the reports, as it was in the process of verifying stories recorded prior to the Commission, that narrative, despite its centrality to hearings, is the soft version of what happened, subordinate to and requiring validation by a more rigorous forensic truth. According to the reports, the official national history must be supported primarily by forensic truths that establish patterns of abuse; dates, places, and motives for torture; and the specific chain of command behind the horror of individual stories. The reports frequently categorize personal testimonies as if they were orderly microcosms of the national narrative, extracting exemplary bits from them and omitting that which seems superfluous to the commissioners' interpretation. This is not to say that the reports entirely occlude narrative fragments that fall outside the Commission's desired outcomes: volume 5, for example, admits that not everyone who came before the Commission experienced healing and reconciliation—but the admission is immediately submerged beneath a selection of narratives that prove "[t]he healing potential of storytelling, of revealing the truth before a respectful audience and to an official body" (5:351). So while the reports offer themselves as a host for stories told at the Commission, they do so in a problematic way, narrowing further the process of narrative selection begun prior to the TRC's molding of a public auto/biographical space. Stories presented before the Commission were chosen because they exemplified patterns of abuse suggested by forensic truth; storytellers had to fit into available narrative positions based on "representivity in relation to gender, race, age and geographical location in the area where the hearing was to be held" (1:146); and individual stories had to encapsulate the experience of a particular community.

The TRC's oral auto/biographical space is thus always contaminated, though not unnecessarily so, by a framing concern for symbolic redress of past inequalities. Each story is asked to assume a national thematics. The reports repeatedly wrest the auto/biographical act away

from the individual by recording relatively few of the stories told to the Commission—and then only fragments in the service of particular conclusions. It seems that the reports were conceived of as needing to reflect "around" the stories by explaining their value, placing them in context, categorizing them, and suggesting points of closure not reached by the hearings. Written under pressure and in order to encapsulate and conclude so much national and private trauma, the reports seem, finally, to deny their promise of the value of narrative truth; as a primary archive of TRC events, they fail to reflect the heart of the Human Rights Violation hearings. This failure raises several vital questions about the literate mediation of oral texts from the Commission and, indeed, other forums of testimony. How are we to host and sustain the South African oral auto/biographical space that was given special legitimacy by the TRC? How are we to foreground the individual *voice,* as well as the difficulty of *speaking* the words that came before the nation at the Commission?

In an article about truth, telling, and questioning, Mark Sanders suggests that we require "an ethics of advocacy" in order to approach stories from the TRC in a just manner (14). He argues for an attitude and practice that compels us to make space in our own writing for stories that have waited many years to reach our ears. Part of the postcolonial purpose in such work is to recuperate narratives that unfolded without our acknowledgement; the postcolonial spirit asks that we listen again, more attentively and creatively, to narratives like those that were here and gone in an instant before the Commission. In her book *Country of My Skull,* Antjie Krog weaves testimony brought before the Commission into a story about her own experience of reporting on the TRC process: her story becomes a narrative about what it means to take other stories into one's own life story. Sanders writes that Krog's "hospitality to the words of witnesses makes apparent how literature is able to negotiate the bifurcation between the Commission's report and hearings" (16–17).

But literature cannot be a docile receptacle for TRC narratives. Once narrative is released into the "safe" space of the Truth Commission hearings, it is also made available to public forms of representation. Krog does not deny the way in which literate texts inevitably appropriate oral stories: in a section of her book entitled "Envoi," she writes, "I have told many lies in this book about the truth. I have exploited many lives and many texts.... I hope you will all understand" (425). It is the cluster of attitudes represented in these three lines that illustrate how Krog is able to offer hospitality to the words of other people. She admits her manipulation of narratives not her own, she asks for understanding, and between these sentiments, in her terms "I" and "you," she implies the need to draw Truth Commission stories back into the domain of the personal. In the epilogue to the 1999 edition, Krog writes:

> One wants to understand this country to the benefit of all South Africans. So one continues to listen—closely. But it is difficult to make sense of our daily diet of contradictory codes. . . . How do you interpret them into your own small life? (435)

Krog acknowledges here the framing power of national narrative, but she writes a book about how one South African tries to make sense of herself when her own story is mingled with and wrapped around the painful stories told by other, individual South Africans. Experimenting with form by writing prose, poetry, metafiction, reportage, interview, and play script, Krog's book implicitly acknowledges both the unsuitability of the written text as a form for receiving performed stories and the need to mold a literate medium that somehow copes with the difficulty of re-presenting traumatic oral narratives.

Initially, the stories hosted by Krog's book tumble one after the other, an assault of nameless narratives that cumulatively evoke the sense of traumatized disbelief experienced by the Commission's first audience. Krog surrounds these opening narratives not with the smooth, edited round of academic ("nonfiction") discourse but rather by the staccato rhythms of broken prose seeking a necessary poetry. As a poet herself, Krog cannot initially, in the face of what she hears, locate her own literary element. She feels for the poetic at times when written textuality seems least adequate to the charge of the oral moment, and this search for an appropriate language for her own writing molds the book thematically and formally. She heads the opening barrage of narrative "To seize the surge of language by its soft, bare skull" (39) and follows the testimonies with this reflection:

> In the beginning it was seeing. Seeing for ages, filling the head with ash. No air. No tendril. Now to seeing, speaking is added and the eye plunges into the mouth. Present at the birth of this country's language itself.
>
> And it wipes us out. Like a fire. Or a flood. Tears are not what we call it. Water covers our cheeks and we cannot type. Or think. (43–44)

She cannot find the right word to describe her outward response to the testimonies—"tears" is too small a term for the outpouring she feels and displays. Like her inability to locate adequate words, the fragments she records seem to grasp after a way of speaking about the trauma they try to expel; one testimony extract laments:

> This inside me . . . fights my tongue. It is . . . unshareable. It destroys . . . words. Before he was blown up, they cut off his hands so that he could not be fingerprinted . . . So how do I say this?—this terrible . . . I want his hands back. (40)

The editing involved in giving us just this sharp, pain-filled little extract from a much longer testimony certainly counts as literate manipulation. But what Krog preserves in her transcriptions is the tangible sense of struggle involved in telling—in the extract the faltering voice is brought to the page by careful acknowledgement of the witness' necessary silences as she battles to summon adequate courage and appropriate language in which to speak. Krog's careful editing and thoughtful punctuation of narratives—with ellipses, dashes, or her own commentary—manages to suggest a range of voices that tell thematically linked stories but that, nevertheless, retain their individual spaces. While each town and rental car passes in a blur of sameness for Krog as she follows the Commission around the country, "the language, the detail, the individual tone … it stays" (55). The horrors revealed by the testimony Krog hears leave their imprint on the shape of her writing. After hearing so many tales of the mutilation of the body and psyche under apartheid, Krog tells us that her own body is breaking down, manifesting its trauma in rashes and the loss of hair and teeth. Preceding this admission, she records an Afrikaans man's battle to tell the Commission how his family was destroyed in the midst of the apartheid struggle:

> Do you know, you the Truth Commissioners, how a temperature feels of between six and eight thousand degrees? Do you know how it feels to experience a blow so intense that it forces the fillings from your teeth? Do you know how it feels to look for survivors and only find the dead and maimed … Do you know how it feels to look for your three-year-old child and never, Mr Chairman, never to find him again and to keep wondering for the rest of your life where he is? (72)

Krog registers the start of her breakdown in response to the trauma experienced by others, by the way in which she punctuates her reaction to the above story:

> I write the news copy. I decide on a sound bite. I dictate the hard copy over the phone. I read: "… and never comma Mister Chairman comma never to find…" A catch in my voice … My throat throbs heavily. My breast silts up, speechless … I sit down on the steps and everything tears out of me. Flesh and blood can in the end only endure so much … Every week we are stretched thinner and thinner over different patches of grief … how many people can one see crying, how much sorrow wrenched loose can one accommodate … and how does one get rid of the specific intonation of the words? It stays and stays. (73)

Her faltering voice, as she takes the words of the Afrikaans man into her own mouth, follows his faltering speech. Her fury of questions emulates his painful challenges to the Commission. Her sense of being haunted by

the sound of the other's words matches his assertion of endless search for closure, and her breakdown is registered formally by her emulation of the pain-filled rhythms of victims' testimony as she struggles to make her book evoke the immediacy of what she experiences.

Krog's ability to host the stories of others rests on her capacity for empathy. Sympathy is an inadequate attitude for the reception of the TRC's oral narratives: sympathy asks one to give tears and words; empathy asks that we *take in* the words, the tears of others, and that we invite their challenge to our own ways of seeing. Krog shows that we must be able to follow other rhythms, and silences not our own; we must be able to interpolate others' stories into our attempts to make sense of ourselves. In this spirit, she is particularly successful in offering commentary about narratives, how they work and the meanings they yield, without finding endings for them. For it is clear that most stories brought to the Commission are precisely about the impossibility of closure, a facet of telling to which the TRC reports are reluctant to admit. At the end of her book, Krog finds the poetic language she has sought as a way of approaching the oral. Just as language and form have had to yield new ways of writing and telling, so Krog's very soul has had to accommodate a new way of hosting the traumatic narratives of others:

> . . .
> my tongue, my inner ear, the cavity of my heart
> shudders towards the outline
> new in soft intimate clicks and gutturals
>
> of my soul the retina learns to expand
> daily because of a thousand stories
> I was scorched
>
> a new skin.
> . . . (423)

If Krog mediates TRC stories by crafting a vulnerable, poetic mode of storytelling, how can critical writing host testimony? Several commentators have already indicated the need for a self-reflexive critical response to TRC narratives. In his article "Don't Stand on My Story: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Intellectuals, Genre and Identity" (1997), Gerald West negotiates the TRC event by reflecting on his own status as a white, middle-class South African male. West suggests that in writing about the Commission we are forced to review what we were made into by apartheid, and we are also provided with the opportunity to inaugurate new selves through such reflection. Grahame Hayes explicitly maps out his position as a critical writer negotiating the Truth Commission:

> I am not going to write as a distant and aloof observer, and hence will mostly use … personal referents of collectivity: us, we, our, the country.… These identificatory pronouns allow me an autobiographical association without writing my particular story. (1998: 36)

In allowing storytellers from the TRC to renegotiate their subject positions through our mediation of their stories, Hayes suggests that we too are called to locate and rework the subject positions that we shall take up as critical writers hosting painful narratives. The final section of this essay considers two of the stories brought before the Commission, one drawn from Krog's transcriptions and the other recorded in both Krog's book and the reports of the TRC. Krog suggests a variety of ways in which we might retell TRC stories, and I read her book as a challenge to its readers to respond to painful testimony, not in theorized, macro ways but as individual narratives that challenge our assumptions about national subject positions. While critics such as West and Hayes have argued for a self-reflexive approach to stories told before the Commission, what must be added to this is a focus on the recuperation of the individual narratives and their particular ways of speaking. In the readings that follow, I hope to suggest the richness of the individual story that is lost in the interpretations offered by the reports—that was lost, perhaps, in the fleeting and much contested context of the Commission itself.

Of all the stories recorded by Krog, *The Shepherd's Tale* receives her greatest consideration in a lengthy and insightful analysis. It is for me an extraordinary narrative because its narrator, Lekotse, conceives of himself and his story as being quite individual beside the coercive presence of the police (in the story) and the commissioners (receiving the narrative). What is particularly impressive about Lekotse as a storyteller is that, while he tries to accommodate the interruptions of Ilan Lax, the commissioner tasked with aiding Lekotse in his telling, Lekotse insists on his own narrative space and his own way of seeing. He will not allow Lax to interfere with the special effects he carefully creates throughout the story. Nor will he allow the Commission to lose sight of him as a present narrator, for he crosses back and forth between the events of the night in question and the moment of telling, in which he sees himself as irretrievably affected by his story.

Lekotse tells about the way in which his home was subjected to police invasion and about the subsequent trauma, both physical and mental, that has plagued his family since the moment their door was kicked down and their privacy destroyed. He begins "My family was affected from that day" and repeats his point seconds later by emphasizing " Now my life was affected from that day" (Krog: 320). Lekotse's

vivid opening description of his wife's decrepit physical state and his own reliance on medication displays his awareness of his performative role: Krog records his feel for effect by italicizing *last* in "I took my *last* tablet this morning" (320). His inclusion of this little detail connects the moment of invasion with the moment of telling in a powerful way—time between these moments has been marked by his having to consume something to help him cope with the trauma eating at him "from that day." We are given hope that, with the last of the pills and the start of his public narrative, he will be released from the grip of that night. This hope is encouraged by the self-assured manner in which he relates events—his cocky attitude to the police elicits laughter from the audience and his rejoinders to the commissioner's questions seem to promise an ending in which Lekotse emerges healed.

Throughout his testimony, Lekotse resists the way in which Lax tries to steer his narrative to satisfy the Commission's fact-finding impulse. The TRC represents itself, through the figure of Lax, as a force that provides Lekotse with space for self-expression but that then tries to control that space, acting as guide and pacifist—or perhaps as referee in its attempts to monitor both Lekotse's telling and the audience's responses. But Lekotse will not be directed. When Lax wants to know the exact date on which events occurred, Lekotse loses momentum briefly, apologizing for being illiterate and for forgetting dates. He quickly recovers himself, however, by ordering, "Now listen very carefully, / because I'm telling you the story now" (321). Whereas for Lax the date is a crucial aspect of that story, for Lekotse it is entirely inconsequential to his narrative. Lax's consistent attempts to elicit forensic truths fail again when he asks whether Lekotse injured his ribs or his shoulder, since, in the statement, he had named his ribs and in the performance his shoulder. Lekotse responds:

> Are you not aware that
> the shoulder is related
> to the ribs
> sir? (326).

Throughout Lekotse indicates his concern with the narrative connectedness of things, while the Commission shows itself to be interested in isolated fragments of fact.

Constantly aware of his role as performer, the shepherd dramatizes the night of invasion by re-creating the direct speech exchanged between himself and the police:

> On that day
> It was at night,

a person arrived and he knocked.
When I answered, the door just opened
and I said, "Who's knocking so terribly?"
He answered, he said: "Police."

And I said,
"What police are knocking on my door in this way?" (321)

This extract is remarkable because Lekotse shows us how he can turn things on their heads through narrative—his initial reference to day is exchanged for a focus on night; the fact that the door "just opened" is refused by Lekotse's question, "Who's knocking so terribly"; and, in response to the way in which the police identify themselves (a monolithic "Police"), he cuts them down to size by inquiring 'What police. . . ?" Lekotse's concern with shaping narrative across the past and the present is suggested in his references to the door that the police kicked down:

When I looked thoroughly
the door was not just kicked,
it was even broken down with their gun butts.

Even to this day the doors are still broken.

My children took pity on me this year,
they bought a new door and a new frame
and we had to get another person to come and fix the door. (322)

His line "Even to this day the doors are still broken" strongly recalls his opening insistence on the way in which he and his family are affected even today, but it also appears at first to be a statement of fact. When we learn that the door has in fact been replaced, we understand that Lekotse has given a symbol (a perpetually broken door) to his sense that his home will always be an invaded space—he is unable to restore privacy and integrity to his house.

But Lekotse maintains a careful balance between allusions to his powerlessness and his portrayal of his own charisma as a protagonist. When the police begin to ransack the cupboards, Lekotse recalls:

I said, "When a jackal gets into the sheep
it does not do this—
please unpack this neatly and pack them back neatly."

They did not provide an answer.
They pushed us outside.
I fell on my shoulder: *Kaboem*! (322)

By repeating his analogy about the jackal for the TRC audience, Lekotse shows himself to be secure in his own ways of understanding and speaking. Even as he reports his family's helplessness in the face of the police invasion, he is unwilling to relinquish his ownership of his private space. He manifests his ownership of the performance space by including the sound effect—*Kaboem*!—to reanimate his experience for his audience. (Interestingly, the transcripts available at the TRC web site do not include such aspects of telling as sound effects.) Lekotse is also adept at startling his audience—after they laugh at one point, Lekotse interrupts Lax's pacifying "Please. . . " with a forceful piece of drama:

> I ended up saying to them: "Look here,
> my whole family is standing outside.
>
> It's cold.
>
> I want you to kill all of us now.
> I'll be very glad if you kill us all." (324)

Of course, shocking as this is, it also implies a somber victory for Lekotse over the police, since he is inviting them to do the worst they can. But the end of the shepherd's narrative revisits this moment to disappoint our hope in Lekotse's release from trauma:

> That is why I said to them,
> "Kill us all
> so that there is no trouble thereafter.
>
> It is much better to die—
> all of us."
>
> It was even going to be easy for the government to bury us
> —they were going to bury us in just one grave.
> It could have been better.
>
> If one of these policemen is around here,
> I'll be happy if one of them comes to the stage
>
> And kills me immediately. . . . (327)

For Lekotse, the past remains in the present irrevocably. While he has worked to control his story throughout his performance on what he calls a stage, in the end the narrative controls him: there can be no expulsion of the past, and he still waits on the question he asked of the police years ago. Lekotse shows himself in Krog's transcription to be an able and

entertaining storyteller; in his experience, however, he was a person caught in the midst of uncontrollable events and players. In the transcript available on the web, Lekotse's testimony ends with a line that is part funny and part tragic. In response to the Commission's thanks for his testimony, he declares: "Can please APLA come and fix my doors?" For Lekotse, the doors remain broken, the reason for the police invasion of his home remains a mystery, and APLA remains an unknown foe, responsible together with the police for the pain he has suffered.

In giving Lekotse's testimony poetic form and ample space within her text, Krog enables us to see how Lekotse connects up the parts of his tale to reveal the paradox that, just as he styles his performance with consummate skill, so his narrative continues to shape him. For a space in the Commission and now again in Krog's book, Lekotse insists that the audience and the Commission see his story as he does—that which has shaped him and shall never leave his present conception of life.

The second story I wish to (re)consider appears both in Krog's book and in the Commission's reports; it is the narrative of Alwinus Mralasi, recorded at the Human Rights Violation hearings at Beaufort West. According to the reports his story is meant to exemplify victims' "willingness to forgive" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 5:371) and is transparent in this respect. I do not wish to suggest that Mralasi does not come to forgiveness but rather that the reports offer no reflection of the individual way in which the narrator reconciles with his persecutor. Nor do they offer Mralasi's full testimony, omitting those parts that offer a more rounded set of themes and that suggest a lack of (narrative and national) closure.

Mralasi had been falsely accused of being wanted by the police. He was consequently arrested. Krog's transcription begins: "They asked me if I knew why I was arrested, I said no.... They said they would show me" (269). This first section, which goes on to give details of his torture and sentencing, is synoptic in style and does not constitute what Mralasi considers to be his story. He follows the summary by drawing his audience's attention to the first part of his performance: "Let me start by giving my story" (ibid.). In contrast to Lekotse, Mralasi remembers the exact date and time at which the police entered his life. He remembers details: he had a child on his lap; he was trying to light a fire because it was "a chilly day" (ibid.). From the moment the police enter, the term "disorderly" finds its way into Mralasi's story several times. He put on his socks "in a disorderly manner" (ibid.); after he is discharged from prison he returns home to find "the house disorderly" (270). Krog records how disorder enters the fiber of his performance when he breaks down and cries and when he stumbles over the memory of his wife sending him a letter in prison telling him of the birth of their child. Wanting us to

understand the pain this caused him, he says, "she told me of the birth of a son. She had a baby" (ibid.); later, remembering his return home, he recalls, "I saw my baby boy and I was looking at my baby—he ran away from me crying" (ibid.). Mralasi thematizes his sense of losing his own identity in several ways: by describing the alienated reaction of his son, by recalling that his wife had to find work to subsist once he went to prison, and by rehearsing his futile argument with a judge who insisted on calling him Alphius when he repeated that his name was actually Alwinus.

The reports include none of this part of the testimony so that Mralasi's ongoing pain over both his arrest and his betrayal go officially unrecorded. He signals the second part of his performance by renaming his betrayer: "Willie Manena was a methodist and he and his two brothers accused me. One could make a story out of this" (ibid.). The reports start from this point, although the words differ slightly. It is evident from Krog's transcription that the story changes dramatically in both tone and content at this transition. Mralasi assumes control over the narrative, there are no more tears, and the narrator can begin to incorporate performance techniques, including direct speech. (From the reports, of course, we have the impression that he has always been composed in his telling.) Mralasi explains how he went to a car showroom with his children one day, in 1972, where he met, quite by chance, the very villain of this part of the story. Initially he wants to exact revenge and takes out a knife in readiness, thinking: "This is God's work" (ibid.). But when Manena joins him outside and Mralasi sees the change that has overcome his foe, he is surprised:

> Willie Manena saw me—a person who is guilty will always spot you. I greeted him: "How are you?" I asked him to go out with me. He had difficulty in talking. I was surprised. I could see that he had been through a lot of suffering—it showed on his face. (ibid.)

When Mralasi learns of Manena's various illnesses and of the abuse he endures at the hands of own son, Mralasi calls his wife and son over to observe Manena, the man who had caused him so much suffering. It is, of course, the realization for Mralasi, who thinks in terms of a Christian paradigm, that Manena has got back what he has given out that initiates the process of forgiveness. He concludes, in Krog's version:

> I said: "Willie, here are your children"— because we have the same clan name. "There are your children. You can see you are old."
> He said: "Are you still going on?"
> I asked my wife to give him one pound so that this man could eat. He never went home. He went to the hospital. It was the end of his life.
> I drove the car. He was standing there. This man who tried to drown

> me. He waved. I waved, I kept on waving. That was the last time I saw him. The hatred faded away.
> We cannot do bad things to others. We have children to bring up. (271)

Mralasi is able to experience the liberation of forgiveness even as the person whom he forgives approaches the end of his life.

According to the reports, Mralasi continues to thank the Commission for allowing him this chance to speak. He tells them:

> You can go to my house. You will be surprised because God is like those old bottles of wine that used to be closed with a cork. And if you were to fill … a bucket with water and then you take that cork and put it into that water, it will not sink, it will float. Thank you. I thank you for all you have done for me. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 5:372)

And so the reports tell the story of someone who has come to the liberty of forgiveness through Christian faith. To do this, they omit the first part of the story as well as the opening synopsis that indicate the unresolved aspects of Mralasi's story: his continued experience of pain when he remembers the way in which he was treated by the police and wrenched from his family. Whereas the report uses the story to exemplify an unqualified act of forgiveness, Krog lets us see the possibility that Mralasi has only come to forgiveness in one part of his narrative. A comparison between the two versions suggests how the reports tend to appropriate the oral auto/biographical space by acts of omission and categorization.

While the first story discussed above challenges the procedure of the Human Rights Violation hearings by insisting on its own direction, the second story speaks from the difference in its two transcriptions about the possibility of distorting oral narrative to suit national ends. It is necessary to remain vigilant at the contested borders between narrative re-presentation and narrative appropriation. A primary task of the TRC was to establish an archive, but the TRC was also conceived of as a national act of purging in which testimony would be heard, collected, and then left behind, in the pages of reports and boxed transcripts, so that the country could go forward. Indeed, at the conference at which this paper was given, I was asked what I thought I was doing in advocating attention to TRC narratives when academic inquiry in South Africa should surely rather participate in future-oriented projects. Painful testimony was the proper domain of South Africa's novelists and poets, my questioner suggested, and the critic could still engage in acts of recuperating lost apartheid voices but should agree that TRC stories must be laid to rest. I had no adequate response at the time because in many ways I

agree that the TRC lived its allotted life and that South Africa must be allowed to recover from the assault of the Commission's many brutalized voices. It remains the case, however, as this essay has argued, that the TRC provided interpretations and frames for stories that inevitably denied those stories their own lives. One of the ways in which critics have begun to include rather than resist the individual trauma given voice at the TRC has been to mediate testimony in anthologies of South African writing and poetry. In the recently published *Women Writing Africa: The Southern Region,* for instance, Sheila Masote's testimony at the TRC appears alongside oral and written stories, interviews, book extracts, and speeches in which the voices of women from four countries in Southern Africa are heard. (One of these pieces is an extract from *Country of my Skull.*) Acknowledging the volume of oral narrative and testimony hosted by their collection, the editors of *Women Writing Africa* argue in their introduction that "acts of writing project acts of reading. The transformation of the spoken word into writing means that the word enters the at least potentially democratic space of interpretation" (4). The TRC archive as well as recent and yet-to-emerge testimony about ordinary experience of our society's many deformities merit continued efforts by cultural producers and commentators to seek out the truths in, and do justice to, our nation's many urgent stories by calling them forth into that democratic space of rereading.

Oral History in a Wounded Country

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Introduction

In this essay I shall share some reflections on the practice of oral history in postapartheid South Africa. Oral history is a rather loose concept. Some define it as a collection of oral testimonies that play the role of an ancillary technique of historical study. The emphasis here is on the creation of historical data. The material produced through oral history research is sometimes called oral archives. Others, in Britain, Spain, and Latin America in particular, adopt a more ambitious definition of oral history. For them it is "another way of doing and conceiving history" (Joutard: 8). Introducing *The Voice of the Past,* the most widely read introduction to oral history, Paul Thompson writes that he hopes "to provoke historians to ask themselves what they are doing, and why. On whose authority is their reconstruction of the past based? For whom is it intended" (vi). The oral historians who follow this line of thought tend to see oral history as a "movement" (Grele).

In practice—and this will be our approach in this essay—the two definitions are often combined. Oral historians collect oral testimonies, transcribe them, and store them with a view to renewing the understanding of the past. Many oral history projects, however, stop at the recording stage. In the best cases some feedback is given to the communities or individuals involved in the interviewing process. It is left to professional writers, usually academic historians, to make use of the material thus collected.

Oral history is based on reminiscences, hearsay, or eyewitnesses accounts that occurred during the lifetime of the people who are interviewed. Oral historians typically interview participants in recent or very recent events, when historical consciousness in the communities involved is still in flux. But what happens when stories are passed from mouth to mouth for a period of time beyond the lifetime of the people? Jan Vansina, a Belgian anthropologist, called these stories "oral traditions" to distinguish them from oral history. In *Oral Tradition as History,* he argued

about their validity as historical sources. The distinction between oral tradition and oral history is now widely accepted, particularly in Africa.

Oral history was established—or rather reestablished if we consider that it has existed since the beginning of history writing—as a technique for historical documentation in 1948 when an American historian, Allan Nevins, began recording the memoirs of persons significant in American life (P. R. Thompson: 59). His method proved immensely attractive. Oral projects were initiated in all areas of historical research, such as political history, history of the working class, Indian history, black history, and women's history. In 1965, ninety-nine history research centers had been opened. By 1973, they were 316. A professional association, the American Oral History Association, was founded in 1967.

Oral history also developed in Britain, where an Oral History Society was founded in 1971. Paul Thompson and his colleagues of the University of Essex spearheaded the movement. Today oral history is practiced in all five continents. The "movement" is particularly strong in Spain and Latin America. There are significant oral history projects in countries such as Germany, Austria, Hungary, Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, New Zealand, Australia, India, Taiwan, Nigeria, and Congo.

Over the last two decades oral history has led to a profound renewal of social history in Africa, as is shown by the publication of a number of excellent studies (see, e.g., Bozzoli with Nkotsoe; van Onselen). However, apart from Hugo Slim and Paul Thompson's recent book on oral testimony and development (Slim and Thompson) and Isabel Hofmeyr's pioneering study of oral storytelling, literacy and historical narrative in South Africa (Hofmeyr 1994), little attention has been paid in academic literature to the practice of oral history in African societies. Most oral history textbooks envisage oral history from a Western point of view. How does the African context—and in our case the South African context—affect the methodology of oral history?

The background to this reflection is the work of the Sinomlando Project of the School of Theology, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, a community-based research institute established in the mid 1990s that currently employs two academics, three permanent staff members, and a variety of field-workers, many of whom are students.

While writing this essay, I have in mind two research projects that are currently underway. The first is part of a broader project on the history of the Christian communities in KwaZulu-Natal under apartheid. It focuses on the leaders of black women's Christian organizations in two black communities: Sobantu, Pietermaritzburg; and Umlazi, Durban. Both townships were among the first to be established in the province, long before the promulgation of the Group Areas Act (1950). The women interviewed belong to a wide variety of churches, including African

indigenous churches. Some of them exercise leadership in formally constituted women's organizations such as the *manyanos* in the Methodist church or the Mothers' Union in the Anglican church. Others are not recognized as leaders, but they nevertheless play a significant role in the lives of their churches (Denis and Phiri).

The second project is of a different nature. Its purpose is to promote resilience in children of families affected or infected by HIV/AIDS. To achieve this goal the families are encouraged to share stories as a way of keeping alive the memories of the family and facilitating the bereavement process. To collect the memories of the family, the methodology of oral history is used. Whether the parent is sick or already deceased, the memory facilitators, as the Sinomlando Project field-workers like to call themselves, meet the family members at their home. They work in partnership with various community-based organizations. In 2001 a pilot study project was jointly run by the Sinomlando Project and Sinosizo, a Durban-based home-based care program established by the Catholic archdiocese of Durban. It involved twenty families from the Durban functional region, some of them as far afield as Stanger (Denis and Makiwane).

A Shift of Emphasis

Let us first consider the evolution of oral history in South Africa (Denis 2001: 1–3). Oral history is not new in the country. During the last decade of apartheid numerous attempts were made to document and record the voices of the "ordinary people" as an alternative to a history written "from above." With the emergence of the United Democratic Front, a coalition of antiapartheid organizations formed in response to the South African government's repressive policies and the ensuing politicization of South African society, the concept of "people" began to dominate social and political discourse. Radical historians endeavored to write the "people's history" as a way to promote "people's power" and "people's education" (Minkley and Rassool). One way of reaching this goal was oral history. "In South Africa," wrote Luli Callinicos in an essay on the "People's Past," "[oral history] is a particularly necessary medium because of our dearth of documents written by ordinary people" (Callinicos: 51).

The University of the Witwatersrand's History Workshop, which developed the most impressive oral collection in South Africa in the 1980s and hosted several important conferences in which oral history work was foregrounded (La Hausse 1990: 350–51; Field: 40), generally shared these perspectives. With different emphases, the work of the Zulu History Project at the University of Natal, Durban, of the People's History Project at the University of Cape Town, and of the South African Institute

of Race Relations Oral History Project also constituted attempts to document a history "from below."

The representatives of what I would like to call the first generation of oral historians in South Africa concurred with Belinda Bezzoli, the editor of the proceedings of the third History Workshop, in seeing oral history "as a means of asking, and perhaps answering, the kinds of questions likely to lead to a fuller understanding of the experience and consciousness of the ordinary working man or woman" (Bozzoli: 9). For them the primary purpose of oral testimonies was to "uncover what might otherwise be hidden." The direct words of the informants were an "antidote to distortion or silence." Combined with written documents, they provided "insights into the experiences and philosophies of the poor" (10).

These phrases capture the purpose of oral history as it was understood fifteen years ago: it was to "answer questions," to "gain insights," to "uncover." In other words, the purpose of oral history was to improve the knowledge of the past. Whose past? In the South African context, the techniques of oral history were primarily destined for "the people," "the poor," the "ordinary working man or woman," if not the "preliterate societies."

In the 1980s oral historians focused primarily on the cognitive value of oral testimonies. Oral history aimed to improve the knowledge of the past by documenting the destinies of otherwise ignored actors. Such knowledge, it was hoped, would contribute to political mobilization. The task of popular history, in the words of a history group active in the early 1980s, was to form "the basis for larger understandings, for the progressive deepening of knowledge and for active political involvement" (Popular Memory Group; Callinicos: 62). Paul La Hausse used a similar language in an article on oral history in South Africa published in 1990. "The use of oral history," he wrote, "has enabled South African historians to construct a culturally sensitive understanding of class, compelling them to relate issues of class formation to those of ethnicity, community, gender, youth and the family" (La Hausse 1990: 349).

The oral history practitioners engaged in popular history did not question the claim that history produces a universally acceptable knowledge of the past. They followed the modernist paradigm (see Wright). All they wanted to do was to explore new aspects of the past—the lives and struggles of "ordinary people" whose lives remained unrecorded. In line with commonly accepted historical methodology, their ambition was to reduce the distortions that inevitably occur in the chain of oral transmission. The purpose of oral history (or oral tradition, in the case of a message transmitted from generation to generation, to use Jan Vansina's distinction) was to bring to light as reliably as possible a fragment of the past transmitted by word of mouth (Tonkin; Hamilton).

Fifteen years later all this remains true even if the focus has changed in South Africa from resistance and oppression to reconciliation, reconstruction, and transformation. There is still a need for documenting the history "from below." What is different now is that oral history has become government policy. One of the functions of the state archives, according to the recently promulgated National Archives of South Africa Act, is to "document aspects of the nation's experience neglected by archives repositories in the past." This includes oral history. The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology is busy launching an ambitious National Oral History Programme aiming to redress the imbalances in the nation's memory (Denis 2000).

New concerns have begun to shape the practice of oral history in South Africa. Among decision-makers, academics, and cultural agents there is widely shared recognition that one of the most urgent tasks in postapartheid South Africa is to "heal the wounds of the past." With all its difficulties and shortcomings, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has irreversibly transformed the country's understanding of its own history. It is no longer possible to act as if nothing wrong happened under the apartheid regime. The TRC's brief was to investigate "gross human rights violations." What emerges with increasing clarity, however, now that the work of the Commission is over, is that many other, admittedly of a minor scale, human-rights violations also need to be documented and dealt with.

Sharing Painful Memories

Oral history is more than an improved method of documenting the people's past. It is a conversation. A conversation is an exchange of information, but it is also a relationship. Two or more people enter into communication. Some conversations deal with trivial subjects and are soon forgotten. A conversation about the past is rarely insignificant, particularly when the past is laden with bad memories, as is often the case in South Africa. Sometimes—not always—the fact of talking to each other about the past has a healing effect. It facilitates the grieving process. The interview situation gives the people who share their memories the opportunity to deal with unfinished business. Oral history has the potential to affirm and consolidate identities, individual as well as collective, that have been repressed in the past. When oral history is practiced in this spirit, the process—the interaction between interviewer(s) and interviewee(s) before, during, and immediately after the interview(s)—is as important as the results: recording and processing the interview(s). Oral history has an academic dimension. It needs to be conducted with rigor and criticality. But it is more, much more, than an academic exercise. It is an encounter between

people about the past. Each life, each story is unique. It is no small matter to share one's story to outsiders, however empathetic they can be. After a successful interview things will never be the same any longer.

My contention is that in South Africa all individual stories are influenced by the "grand narrative" of colonialism and apartheid, even those that apparently have nothing to do with it. Racial and social domination was, and still is in many ways, so pervasive that nobody can escape it. One cannot draw a line between individual stories and the wider social, political, and economic context. Whether we are black, white, Indian or Coloured, our lives bear the mark of apartheid.

However, the way in which people relate their experience can vary enormously. The women we interviewed for the project "Leaders of Black Women's Christian Organisations in KwaZulu-Natal" showed little interest in the topic on which the interviews were supposed to focus, namely, the impact of apartheid on church life in KwaZulu-Natal. Unlike the male clergy we interviewed in the context of another project (Denis, Mlotshwa, and Mukuka), on the whole they stayed aloof from party politics. Politics only became relevant to them when their children were directly affected by it. Some of them were killed during the political violence in the late 1980s or beaten up by the police. Many lives were shattered by the conflict between ANC and IFP in the Natal Midlands. The oral histories we gathered bear abundant testimony to this.

For this project we made use of semistructured questionnaires. This method gives the interviewees the opportunity to speak about what they have at heart. A considerable part of the interviews conducted with the leaders of black women's Christian organizations in KwaZulu-Natal evolves around the relationships of these women with the men who have authority over their lives: at home, in the church, and at work. They see the world in the eyes of women, wives, and mothers. This does not mean that apartheid was absent from their preoccupations. The women we interviewed were perfectly aware of the fact that they lived in a context of domination. Their message, sometimes confusedly expressed, was that the relationships of power and violence that dominated public life also permeated the private sphere. Gender oppression and racism are two faces of the same coin.

It is impossible to separate a life story from its social and cultural context, in the case of South Africa a context marked by racial discrimination, gender oppression, poverty, and, today, an epidemic of gigantic proportion. The same applies to members of groups suffering from discrimination, such as Jews, immigrants, homosexuals, people living with HIV/AIDS. Their stories have an intensity, a quality of emotion, a sense of tragedy that is rarely found in people who belong to the mainstream of social life.

All stories are meaningful, of course, whether they come from the North or from the South, from privileged sectors of society or from rejected classes. My point is that in a divided country such as South Africa oral history projects have to pay particular attention to trauma and healing. These aspects are usually underemphasized in oral history projects conceived and carried out in countries exempt from war and extreme poverty. In the United States, for example, the impetus for doing oral history is said to be "curiosity and a desire to see one own's past preserved." I found this phrase in the (excellent) pamphlet on community history projects published by the American Oral History Association. "Community history projects," the pamphlet says,

> significantly expand community members' understanding of their identity, their history and their connection with other communities. If an oral history component of a community history project is carefully planned and well researched, it can produce a more accurate picture of the complexity and diversity of a community's heritage and can potentially contribute to a broader understanding of American history and culture. (Mercier and Buckendorf: ii).

I wonder if this language could be used in an oral history manual for South Africa. In a wounded country, one does not collect stories merely to satisfy one's curiosity. In a further paragraph, the authors of the pamphlet note that community history projects contribute to "a broader understanding of American history and culture" (ii). In South Africa nobody would assume that there is a national culture to the broader understanding of which oral history projects would contribute. This culture may exist in some places, but it is extremely fragile. In no way can it be taken for granted.

South Africa does not have a monopoly on trauma. The list of nations, ethnic groups, and cultural minorities who suffer from oppression and marginalization has no limit. For all of them oral history has enormous potential. It affirms suppressed identities and provides healing. My point is that in South Africa oral history projects should pay *particular* attention to trauma and healing. In this country all sectors of life, including arts, sports, environment, and religion, bear the traces of a wounded past. For this reason it is impossible to conduct an oral history project in South Africa as if it were an ordinary country.

The Dynamics of Memory

An interview, as noted earlier, is a conversation. Three types of activities are involved in oral history: remembering, speaking, listening. Each of them is determined by the context in which the conversation takes

place. One does not remember, speak, or listen in a country affected by racial division, poverty, and disease as one would do in a society characterized by affluence and (relatively) equal opportunities.

Memory is one of the most common human activities. We remember all the time, often unconsciously. But so much happens in our lives that we cannot remember everything. We select what we remember. Memory is, and has to be, a dynamic process. We remember what makes sense to us (Hayes 2001: 35). Memory helps to construct—or reconstruct—a past that gives sense to the present. The process of ordering, discarding, selecting, and combining means that memory is always a combination of the objective and subjective and of facts, interpretations, and opinions (Slim and Thompson: 140).

Memory does not operate is the same way in a safe and in a conflict-ridden environment. Traumatized people either repress their bad memories or are obsessed by them. When they tell their stories they try, consciously or not, to make sense of the painful events of the past in which they took part. In our work in KwaZulu-Natal we interviewed many traumatized people. Sometimes the interview was the first opportunity to evoke a painful memory. It is because they were afraid of being confronted with their own pain that our interviewees—women whose children have died during the political violence or family members affected by HIV/AIDS—were so hesitant to be interviewed. Sometimes the meeting had to be rescheduled three or four times. Every time there was a good motive. But the real reason is that they were not ready. It takes time and courage to confront the past.

Remembering is an active process. We do not necessarily choose to remember. The circumstances that prompt memory are not always under our control. Unconscious factors clearly play a role. To a large degree, however, memory can be said to be a voluntary act. We choose what we remember and what we forget.

In our experience the work of memory brings positive results. Some of the people we approached for an interview initially showed signs of resistance. We had to explain several times the purpose of the interview. But once they began talking, they would not stop. They felt affirmed by the interview. In the end, they expressed gratitude for the opportunity of telling their story.

It must be pointed out, however, that memory does not always have a healing effect. There is always a risk of "retraumatization." Some people feel helpless when they are confronted with painful memories, especially if there is no hope of reparation. When dealing with sensitive subjects, oral history practitioners have to measure the potential risks of their intervention.

The Courage to Speak

But oral history is not only about remembering. It is a conversation. An interview is a very specific type of interaction between two person or groups of persons: those who tell the story and those who listen to it. Key to that process is the decision of the person who remembers to speak. Like remembering, speaking is an active process. In normal circumstances we freely elect to speak. It is our decision. There can be circumstances, however, that force us to speak against our will. We sometimes speak under duress. In a more subtle way there are situations in which we feel obliged to speak, knowing that we would run into problems if we kept silent. We speak under threat. On certain occasions we speak to please our interlocutor. We do not feel free to elude his question. We speak out of politeness. Freedom of speech is an essential quality in oral history. To ensure quality interviews and also for ethical reasons, oral history practitioners have to ensure that the people they interview give informed consent. They must verify that they fully understand the nature of the interviewing process and agree to it.

Let us now assume that the interviewee has given informed consent and speaks freely. The decision to share one's memories is always momentous. Many of the people to whom we spoke had never been interviewed before. They did not know that their stories would be of any interest to anybody. This is particularly true of women who are culturally conditioned to let their husbands, boyfriends, employers, or ministers to speak on their behalf. Speaking, for them, is liberating. It relieves them from a burden that can be very heavy, especially after years of silence. In a context of racial, cultural, religious, or socioeconomic domination, interviews easily become emotional. The interviews must be prepared to handle very sensitive situations. In these interviews the body language—long silences, tears, giggles, uneasy movements—"speaks" as much as the words.

Cultural Norms

As Hugo Slim and Paul Thompson (61–63) point out, an interview has a cultural dimension. One does not conduct an oral history project in the South as in the North:

> While the interview is now a common form of enquiry and communication in the West—where a job interview is a prerequisite for most employment, the media feature endless interviews, both informative and entertaining, and few people escape having to take part in polls and questionnaires—this is by no means universal. … In some societies the interview is not an established type of speech event, and there can often

> be an incompatibility between standard interview techniques and indigenous systems of communication. (61)

There are local communication norms to which oral history practitioners have to conform when planning and conducting interviews. These norms relate to turn-taking, the order of topics for discussion, or various rituals attached to story telling:

> In some societies, individual interviews are considered dangerously intimate encounters. In others, the recounting of group history can be a sacred ritual and certain people must be consulted before others. Sometimes a number of clearly prescribed topics should be used to start proceedings, while other topics may be taboo, or should not be introduced until a particular level of intimacy and trust has been achieved. (62)

In Africa individual interviews make little sense. All interviews, even those conducted on a one-to-one basis, have a communal dimension. People do not stand alone. The other members of the community want to be involved. Either they insist on being present during the interview or they asked to be consulted before it takes place.

Women are particularly reluctant to speak on their own. They are brought up in the belief that they are not allowed to speak in public. Women avoid the first person and rarely mention personal accomplishments. They do not often place themselves at the center of public events; they downplay their own activities and emphasize the role of other family members in their recollections (Sangster: 10). In precolonial Southern Africa, women's storytelling was a marginalized and patronized craft, relegated to the distinctively lesser sphere of a separate women's world (Hofmeyr 1994: 36). In many ways the "institutionalised silencing" (25) that characterized women's subordination in former times continues to affect female storytelling in contemporary South Africa. If she is married, a woman is expected to ask permission from her husband before agreeing to be interviewed. If she is not married, as most women involved in the Memory Box Programme, she does not feel free to talk until senior members of the family, such as an aunt, an uncle, or a brother, have been informed about the interview and given the woman permission to take part in it. Many interviews had to be postponed several times for this reason. At first we did not understand why the person we approached—HIV-positive mothers or grandmothers caring for AIDS orphans—were so reluctant to share their memories. Experience shows that a good knowledge of the family dynamics is essential for the success of the intervention (Denis and Makiwane).

Similar resistance is observed in church groups. Unless they are very educated, lay ministers, members of women's organizations, and church

volunteers are reluctant to speak about church matters without the pastor's explicit permission. Social control is usually stricter in African indigenous churches (AICs) than in "mainline" churches. A minister of a local AIC congregation would not agree to speak to a stranger without having first referred the matter to his bishop or superintendent.

The Art of Listening

What is the point of talking if there is nobody to listen to what one has to say? A good oral history practitioner is an active listener. Many of our interviewees abstained from sharing their memories because they thought, rightly or wrongly, that nobody was interested in their stories. Good interviewers are sensitive and empathetic. They indicate—by nodding or asking further questions—that the stories they hear are important to them. Oral history is more than an exchange of information. It is a human encounter. The sharing of memories has an impact on the two parties in presence: the person who speaks and the person who listens.

Good listening skills are particularly important when the person shares painful memories. Good listeners are not people who keep their own emotions at a distance and remain "objective." This, in fact, is impossible. When listening to the interviewees's story, the interviewers's own past come to the surface. The interviewers's own experience of the past shapes his or her way of listening. A female interviewer who has experienced discrimination in her own family, for instance, will not react to a story of gender oppression in the same way as a male person who struggles to make sense of it. This does not mean that oral historians should be led by their emotions uncritically and passively. All they have to do is to acknowledge that they too have a past. They must find a way of dealing with the emotions triggered by the story. By developing self-awareness they will increase their capacity to listen. The result will be a quality interview.

Conclusion

To conclude this brief and in many ways unsatisfactory essay, I shall say that two aspects characterize oral history in South Africa. The first is the relatively high incidence of traumatic events in people's lives. Remembering, speaking, and listening often are painful exercises. Oral history practitioners need to develop special skills to do their job effectively. Colonialism and apartheid cannot be blamed for all the sufferings endured by the South African people, but they played an important role in their development. We live in a violent country, and this violence permeates all levels of society. Oppression is a multifaceted reality. Oral history creates

a space for the sharing of memories. Inevitably, these memories bear the mark of the violence and the divisions that affect society.

A second aspect of oral history in South Africa is that, unlike in the North, it is essentially a communal practice. People are rarely interviewed individually, and if they are, other members of the community have an influence on the outcome of the interview. They often insist on being physically present during the interview. Family members interfere, and neighbors arrive unexpectedly. Access to people presupposes a good knowledge of the community of which they are part. One needs to follow the right channels. When a person refuses to be interviewed, it is often because the correct procedure has not been adopted. For an oral history project to be successful, all community members need to be included. This takes time. The results, however, are rewarding. Oral history is a remarkable tool for the healing of the country.

BECOMING *NGAKA*: COMING TO TERMS WITH ORAL NARRATIVE DISCOURSES

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INTRODUCTION

Divination is central to African life. This is the case despite of the fact that "globalization"—often used as a synonym for "modernization"—has become a buzzword in Africa. For many, if not most, Africans, modern life does not exclude participation in divinatory practices. For example, imagine a young, well-qualified engineer driving from Sandton with her new BMW 5 Series, a top-of-the-range laptop computer on the seat next to her, to see her grandmother and ask her to bless her new property. She drives to Giyani kaMalamulele, dusty and remote. On her arrival, a diviner-healer of the clan meets her and immediately sprinkles substances on her car. The *ngaka* then gets a goat slaughtered for this special occasion. *Vakokwani* (grandmothers) of the entire clan sing praises to the young lady. For some, this may be strange. For African people, it is a daily occurrence. It is central to their lives, philosophies, and cultures. Modern life does not exclude this particular part of African spirituality. The ancestors are not outdated nor out of touch with current developments and the challenges and demands of modern living. They are a living part of life—they know about laptops and BMWs.

This essay looks at an account of the presenter's own life history as informed by divination and divination oracles. Based on the author's own experience, the essay unravels esoteric knowledge of divination, with reflection for oral narrative perspective underpinned by oral narrative theory/s. The author uses the narrative theory/s in the context of African divination to bring previously marginalized discourse and practice into the center of debate and scholarship. Further, the oral narrative discourse offers this displaced discourse the opportunity to occupy its rightful place and to be able to *converse* with existing centralized discourses. The story allows for openness. It is intended to be *ipsissima vitae* with regard to the esoteric world of divination.

This Is My Story . . .

In my first Northern Province fieldwork on divination I remained an observing outsider, only asking questions. Most questions were of the clarity-seeking type rather than aimed at the realities of divination itself. Since I was introduced to divination and healing in the early stages of my life, things have changed. Very soon, the data awakened the realities divination had for me personally at various stages. This is my story . . .

My mother comes from Ga-Ramotse, a village to the north of Pretoria, located within the Hammanskraal area. Unfortunately, my father did not "properly" marry my mother. I have never seen or met him. However, I know that he comes from the Makobe family. To know this has always been enough for me and has always given me my own special identity. When I was seven years old, my mother was married into the Masoga family. I still have a vivid recollection of the actual day of the wedding and activities. My mother and I were covered with *dikobo* (African blankets) and danced in circles. Well-wishers sang songs such as the following:

Dikuku di monate	Wedding cakes are tasty
Lenyalo le boima	But marriage is a tough zone
Rena re ya tsamaya o tla sala o di bona ngwetsi . . .	We are going and you shall see to finish . . .

Since my mother was married with me already born, the ritual demanded that the *magadi* (bethrothal gift) include me as well. This fact means that I am not ignored but taken cognizance of and fully recognized in the new relationship. The Masoga family had to establish links with my mother as well as with me. As such, it was not a transaction but an establishment of links and relations. It was at this point in my life that ancestry featured prominently in my life. The *magadi* negotiators from both families emphasized the importance of these new ties. Sacrifices confirmed the new status of both my mother and me.

In these activities and festivities, animal sacrifice plays a central role. It is a ritual of "reordering" and strongly affects the "symbolic social universe"—giving primacy of place to the ancestral spirits. Becoming a Masoga did not change my inner identity—*Makobe Makobe.* The fact that my father left my mother out in the cold did not change the fact that I am *Makobe Makobe.* My ancestral spirits guard and support me. This has been so throughout my life. At certain points in my life, there were indications too that I am a child of the ancestral realm—*Ke ngwana wa Badimo.*

For my schooling, I proceeded from the primary school at Leboneng to Madisong Middle School, where I completed my standard eight. I then moved to Hans Kekana High School and here completed my matriculation—the only high school in my village, Majaneng.

Trouble began when I had to embark on my postmatriculation programs. I was offered a bursary by the then Bophuthatswana Department of Education but turned it down. The basic reason was that I wanted to become a minister of religion, or to be precise, a reverend within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa. My parish pastor at the time, Reverend Malapane, an old man full of wisdom and good counseling, was primarily responsible for my "early entrance" into the training for the ministry in the Lutheran church.

My application for training was successful, and I was informed that the screening committee of ELCSA decided to send a few of the new candidates to the University of Natal's School of Theology, at Pietermaritzburg. It was at this stage that my grandmother, Mrs. Moshala Masoga, advised me to consult with a woman in the vicinity. The woman in question was a well-known "prophet." I immediately consulted with her for the purpose of "smoothing" my way into and through the university.

During the consultation Mrs. Modise, the prophetically gifted woman, put a seashell containing clear water on a table. She prayed to all the ancestral spirits and concluded with the Trinitarian reference: *Modimo Tate, le Morwa le Moya o Mokgethwa.* After this, she said to me that I had serious problems.

"Your ancestors, both patrilineal and matrilineal, want you to become a diviner-healer. This they wish for seriously, my son. They appreciate that you intend to become a minister of religion. But still, they want you to become a diviner-healer." I pleaded: "Please ask them to release me for a while to complete my studies. Thereafter, I will surely follow in their footsteps." Her reply was: "Sure, that can be considered. We will have to plead with them to allow you to pursue your studies first."

Subsequent to this was a ritual of pleading. A sheep was slaughtered and cleansed (ritual cleansing) with its blood, and some indescribable substances were mixed in the water of my cleansing bath. After the ritual, a black string was tied around my waist.

"Now you can proceed with your studies. Remember that ancestral spirits cannot be fooled, my son. A promise is a promise. Now go and complete your studies," she concluded.

My stay at the university did not meet with problems at all. I was surely under the support of my ancestral spirits. I was able to complete my studies to master's level.

From the University of Natal, I moved to Pretoria and worked as a junior lecturer in the Department of Classics at the University of South Africa. Trouble started. Firstly, I divorced my wife. Reasons for this event I can hardly spell out. Only ancestors can give an adequate account of it.

Secondly, I was involved in a number of motorcar accidents. The reasons for this are unknown too. Some of the people I was accompanying

in their cars died. I felt that I was saved for a reason. I consulted with a number of diviner-healers who mentioned the same thing: *Badimo ba lwa le wena* ("The ancestors are at war with you"). I then decided to become a *ngaka.*

For about four months I frequented Tate Mavulindlela's *sangoma* lodge. I was there almost every day and evening, sometimes staying overnight. Life at the *sangoma* lodge involved many aspects of African divination and healing practices. I was restored back to my human form. I experienced patterns and dreams of *sangoma*-hood. Tate Mavulindlela, now my "father" (the rank used in this trade) was chosen by my ancestral spirits to initiate me. I greet her as *Tate Mavulindlela, monna wa Nqeshe, o tswalwa ke koko Mashayihlombe, monna wa Nkomo Mokhari, o tswalwa ke koko Magwetja Nkwe ya Thaba, monna wa Phoshoko*—the ancestral greetings. This I have to do whenever I meet her at the *sangoma* lodge.

I was then introduced to basic esoteric knowledge and the skills of handling oracular tablets. With regard to the digging for and gathering of herbs as well as with the administering of medicines, I was supervised. I had to produce ancestral trances daily. I was also informed that my grandfather, Mahlabathini—old and tired—spoke and still speaks through my mouth, asking for a stick to walk with. He sometimes, I am informed, conveys messages about daily happenings and how they should be handled. Trance production is considered to be the decisive sign of one's calling.

After three months of training, I was sent to the Northern Province for initiation. The place was the *sangoma* lodge of *Koko Magwetja Nkwe ya Thaba, monna wa Phoshoko. Koko Magwetja Nkwe ya Thaba* gave birth to my "father" Mavulindlela *monna wa Nqeshe.* It was the right time to be initiated into *sangoma*-hood. It happened before a large audience of lodge members, invitees, and neighbors. I spent the first day and evening with no food, only wearing and covering my body with a red cloth. The whole night was characterized by drum rhythms and singing. Ululations filled the night. I was informed that the ululations welcomed two new *sangomas: Badimo ba retwa e bile ba lebogwa ka mekgolokwane.*

The morning of the initiation dawned. This day I will never forget. I was to be initiated with an elderly woman of a Shangaan background. We both knelt and sniffed our *motsoko* (snuff) without uttering any word to one another.

The great moment came. My ancestral goat passed by. It was taken right up to the ancestral site—*egandlelweni*—the place where ancestral spirits reside.

Khalel' nkano, khalel' nkano, nkano ya boBaba bayibuz' nkano ("I am crying for the healing horn, let my ancestral spirits bring the healing horn to me") was the song sung at this moment. With drums beating in the

background, the song was sung repeatedly. Tate Mavulindlela came forth to fetch me. I crawled on hands and knees over rocky and rough ground to *egandlelweni.* Finally, I reached my destination. I drank the blood from the cut throat of a dying goat and drank water from a big bowl. I had to puke the water substances with blood faster. Having puked that brought a sense of relief to all: *ngaliphuza ngaliphalaza.* I was initiated.

Discussion

Before one can attempt to do a reflectional discourse on the above, the theoretical observations need to be clarified. The first one has to do with the tension that exists within the phenomenological debate or field. Eliade's perspective on *epoche*—meaning that an observer can enter into the religious experience of believing communities and achieve understanding initially through the technique of *epoche* and then by employing emphatic interpolation while still maintaining *epoche* concerning the reality of the community's object of faith—was heavily contested by a number of scholars (Segal: 101; Pals: 28; Strenski: 41). This entire debate centers around reductionism in the scientific research on religion (Cox 1996b: 155). James Cox's views on methodological conversion make sense to the researcher. Cox maintains that:

> We can understand those who are different from ourselves without confessionally endorsing their world views. Yet, we do affirm methodologically what they affirm thereby experiencing what they experience. (1996b: 166)

This explanation or perspective clarifies confessional conversion as opposed to methodological conversation. As Cox maintains, "Confessional conversion surreptitiously moves the study of religion away from science into theology" (168).

In this case methodological conversion allows one to suspend the rules of autonomous rationality and abide by the rules of religious faith while at the same time playing the rules of scientific rationality (Cox 1996:168).

Cox uses the term *diatopical hermeneutics* as opposed to an interpolational approach to the study of religion. Bringing Cox's views home one is able to note the following.

The researcher was introduced to the esoteric knowledge of divination together with his academic cultural baggage. This was a diatopical situation the researcher had to deal with. The conversion *metanoia* helped the researcher to sharpen his methodological analysis. It was not a mere confessional process but dealt with his inner methodological realities. The researcher changed and adapted his thinking in the process of the

diatopical hermeneutics. Firstly, both the researcher and his adherence to his faith were critically analyzed by employing theories and disciplines to which he had been introduced (Cox 1996b: 167). Secondly, the researcher tried to apply the said analysis to the tradition he found and had emerged from (ibid.). Thirdly, the researcher attempted to internalize his own tradition in the process of critical appraisal. This process engaged a serious, open, critical, and honest conversation that ultimately led to a methodological conversation (ibid.). Fourthly, the whole conversation and conversion led to "new meaning" and understanding. The process that the researcher went through exposed and pointed to major landmarks for his life experience. He kept on reflecting and recasting on this backdrop as it shaped and reconstituted his thinking and life. The effects of this engagement will not be easily removed from the researcher but instead will continue to engage other life experiences encountered in due course. Surely, in terms of methodological stance the researcher changed and reshaped his own perspective. The researcher is found once more, where he was lost before.

Further on the theoretical assumptions. The above narrative discourse introduces or rather opens a door for the reader into the narrator's world. Genette distinguishes between *histoire, recit*, and narration to account for the analytical categories used in narrative theory. She translates these concepts as story, text, and narration. A story in this regard comprises the logical chronological fictional events that provide the narrative with the "raw material" in terms of which the narrative is told. Text deals with the narrative text encountered during the narration process. Lastly, narration category within the narrative theory accounts for the process of the narrative, with implications that someone has written the narrative and has intended it to be read as a message by a reader or readers. As Rimmon-Kenan rightly notes,

> within the text, communication involves fictional narrator transmitting a narrative fictional narratee. Of the three aspects of narrative fiction, the text is the only one directly available to the reader. It is through the text that he or she acquires knowledge of the story (its object) and of the narration (the process of its production). On the other hand, however, the narrative text is itself defined by these two aspects: unless it told a story it would not be a narrative, and without being narrated or written it would not be a text. (3)

The above story indicates the nature of events and characters involved. The function of events indicates a progression through "steps taken," with the result of "objective reached" or "missed" or the "steps not taken." In this case both analeptic and proleptic events in the story are taken into consideration. As far as the characterization goes, the

researcher is the character himself. He is, in terms of Rimmon-Kenan's (40–42) definition of character, a round character. Apparently this distinction originated in the 1930s, and since then it has been taken over by many narratologists. A round character is more complex and develops in the course of the action (40).

The textual narration of the above personal narrative discourse stands in relation to both story and narration. Three categories should be noted in this regard: time, characterization, and focalization (43). In this case time and characterization stand in relation to the story and focalization to the narration.

Time category concerns the textual arrangement of the event component of the story in the text (ibid.). Definitely, the researcher's narration does not accurately correspond to the logical chronological succession of events in the story. The discourse of the researcher is patterned in terms of order, duration, and frequency (Genette: 33–34). The order patterns specify analeptic (flashbacks) and proleptic (foreshadowing) relations between the story and text-time. Duration specifies the difference in time between events that took place in the story and at various textual levels. Lastly, frequency specifies the number of times the events in the story are recounted in the text. In this regard "initiation" as an event noted in the text is repeated several times. Characterization, on the other hand, has already been discussed above. Lastly, focalization offers the reader an "angle of vision" (Rimmon-Kenan: 3) through which the story is filtered in the text, and it is verbally formulated by the narrator (43). Uspensky identifies three areas in this regard: the perceptional, the psychological, and ideological facets.

First, time and space determine the perceptional facet (sight and hearing). The researcher is also a focalizer both externally and internally: located in the action and interaction of the entire focalization. The researcher not only provides a bird's eye view but participates in the action and is further limited to the present characterization.

Second, the psychological facet of perception has both cognitive and emotive components. The cognitive component (knowledge, conjecture, belief, and memory) indicate that the narrator (cf. researcher) understands overtly the represented world in the text. The emotive component comprises the emotions of the internal focalization (Rimmon-Kenan: 80–81). Lastly, the ideological facet of focalization comprises the "norms of the text," which consist of "a general system of viewing the world conceptually" (81). In the above personal narration (narrative text), the narrator-focalizer's norms or ideology provide the "single dominant perspective," which "is usually taken as authoritative, and all other ideologies in the text are evaluated from this 'higher' position" (ibid.). In the above mentioned narrative, discourse ideology is

positively presented and evaluated by the narrator-focalizer. The narrator-focalizer is, in this case, inside the story world (*diegesis*) and not objective and authoritative external focalizer.

Clearly the above brief account of the researcher's experiences gives insight into some of the practices that are central to his life history. They can be much expanded, and that will be done in future research. Even so, my mother's wedding, how I was taken up in the Masoga family, my theological training, that I had a calling, and how I finally became a *ngaka* form ingredients central to my life. If I would deny this, I would become alienated not only from my most revered meaning system but also my people and ancestors. When I started my research, I intended to do it as a scholar looking at divination from the outside and objectively. Very soon, however, and given my own calling before I went to university to study, I realized that this was impossible. This explains why I took the course of action I did: to become *ngaka.*

My entrance into divination offered me esoteric knowledge that remains outside the experience of the observer-researcher who remains an outsider. Crossing over into this special territory or "specialized space" gives this esoteric knowledge personal, social, and bodily legitimacy. This experimental knowledge is more profound and comprehensive, more personal and idiosyncratic than what I would have gleaned from mere observation.

The knowledge I gained is practical and effective. I have mastered the language of divination and healing. The knowledge and language of divination heals. Healing, with its complexities, attempts to realign the natural and supernatural realms. They cannot be separated. The diviner-healer is the embodiment of the ancestry in the world of the living, regardless of technical skills. This is encompassed in the spiritual manifestations that diviners experience daily.

I have also realized that much of the current scholarship on African religion uses the operation table of intellectual vivisection to deconstruct, deny, assault, appropriate, or destroy the living. There are exceptions to this practice (Setiloane: 11). As Setiloane rightly observes:

> For many of us living in modern urbanized Africa, it becomes increasingly difficult to imagine how life might have been on this continent before the advent of Western people and their civilization. We have become so conditioned (and brain washed) that, even with the best education, we often look back at it with shame as "shame," "brutal" and everything that is bad. (11)

Much of the published work in this field has produced systematic academic commentaries (Mbiti). The problem, however, is that such approaches are often reductionistic. As van Binsbergen rightly notes:

> We still know far too little about the anthropological activity as boundary crossing, and how this reacts with the participant's own boundary management. Dealing with other people's existential questions, existential questions of our own cannot be avoided; nor can these all be suffocated under increasingly convoluted and elegant discourse, no matter how many levels of structure, transformation, binary and ternary logic they may contain. (341)

In conclusion, in crossing over and making contact again with my own ancestral roots; I merged with the data. I am enriched in the process and am human being again. At first it was an experience of ambiguity and was characterized by indeterminate attributes as expressed by a rich variety of symbols, expressions, and activities. Despite the ambiguity of characterizing this "space" (Eliade: 20–24), the researcher ventured through it to discover and be discovered. *Seo ke seo bongaka e lego so bagesso…* ("This is what divination is all about").

RESPONSE

COMMENTARY

Terence Ranger
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Introduction

I read this collection with great pleasure and profit. It touches on questions that have preoccupied me during my career as a historian: African resistance, African uses of the Bible, African experience as mediated through personal reminiscence. My first books were about resistance: perhaps the key word in this collection. My last two books have focused on themes that are also central to it. Many of these essays are about voicing—and so, as its title suggests, is my *Voices from the Rocks* (Ranger 1999). There is much discussion in this collection about how to use personal reminiscence to understand and help to heal trauma—and this is the central theme, as its title also suggests, of the book I wrote with Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, *Violence and Memory*. This collection raises the question of how life in the segregated cities of South Africa is remembered—and this is the concern of the book I am writing at the moment, *Bulawayo Burning*.[1] So I am very sympathetic to the aims of this collection. But in commenting upon it as a Southern Africanist rather than as a South Africanist I want to make a critique, which is partly also an autocritique.

Personal Reminiscence in Southern Africa

In order to do so I want first to address Phillipe Denis's "Oral History in a Wounded Country." This is certainly not because this chapter is weaker or less sensitive than the others. It is because it makes unusually explicit some of the propositions that I want to modify.

Denis emphasizes the exceptionality of South Africa: "it is impossible to conduct an oral history project in South Africa as if it were an ordinary

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[1] This title is a reference to Yvonne Vera's extraordinarily vivid novel of Bulawayo township life in the late 1940s, *Butterfly Burning* (1998). I am endeavoring to give a fully researched social history something of the color and engagement of fiction.

country" (211). South Africa is exceptionally violent and bears an exceptional mark of racial division and oppression. "[I]n South Africa all individual stories are influenced by the 'grand narrative' of colonialism and apartheid, even those that apparently have nothing to do with ... [r]acial and social domination" (210). So in South Africa oral historians began by documenting resistance in order to mobilize; now they "facilitate" memory in order to reconcile, reconstruct, and transform. South African oral historians cannot make use of theories of personal reminiscence produced in "normal" countries such as Britain or the United States. "[I]n a divided country such as South Africa oral history projects have to pay particular attention to trauma and healing" (211). In doing so they have to respect "the African" culture of orality. "In Africa individual interviews make little sense.... Women are particularly reluctant to speak on their own [and] rarely mention personal accomplishments" (214).

Now, I certainly agree with Denis that we need more theoretical and methodological discussion of how to collect and assess personal reminiscence in societies that still retain collective oral traditions that pattern how people narrate their own lives. Nevertheless, I want to take issue with his propositions about the purpose of oral history and about its nature "in Africa." And then, and more importantly, I want to take issue with the general assumptions that underlie not only this essay but so many of the others in this collection.

I believe, first, that it is not helpful to the oral historian to lay so much emphasis on the *abnormality* of South Africa. Whatever view one takes of the history of the United States or Britain, is it really possible to maintain that South Africa's history has been more traumatic than that of Nazi Germany or of Soviet Russia, to cite two examples where there has recently been much discussion of memory and forgetting? I should have thought that a South African oral historian had a great deal to gain by drawing on the work of the late W. G. Sebald on German "amnesia" about the devastation of German cities by Allied bombing. Equally relevant is the magisterial treatment by Catherine Meridale of "death and memory in Russia." And even in Africa can one seriously maintain that South Africa's memories are more agonizing than those of the Southern Sudan, or of the Congo, or of Rwanda? In Rwanda, indeed, the scale of calamity almost overwhelms memory and its capacity to heal. My own country of focus, Zimbabwe, has had a colonial regime that expropriated and discriminated and segregated with a gusto even greater than that of white South Africa. It has suffered not only a terrible guerrilla war but an equally terrible postcolonial repression by the majority-rule government that South Africa has been fortunate enough to escape. In Zimbabwe, too, it is undeniably true that "all individual stories are influenced by the 'grand narrative' of colonialism." Yet I shall cite Zimbabwean examples

to argue that oral historians have tasks over and above those of documenting trauma and to argue that they cannot approach their task by assuming "an African orality."

Let me first take Denis's specific illustrations of African oral culture. In Zimbabwe it does not seem to be true that "individual interviews make little sense" nor that women are reluctant to tell their stories. I have worked with third-year history students from the University of Zimbabwe both in researching the black peasant experience of Makoni district in eastern Zimbabwe (Ranger 1985) and more recently in exploring the urban experience of the Bulawayo townships. The students found no difficulty in interviewing women on their own—whether the researcher was male or female—nor in recording their long personal narratives. These women were also quite ready to talk about their "personal accomplishments." Sometimes, admittedly, it was only the accomplishment of survival. "In short," one old lady told Peter Chakanuyka in Makoni, "my life has been full of unendurable things which I have learnt to endure."[2] But often more positive accomplishments are claimed: the establishment of women's clubs; funding childrens' education from "women's crops"; participation in nationalist or guerrilla activity. And in the townships old women like to remember with joy their triumphs as dancing teenagers. "Ah, my child," a widow told Hloniphani Ndlovu in Makokoba township, "you would not think that a grandmother like me could dance all that township jazz." And she proceeded to demonstrate that she still could.[3]

Zimbabwean women have spoken individually too about the traumas of war. There is a distinguished tradition of Zimbabwean female oral history—interviews of women by women—ranging from Irene Staunton's *Mothers of the Revolution* to the recent collection of interviews with guerrillas, *Women of Resilience* (Zimbabwe Women Writers Association).[4] Even in the area above all others where one might expect female cultural deference to male authority—the Zimbabwean *Vapostori* churches—Bella Mukonyora has been able to talk to many women, individually and

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2 Like Denis's black church women the unendurable things remembered by this old lady had more to do with gender oppression than Rhodesian colonial rule.

3 A vivid collection of Zimbabwean urban women's oral testimony is Barnes and Win.

4 One interview in *Women of Resilience*—between Irene Staunton and a woman *chimbwido* (guerrilla aide)—demonstrates an astonishing readiness to talk outside a cultural context. The informant describes how she was constantly sexually molested as a young teenager and tells Staunton that she would never be able to talk about this to her family or friends. A very nontriumphalist study of the war by a Zimbabwean woman-historian, Josephine Nhongo-Simbanegavi, draws extensively on individual interviews with women ex-combatants.

collectively, and to gather from them their own gendered narratives of the work of the Spirit (Mukonyora).[5]

Now, these Zimbabwean examples of a very different oral culture have also begun to make my second point, namely, that oral informants do not always want to talk about trauma and oppression and are not always seeking healing. Here I can move for a moment from Denis's essay to Ashlee Lenta's. Discussing testimonies to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Lenta emphasizes that autobiographical oral narratives can be—and usually are—processed and circumscribed by the agenda of the recorders. The TRC had a nation-building agenda, and "[t]he pressure of the national narrative ... seems to crowd out the possibility for individual narrative" (192). Lenta calls on scholars to rehear these testimonies so as to draw them "back into the domain of the personal" (193). Denis, of course, is operating in the domain of the personal. Nevertheless, the two oral history projects he describes—of black women's Christian organization and of the resilience of children in HIV-affected families—certainly involve their own processes of circumscription. Denis describes this honestly. As he says: "The women we interviewed ... showed little interest in the topic on which the interviews were supposed to focus, namely, the impact of apartheid on church life in KwaZulu-Natal" (210). He emphasizes that the use of "semistructured questionnaires" nevertheless gave "the interviewees the opportunity to speak about what they have at heart." So the women talked about "the men who have authority over their lives" and stated that "[g]ender oppression and racism are two faces of the same coin." In this project, then, the women ended up talking about oppression even if in a different way from what was expected.

But we need to look more critically at those "semistructured questionnaires." Maybe they were only "semistructured," but they were still structured. The student researchers who worked with me in Makoni and Makokoba, and with Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor in northern Matabeleland, carried out totally open-ended and nonstructured interviews. Informants were asked to talk about what "they had at heart" and to narrate their lives. In this way we discovered that people had at heart all sorts of unexpected things. In the townships especially they had at heart narratives of survival and achievement and sometimes even of remembered joy. We found, as many oral historians elsewhere have found, that people do not wish to remember their lives only as a record of oppression. When I talked about my research on Bulawayo in

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5 Mukonyora, who is currently writing a monograph on the Masowe Apostles, participated in their open-air meetings among the women of the church.

Philadelphia in 2001, a Zimbabwean literature professor who was unexpectedly in the audience told me severely: "If your book is entertaining it will be of no use to us whatsoever. The only thing that needs to be said about the townships is that everyone was crushed under the boot of Rhodesian repression." But few people want to understand their lives as having been merely smears on the dirt roads of the townships. Maybe it is what Marxists used to call "false consciousness" for them to remember and to celebrate their own resilience and cunning and enterprise. But we are talking about healing here.

Denis's chapter presents the oral historian as thaumaturge. I see the oral historian not as an active healer and certainly not as an agent of conscientization. The oral historian is above all a listener, an audience. Sometimes it is indeed necessary for people to have a listener for narratives of terrible experiences, but sometimes it is necessary for people to have an audience for the narrative of "everyday life."[6] In our work in northern Matabeleland Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor, and I heard a great many unexpected ordinary things as well as hearing narratives of violence and atrocity. And even when we heard the narratives of atrocity we were not ourselves part of a healing process. The people of northern Matabeleland have their own mechanisms of healing and did not need us to help them do it. What we were used for, other than as listeners, was as reporters, expected to write their narratives into the national record as a way of proclaiming their due rights as citizens. In this way they were asserting their identity as entitled men and women rather than as merely victims (see the final chapter of Ranger, Alexander, and McGregor; see also Ranger 1992b; Schmidt).

I do not wish to present this as a question of alternatives. It is not a matter of either trauma or celebration. The two are intimately connected. The Zimbabwean literature professor was as severe on Yvonne Vera's novel of township life, *Butterfly Burning*, as he was on my projected social history of Bulawayo. "My students admire her style, of course," he said. "But we are very doubtful about the book. There is too much joy in it." And indeed Yvonne describes her novel —despite its scenes of abortion and suicide—as her "light" book, animated as it is throughout by the sound of *kwela.* I prefer another literary judgement on *Butterfly Burning* as it is expressed in the summary prospectus for Sarah Nuttall's chapter on Vera's work in a forthcoming collection on Zimbabwean literature:

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6 For a discussion of the relevance of the German oral history of "everyday life" to the reconstruction of African social history, see McCaskie.

> In *Butterfly Burning* the township is *inside* the city and inside the township is Kwela music. Inside the township, inside Kwela, is the *wound.* But the wound is the place from which to *create* in the city. Not only this—the wound seems to relate directly to joy, to a sense of joy that permeates her work, that permeates the sound of kwela and the sound of her fiction. (Nuttall)

Photography and the African Urban Experience

The work of Yvonne Vera provides a way into a digression I want to make in order to offer an illuminating analogy with what I have been trying to say about oral history. Pursuing her interest in urban life Yvonne Vera mounted an exhibition of township photographs, *Thatha Camera* (1999), in the National Gallery in Bulawayo, of which she is Director. Like her novel this exhibition was full of joy. Vera acknowledges that "the camera has often been a dire instrument. In Africa … the camera arrives as part of colonial paraphernalia, together with the gun and the bible, diarising events, the exotic and the profound, cataloguing the converted and the hanged." But she shows how township Africans captured the camera and how they used it:

> Once adapted to its particular cultural context the photograph begins to have a transforming authority on the image of the self.… Private moments become public. Something intrinsic is sought through the camera by the photographed. Each image conjured is a memory, a pursuit for reality.

Vera emphasizes that township photos are about "the evocation of desire, the invention of the desirable object," with fashion and style in both men and women celebrating "a new found urban sensibility, a reach towards a fearless field of personhood.… Each figure is a trend, an evocation. It is a freed climate. This is the city. This is me" (Vera 1999:).[7]

This bold, not to say provocative, declaration of a "freed climate" in late colonial Bulawayo is very different, of course, from much writing about photography in South Africa. Revue Noire's huge anthology of African photography contains a chapter by Kathleen Grundlingh on "The Development of Photography in South Africa," which emphasizes that the camera "became a weapon for the white and black photographers who wished to fight apartheid with documentary photography which

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[7] See also my own commentary on the exhibition, drawing on personal reminiscence (Ranger 2000), and my generalization of the points made there Ranger 2001.

would show the whole world the horror of the regime." Pierre Laurent Sanner writes about "Comrades and Cameras" and the political work of Afripix. And of course, there was political photography in Southern Rhodesia too. The monthly magazine *Parade* moved steadily from beauty queens and weddings to photographs of rally and riot.[8] Vera's point—and mine—is that just as in Zimbabwe there were protest photographs as well as declarations of personal "freedom," so in South Africa there were celebratory township photos as well as documentation of the horrors of apartheid.

In the Revue Noire anthology there are two fascinating chapters by Santu Mofokeng that make this point (1999a; 1999b). He became unhappy, he writes, "with the propaganda images which reduced life in the townships into one of perpetual struggle because I felt this representation to be incomplete." So he began to work with the oral researchers of History Workshop to produce "ordinary pictures of ordinary life in ordinary townships." His other chapter raises the paradox of black celebration of identity in the midst of colonial repression. He presents photographs from the 1890s and 1900s of "black men and women who belonged to the working and middle classes that the South African authorities wanted to erase from the history books." In these photographs, with their serene mastery of Victoria fashion, there is "no evidence of coercion. . . . We see these images in the terms determined by the subjects themselves for they have made them their own." Looking back with astonishment and awe at these images Mofokeng writes that "the beauty of these photos make me wonder if they are not some kind of trick or illusion"—as of course, in common with all photographs, and probably all personal reminiscences, they are.

A recent show in London has revealed that Vera's exhibition stands somewhere between this cautious South African rediscovery and the exuberance of the African photographers of urban Mali. Seydou Keita reveals how his black women clients would come in for a new photo every time they changed a hairstyle, wore a new fashion, or bought a new kind of shoe. Malick Sidibe looks back to the "truly joyful times" of 1960 when his photographs recorded "spontaneous images of joy. Sometimes I think that youth, dancing and joy are the only things that matter in life." Young people in Bamako in the late 1950s, just like young people in Bulawayo, "experienced a different kind of freedom. [This] did have to do with independence, but not necessarily colonial independence. There was another kind of independence, too. By 1956, Afro-Cuban music had hit Africa,

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8 *Drum* magazine also carried much protest photography on Zimbabwe. See Couzens.

along with European music, and this allowed young people to experience a different kind of freedom … a totally new thing. We got really excited" (Lamuniere: 38, 51–52).

Black South African youth in 1960, of course, did not have the opportunity to compare the two different kinds of independence, and in the 1970s and 1980s the South African townships were much more of a battlefield than those of Bulawayo and Harare. Repression and resistance do indeed have to continue to be the theme. But somewhere the exuberance of that generation has to be caught as well. The emancipating music of the Bulawayo townships, after all, had come north from Johannesburg. As Duncan Brown's essay in this collection points out, however one analyzes its metaphors the Cape Town Carnival "is fundamentally about pleasure" (163).[9]

Widening the Debate

I have been unfairly extracting from Denis's excellent essay some propositions that seem to me to weaken the volume as whole. Some of these—an overexclusive emphasis on trauma and resistance and the setting up of binary oppositions between "African" and "European," "oral" and "literate," "traditional" and "scientific"—are, indeed, much more prominently displayed in other essays. But for now let me lay down as a marker a quotation from Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael's assessment of South African Culture Studies:

> Cultural theorizing with its emphasis on separation and segregation has been based until recently on the following tendencies: the over-determination of the political, the inflation of resistance, and the fixation on race … and racial victimhood as a determinant of identity. In its adoption of these paradigms, South Africa has projected itself as different, as special and as unique … as dislocated from the African continent. (Nuttall and Michael: 1–2).

These are indeed the dangers. One can add to them a danger inherent in the new, and in itself admirable, desire to foreground an African cultural dimension. This rediscovery of culture can easily lead to reification and essentialism of "tribe," "ethnicity," and "race." Jean Comaroff recently remarked about the upsurge of local identity politics in South Africa and its accompanying invented historiography that:

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[9] Brown quotes one of his musicians: "I remember the days in District Six / The Laughter of adults and little kids / … Goema music was always the heartbeat" (156).

> cultural identity, congealed in ethnic consciousness and the imperatives of autochthony, is often taken to be the most elemental.... [There is] a process of reduction: first from history to culture, then from culture to intellectual property as *naturally* copyrighted.... We are unnerved by how ... arguments for historical justice give way to myths of entitlement that silence the flux and indeterminacy of the past. This predicament is all too familiar to anthropologists, who, having championed the salience of culture, now see it evoked on all sides, returning to haunt them in a host of embarrassing guises—as race, as entitlement, as property, as homogenous, unchanging essence. (Comaroff 2002)

But why do I brandish these warnings at the authors of this collection? Let me list some of the binary oppositions and cultural essentialisms I have found in the essays. Thus foregrounding "the cultural question," Draper writes of a generalized "collapsing indigenous worldview" (64). While mocking previous anthropologists for the use of the term "remote tribes," Maarman Sam Tshehla nevertheless is captured by the idea of bounded "traditional" oracy. He writes of his "two worlds" (171) of academic literacy and ethnic orality. There is, he asserts, "a growing consensus that oral and literate worlds are not easily comparable" (179). And he writes that "vernacular literacy ... entails that the literate one is severed from the world of her origins. That is, to become literate, you first have to apostatize from your 'oral' worldview" (177–79). Gerald West seeks "an indigenous hermeneutic" (42), an "African ontology" that "in contrast to the linear, progressive, and teleological colonial-Christian model ... emphasizes the circularity of religious, social and historical life" (52). He finds the "symbolic contest between colonized and colonizer" expressing itself in the circularity, repetition, and rhythm of *marabi* music and of African Bible reading. This African ontology, he goes so far to say, is "an interpretative resource coursing through the veins of black theological students and the countless 'readers' of the Bible in local churches and communities" (55). I have come to disagree with all these propositions and to believe that taken together they offer a misleading view of the processes of cultural and ideological change.

Draper's idea of a "collapsing indigenous worldview" is linked with his use of Bryan Wilson's thirty-year-old categories of indigenous response (Wilson 1973). The fact that a book was published thirty years ago is no reason to scorn it, but I can claim to have thoroughly disliked and repudiated Wilson's categories the moment they appeared, when I wrote a perhaps too scathing review of the book in the UCLA publication, *African Religious Research.* Ironically, one of my objections was that Wilson's categories were derived from the literature on Native Americans and the Pacific. He knew little about Africa, where the literature on religious movements was still undeveloped, and I tried to show that his

generalizations did not fit what we were beginning to discover. But underlying this specific criticism was my dislike of Wilson's theories of culture and of culture change, epitomized in the expression "a collapsing indigenous worldview." I did not believe then, and I certainly do not believe now, that there *is* such a thing anywhere as an overall "indigenous worldview," all of which collapses at once. I did not believe then, and believe still less now, in the idea that in the midst or aftermath of the "collapse" some people had to act as *bricoleurs,* stitching together bits and pieces to make odd intermediate patterns that lie somewhere between "tradition" and "modernity."

I prefer Liz Gunner's formulation in this collection of the polyphonic "production of culture," of the "multiple levels of involvement" in the making of culture, of the flexibility of apparently "traditional" cultural forms that enable them to engage dynamically with "modernity" rather than fossilizing as "frozen assets." Indeed I am currently writing a review essay of three recent monographs that set out to show how selectively "indigenous worldviews" respond and adapt to colonial "modernization."[10]

But if I do not find the idea of a collapsing indigenous worldview useful, still less do I find credible the idea of still-existing but separate oral and literate worldviews. Maarman Sam Tshehla makes some shrewd objections to terms such as *bricoleur* or "hidden transcript." He also gives us a marvelous account of her parents' oral knowledge of the "black book with the red lips." But his notion of the separation and incomparability of oral and written worldviews is not at all plausible. Is there anywhere in southern Africa, one might ask, where such a separation operates? In this collection itself Mogomme Alpheus Masoga reveals how his participation in the "oral narrative discourse" of divination created no tension with his literate academic studies—"My stay at the university did not meet with problems at all. I was surely under the support of my ancestral spirits. I was able to complete my studies to master's level" (219). After that, it is true, he became aware of what he calls a *diatopical* difficulty, but he describes both practical and theoretical ways of dealing with it.

Both in my own research and in recent publications what is striking is the interpenetration of the oral and the literate. Thus I have written about that most spectacularly oral of southern African religious phenomena, the oracular cave-shrines of Mwali in the Matopos, from which the

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10 The review article (of Greene; Hunt; and McCaskie) is to appear in *Comparative Studies in Society and History.* Greene and Hunt have a great deal to say about missionaries and religious change.

Voice of God is still heard.[11] Pilgrims from all over southern Africa come to hear the Voice, whose oral authority is held to be supreme on questions of environment and fertility. Yet the priests and priestesses of Mwali are literate; their children attend the church schools that operate close to every shrine; they themselves are Bible readers. In 1994 Hezekiel Mafu interviewed the late Gogo Ngcatu Ncube, priestess at the Njelele shrine in the southwest Matopos. Mafu writes:

> The interview lasted two and a half hours. During it she stressed [that] theologically she considers herself a believer and worshipper of the God of the Bible. She claimed to have been instructed by the "rock" always to keep a Bible with her and frequently read it.... Her morning devotions consisted of reading some portions of the scriptures. She believes that God who appeared to Moses at Mount Sinai and gave him the ten commandments, was the same God who spoke in the past and is still speaking now at Njelele. The method of communication has not changed. (Mafu: 290–91)

Gogo Ncube carried her Bible with her into the oracular cave where it could be read with a deeper understanding in the very presence of God. It does not seem that in becoming literate in the vernacular that Gogo Ncube was apostatizing from her own worldview.[12]

In this case, literacy has added new interpretative possibilities to an oral religion. In other situations oracy still exists as a crucial resource even within highly literate African societies. Thus Tom McCaskie in his marvelous social history of an Asante village, based on a massive archive of oral interviews collected but not made use of in the late 1940s, writes:

> Communicating by speaking and listening—the edifice of orality—has a significance in the Asante structuring of social reality that is so fundamental

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11 The Voice from the shrines figures largely in my *Voices from the Rocks* (1999). In a recent lecture (Ranger 2003), I elaborated the various traditions of "Voice" in Zimbabwean religion and drew attention to the transcripts of tape-recorded seances at the eastern Matopos oracular shines, which are presented in Martinus Daneel's *African Earthkeepers.* The Voice from the shrines, articulated by a possessed woman, is the most remarkable manifestation of the Shona concept of *izwi.* Fascinating and important rsearch on the shrines, including interviews with possessed priestesses, is being carried out by Lynette Nyathi.

12 Mafu also describes the current priest at the Manyangwa oracular shrine near Plumtree, a Pastor of the Faith Apostolic Church who has been called back to serve as shrine-keeper. Like Gogo Ncube he insists that the God of the Old Testament is identical with Mwali and that he still speaks to his people in Zimbabwe. Mr. Manyangwa gives priority to this continuing Voice while recognizing the authority of the Bible. "Where there was no voice from the rock, the churches should take a lead in praying for the rain, but where there was a voice from the shrine, churches should let the shrine-keeper take the lead" (Mafu: 302–3).

> that its implications go to the heart of cultural practice. To this day Asante people, now long familiar with the instrumental and other advantages of literacy, persist in the view that writing is somehow inauthentic.... It is felt that writing is not really the way in which to tend the best interests of oneself, for such necessary husbandry depends upon face-to-face communication with others.... This is the very bedrock of Asante cultural praxis. (McCaskie: 236)[13]

In short, what strikes me about the relationship between orality and literacy in Africa is not their incomparability but their interpenetration. A recent detailed and sophisticated treatment of the topic—Sean Hawkins's study of *Writing and Colonialism in Northern Ghana*—makes the point. Hawkins strongly associates colonialism and literacy: "Colonialism in Africa needs to be understood through the medium of writing and the particular world it belonged to." He makes a strong connection between colonial literacy and the transformation of LoDagaa society:

> Colonialism [was] an encounter between a world of experience—a world of knowledge, practice and speech—and "the world on paper"—a world of writing, rules and a linear concept of history.... Writing imposed a form of historical consciousness on different aspects of LoDagaa culture—identity, politics and religion.

But this did not represent the collapse of an indigenous culture. "The world on paper invented African societies but African intellectuals, chiefs and subalterns, in turn, negotiated their way through this written world—appropriating concepts at one point, rejecting some at another, and reconfiguring at yet another." Participating in literacy, LoDagaa intellectuals helped create new contexts for orality.[14]

African Christians, the Bible, and Orality

Hawkins's argument makes a good point at which to move into a discussion of African Christianity that will both comment on West's essay

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13 Pertinently to the thrust of this collection, McCaskie is making these comments in the context of a discussion of Asante oral uses of the written Bible.

14 I am quoting here from the summary of Hawkins's book on the inside dust jacket and from the assessment of it by Jean Allman. Missionaries play a large role in the book, but they are twentieth-century Catholic missionaries rather than nineteenth-century Protestant ones, and the question of Bible translation is not discussed. Two sections in the book, however, would be especially relevant to readers of this collection: "Re-imagining God" (138–60) and "Missionary Medicine and Colonial Money" (190–223).

and also propose what I believe to be the true dynamics of southern African social and cultural change.

It is the case, of course, that Jeff Opland's essay in this collection describes "the appropriation" of literacy by Xhosa intellectuals just as Hawkins discusses LoDagaa appropriations, rejections, and reconfigurings. Opland brings out the oppositional character of Xhosa literacy. "When the military option of resisting white encroachment ultimately failed. . . , it was suggested that an alternative strategy of resistance might replace it, one that would appropriate as a weapon the printed word" (9–10). I think that this emphasis on resistance is both true and limiting. The literacy of African Christians was directed toward changing their own societies as well as confronting the whites. It would better to say, however, that the *combined* literacy and orality of African Christians was directed toward these dual ends. Deborah James and Geoffrey Maphahla Nkadimeng rightly stress in their essay in this collection that African "Christianity was . . . a fundamentally political phenomenon, contrary to weaker claims that its significance in relation to resistance has been merely that of 'counterhegemony'" (131). African Christianity, however, was as much directed to the politics of internal social and cultural transformation as it was to the politics of resistance to land alienation.

I do not think that any of the essays in this collection really bring out the power as well as the dependence of early African converts. It is a point I bring out in my discussion of "the dialectic" of American Methodism in eastern Zimbabwe—and from now on I shall draw entirely on Zimbabwean examples:

> As preachers [African pastor-teachers] had two advantages over the missionaries. They were, of course, fluent in the spoken vernacular and masters of its oral techniques. . . . As *African Advance* noted in October 1916, "the method of teaching by parables is a practical method in Africa. Our native pastor teachers not only use the parables of our Lord but many others of local import that are readily understood and with telling effect," . . . The African pastor-teachers did not lose their advantage with the development of vernacular literacy. After all, they were centrally involved in the creation of the literary vernacular. The missionaries freely admitted their dependence on their converts, and it was the African pastor-teachers who became the real masters of the new instrument of communication rather than the missionaries. Their control of literary Chimanyika, as eastern Chishona came to be called, made them the masters of identity. It was the literate teachers, rather than the oral mediums and elders, who now became masters of history. . . .
>
> In all this the teachers were taking full advantage of Methodist opportunities—the Methodist emphasis on the Word, whether in oral or written form. They also took full advantage of the Methodist emphasis upon the Bible. Here the teachers made the Bible their own in a way the

> missionaries no longer could. Early twentieth century Zimbabwe was biblical ground—an Old Testament country of Prophets throwing down idols, a New Testament country of Pauline conversions. (Ranger 1994: 302–3)

In 1918, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the American Methodist pastor-teachers at a great revival meeting but left the white missionaries unaffected, they became masters too of an Acts country of healing and tongues. This combination of oral, literate, and pentecostal authority empowered the pastor-teachers not only against the missionaries but also against chiefs and spirit mediums and elders. It helped them carry through a youth revolution. It helped them to become economic and social entrepreneurs. It helped them to create larger units of identity and solidarity. In short, orality and literacy together enabled them to begin a social revolution.

It did not enable them to complete the revolution, however. In the 1920s and 1930s there was a Christian retreat in Zimbabwe. There was a financial crisis; many schools closed; missionaries participated in a conservative reaction against social change. This led many African leaders in the mission-instituted churches to protest against the missionary failure to achieve the promise of transformation.[15] It also led to the emergence of prophets committed to "taking on the missionary task" and completing the work of Christianizing African society much more effectively than the missionaries had been able to do. These men and women established churches of the Spirit that commanded their followers to repudiate the ancestors and to campaign against "traditional" religion. Because they had broken away from the failed white church leadership, because they taught economic self-reliance, and because their followers practiced the gifts of the Spirit, speaking in tongues, and walking on fire, such churches were regarded with deep suspicion by the Rhodesian administration. The prophets were harassed and imprisoned, becoming despite themselves icons of resistance. But what they were *really* devoted to was the total transformation of African society (Ranger 2002).

These movements combined orality and literacy, drawing heavily on the vernacular Bible. In some prophetic churches the majority of members learned the Bible through oral repetition; in all of them song and sermon were critically important. It is often overlooked that in these ways they were very similar to the popular Christianity that had been spread and led by the pastor-evangelists of the mission churches. In any case, the

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[15] For a recent account of the Christian crisis of the interwar period, see Summers. See also Ranger 1995.

orality of the Zimbabwean prophetic churches was consciously different from the orality of "traditional" religion.

Here I can make a comparison between two of the African churches described in essays in this collection and the history of Zimbabwean prophetic movements. This comparison focuses on the notion of "Voice." Carol Muller's essay argues that "in predominantly oral communities, the 'word' of God/gods is a word that is sounded out; it is integrally entwined with the human voice" (93). Muller points out that in Zulu the word *izwi* refers both to "word" and "voice." Isaiah Shembe, she says, possessed "a guiding 'Voice' inside his body, which formed the core of belief.... stories about the 'Voice' that guided his spiritual mission are central to the memory of the founder's prophetic character.... Isaiah Shembe's religious vocation was quite literally a calling, a voice that beckoned and instructed" (94). Jonathan Draper, going much deeper into the Khambule movement than Bengt Sundkler was able to do, remarks that as a result of the founder's response to the commands of God, "the closed, silent, textual Bible is now unlocked and spoken in prophecy again" (80).

In Zimbabwe, too, Johana Masowe (John of the Wilderness) responded to the Voice. Dr Bella Mukonyora—who is completing a monograph on the Masowe church—also argues that Johana drew on the concept of *izwi.* She points out that from the very beginning of his ministry—even in testimonies to the Rhodesian administration—Masowe invoked the authority of the Voice:

> During my sickness (he told the Chief Native Commissioner in 1932) I heard voices telling me that I was John.... When I got better I went to a hill and remained there for forty days.... I used to hear a Voice saying "I have blessed you. Carry on with the good work." I really do believe that I have been sent from heaven to carry out religious work among the natives. No human being has guided me in my teachings. I am only guided by the Voice.

Masowe's first converts reported that during his illness Masowe died and that as he lay dead he was called by the Voice of God, which filled the hut. "We could see his corpse on the floor but his voice was speaking with God in heaven. We said to ourselves 'One of us is speaking with Jehovah.'"[16]

One could certainly see this as a return to an "indigenous" idiom of orality, as an invocation of the same Voice that speaks in the Mwali caves.

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16 Shoniwa's statement to the Chief Native Commissioner, 1 November 1932; Samson Mativera, "The Calling of Baba Johane: His Confrontation with Satan and with God," October 1932.

In fact, though, something different is going on. Johana and his converts are using the Bible both to reinstate and to restate the idea of *izwi.* It is the Old Testament Voice of Jehovah that is speaking, calling on his prophet as he did of old. The Zimbabwean Apostolic churches are often described as pentecostal, and indeed their followers do have access to the gifts of the Spirit. But the prophet is empowered not by the Spirit but by the Voice of God. Both types of orality repudiate and even demonize traditional forms. The Masowe church teaches that God's Voice does not speak in the Matopos caves, that the Mwali cult is a mockery of *izwi.* It also teaches that the ancestral and other spirits that possess Zimbabweans and speak through them are demonic manifestations. When the Holy Spirit descends on the Masowe followers it sweeps all these demons away like a cleansing wind. In a recent lecture on the Voice of God in African religion I asked an audience of evangelical Christians "to be open to the possibility that divinely commissioned prophets are needed to naturalise and supernaturalise African Christianity" (Ranger 2003).[17]

The time has come to examine contemporary Bible exposition among the descendants of these various Zimbabwean Christian traditions. This will allow me to test West's assertion that within the black churches one can find an indigenous hermeneutic powered by repetition, circularity, and rhythm, one very different from linear, text-bound commentary. A marvelous opportunity to do this is afforded by Titus Presler's recent study of "Zimbabwe's vigil movement." Presler describes the night-through *pungwes* that African Christians of all traditions organize in the Honde Valley in northeastern Zimbabwe. He offers three long accounts of Bible proclamation, one within a Methodist *pungwe,* one within the Mughodi Apostolic church, which sees itself as a bridge between the historic and the prophetic churches, and the third within the Johana Maranke Apostles.[18]

At first sight Presler's study offers dramatic support for West's propositions. The Christian *pungwe* was derived from an African ritual that Martinus Daneel and Dana Roberts describe in their preface as

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17 I pointed out in this lecture that even for the American Methodists in eastern Zimbabwe, who laid so much emphasis on the power of the Word as contained in the Bible, the age of prophecy and direct commissioning by God was over. Johana Masowe, who was born in the American Methodist's show village of Gandanzara, thus claimed a greater authority that was more biblical than "traditional."

18 Both the Mughodi and the Maranke churches emerged at the same time and in much the same place as the Masowe movement—in Manicaland in the early 1930s. Like Masowe they came out of an American Methodist environment. By the 1990s, of course, the Methodist church itself was under full African control. It rejoiced in the inheritance of the 1918 Pentecost and was as charismatic as many of the African-initiated churches.

representing "the enacted essence of Shona traditional religions; hence its catalytic significance for spiritual renewal and community solidarity." Presler insists that he is studying "oral theologies," developing in the night amidst song and dance and drumming. Yet the detailed accounts of the discussion of the Bible within the *pungwes* paint a rather different picture.

"All *Pungwe* communities," writes Presler, "regard the Bible as their authority for doctrine, spirituality, church structure and moral life." All go to some lengths to separate exposition of the Bible from any other form of oral discourse.

The Christian *pungwe* was pioneered in the Honde Valley by Methodist deacons. Presler tells that in Methodist *pungwes,* and those of the other mission-founded churches, preaching occupies "the bulk of *pungwe* ritual time." There are some dramatic performances and hymn singing, but the emphasis is on the Word. Preaching consists of a series of commentaries on a Bible text, read aloud by a pastor or deacon. At the service described by Presler, "the scripture passage for the night was Luke 24:13–35, the story of the two disciples and Jesus on the road to Emmaus, itself an evening story conducive to the *pungwe* setting. About thirty people preached or testified." Presler quotes at length from the opening sermon by the Methodist pastor, Reverend Togarasei Kahlari. It was a classic Methodist sermon, full of the enthusiasm and conviction through personal experience that characterized the preaching of Welsey himself. It was a call for transformation of self and society. These messages were, of course, fitted into the nighttime mountain setting. "The Emmaus story is set forth as a *pungwe* story: evening was at hand, the despondent disciples were looking for Jesus and they shared a meal; when Jesus appeared to them, they resisted sleep, and instead rushed back to Jerusalem to announce the good news. That joyful reunion was the Jerusalem *pungwe.*" So Kahlari called on his congregation to "look for Jesus" in the night around them. Presler comments that "*pungwe* theology emphasises the Holy Spirit, but it remains enduringly christocentric" (Presler: 127–31).

One might say that this noncircular, nonrepetitive, nonrhythmic discourse on the Bible was after all Methodist, even if it was a Methodism derived from the combined oral and literate powers of its early African founders and the Pentecost of 1918. But what about the prophetic churches that had sought still greater powers in the 1930s? How did they discuss the Bible at night in the mountains?

Presler discusses a Bible exposition by members of the Mughodi church, founded in 1931 in western Manicaland by Elijah Mughodi, who had received the divine commission on a hill, just like Johana Masowe. The Mughodi *pungwe* began with public confession and praying in tongues. But, as in the Methodist *pungwe,* "sermons occupied most of the

night." In this case, though, the Bible text was read line by line, the preacher expounding each passage as the reading progressed. Presler comments that the Bible was read "by an evangelist who stood with each preacher at all times." In other words all of the sermons were interwoven with the Bible text, and "the reader's visual prominence emphasised the authority the written word and the preacher's accountability to it." The secretary of the church began the *pungwe* by emphasizing that only "designated preachers" could speak and that they must concentrate on the biblical passage: "So, preachers, you will follow that order … stick to the passage that has been chosen. We are not allowing folk tales (*nyambo*). But let us follow what is said in the passage" (Presler: 198–205). This sounds like a deliberate safeguard against circularity!

But the Mughodi church sees itself as standing between the mission-founded denominations and the radical Apostolics. What, then, of Presler's account of a full-blown prophetic *pungwe*? He tells us of a nighttime encampment of the Maranke Vapostori. The rituals there enact *narratives:* "a pilgrimage through the wilderness in the great drama of God's people that includes the Sinai trek, the retreats of Jesus and the visions of Johana Maranke." Presler remarks that the Maranke "wilderness spirituality [is] grounded in biblical revelation" and that most of the night is taken up with "Bible study and discussion." The text for that night was Mark 16, where the risen Jesus commissions his disciples and tells them of the signs they will perform. Presler gives us the text of the second preacher's sermon, which illustrated the text with reference to the travails of Noah and Moses. "The problem we have in being in the bush like this is to spread God's words so that all people, when the world comes to an end, will have heard that God's words are there" (Presler: 162–67).

It seems, then, that all these different churches, pursuing revelation in the bush at night, were anxious to elevate "the authority of the written word." But what most strongly emerges from Presler's remarkable account is one word from his title, *Transfiguring Night.* What he is describing is "transfiguration," transfiguration of the "traditional" *pungwe,* transfiguration of individuals, transfiguration of communities. During the 1970s the *pungwe* was taken over by guerrillas, becoming their key ritual of indoctrination, mobilization, and punishment. It was certainly a ceremony of "resistance." Now, however, African Christians in eastern Zimbabwe have returned to their century-old attempt to transform their own society.[19] In the history of the *pungwe,* then, we need to stress

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[19] John Mbiti writes a foreword to Presler's book. He likes it, of course, because its deals with Shona religion. Mbiti begins with a characteristic metaphor: "The introduction of Christianity into Africa through Western missionaries is like rain falling on the leopard. Obviously

resistance, but we also need to stress transformation—and we need to note that in Presler's account of nighttime dramas of sin and repentance and apocalypse there is plenty of room for joy as well.

Conclusion

I have been seeking to engage the essays in this collection in an argumentative—I hope not too argumentative—way. Some I have drawn upon; others I have debated. I quote above Nuttall and Michael's criticism of work on culture in South Africa for its "over-determination of the political, the inflation of resistance, and the fixation on race . . . and racial victimhood," for its dependence on binary oppositions. Their endeavor to overcome these problems is based on the concept of "creolization," emphasizing the shared experiences of black and white.[20] I have not myself attempted to draw on this idea in my own attempt to undermine binary oppositions, though there is a great deal that might be said about it with reference to Zimbabwe as well as to South Africa.[21]

My own attempt to break down binary oppositions—between "indigenous" and "Western" hermeneutics; between orality and literacy; between "African culture" and "colonial intrusion"—has been to emphasize the complexity, variety, and dynamism of African societies. I have been mainly writing about Zimbabwe, a country whose history—and present—is no more "normal" than that of South Africa. But even in Zimbabwe, under an oppressive colonialism or under a ruthless postcolonial regime, Africans have conducted their own business. They have not, of course, been free to do so. African "business" has had to be carried on within structures of oppression: in segregated townships and eroding Communal Areas. Yet within these structures some Africans have

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the rain makes the fur wet and washes away dust and microbes. It does not intrinsically alter the genetic spots of the leopard." But at the end of his foreword Mbiti writes: "This study enriches our understanding of Africa's explosive Christianity. After the rain the leopard's spots remain, but they are inwardly affected, for the leopard drinks that water to stay alive. The world of the *pungwe* night of the Shona remains, but, we are told, among the Christians it is 'transfigured' " (xv–xvii).

20 For an interesting debate about "creolization," see Sean Jacob's review of *Senses of Culture* published by H-SAfrica, September 2002, and Sarah Nuttall's reply, published in November 2002.

21 At a time when Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwean government is emphasizing a national history based on the sequence of black resistance and is insisting on the unchanged continuity of white imperialist and racist motivations, it is a difficult task for historians of Zimbabwe to write about "creolisations." However, Professor Ngwabe Bhebe and I have edited a volume on the historical context of human rights and democracy in Zimbabwe that does explore these issues (Bhebe and Ranger).

managed to achieve power within their own societies; nearly all have managed at least the feat of survival, and most look back on achievements and pleasures. To do this they have captured and made use of technologies that came to them via colonialism but that are not, of course, limited to it. One of these was the camera. Another was the Bible. These have been technologies of resistance. They have also been technologies of a freedom different from political freedom, technologies able to produce an astonishing beauty, which seems like a "trick or an illusion" but which is one of the realities of twentieth-century southern Africa.

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